

THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO MISSIONARIES



*Counter-Missionary Handbook**

by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

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THE BATTLE FOR THE JEWISH SOUL

According to recent Gallup and Harris polls, there are over 70 million “born again” Christians in North America, many of whom are convinced that in order for Jesus to return, the Jewish people must first be converted to Christianity. Christian denominations, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Assemblies of God, as well as countless other Christian groups worldwide, contribute more than \$300 million annually to aggressively evangelize Jews. These evangelical Christians have established special “Hebrew Christian synagogues” to attract Jews. Such “synagogues” have grown in number from 20 to over 500 in the last 30 years.

Missionaries convince their recruits that they are not complete as Jews until they accept Jesus as the Messiah, and that a Jew retains his Jewish identity after converting to Christianity. According to a 1990 Council of Jewish Federations’ population study, over 600,000 Jews in North America alone identify with some type of Christianity. Over the past 30 years, more than 275,000 Jews worldwide have been converted specifically by missionaries who use deceptive tactics that masquerade Christian beliefs in the guise of Judaism. The Gospel is preached by “Messianic rabbis” wearing *yarmulkas* (skullcaps) and *talleisim* (prayer shawls) at “Shabbat” and “High Holiday” services. These “Hebrew Christians” promote their Christian faith by using a new name: “Messianic Judaism.”

These groups have influenced evangelical churches to adopt the same deceptive techniques. For the first time in history, Jews are welcomed into the church and told that they can retain their Jewish identity. Church members then introduce the Jew to “someone Jewish who has accepted the Lord.” This method of proselytizing increases the number of contact people who serve as conduits to the “Hebrew Christian” missionaries to include Christian associates at work, at school and in social settings. In addition, new programs such as the \$16-million theme park in Orlando, Florida, called The Holy Land Experience, and traveling

conferences, such as “To the Jew First in the New Millennium” are virtual training grounds to teach Christians how to effectively evangelize their Jewish acquaintances.

Contrary to popular perception, it is not only emotionally unstable Jews who fall prey to the missionaries’ efforts; in fact, all Jews are susceptible. Missionaries often target college campuses, hospitals, drug rehabilitation programs, seniors’ residences and shopping malls in

Jewish” day schools for children and “yeshivot” where they produce ordained “Messianic rabbis.” There are over 100 “Messianic congregations” in Israel, and over 175 in the Former Soviet Union. These groups prey almost exclusively upon uneducated, unaffiliated and alienated Jews.

In response to this ever-growing threat, **Jews for Judaism** was established in 1985. The only worldwide counter-missionary resource and outreach network, **Jews for Judaism** has branches in Los Angeles, Baltimore, Toronto and Johannes-burg. Its two primary goals are preventive education and winning back those Jews who have been influenced by missionaries.

Jews for Judaism achieves these goals through counselling “Hebrew Christians”, monitoring missionary activity and offering a speakers’ bureau and intensive counter-missionary courses. **Jews for Judaism** is also a pioneer in the use of multi-



A Jews for Judaism volunteer counter-leaflets a Jews for Jesus missionary.

Jewish neighborhoods, as well as the Israeli community, Soviet immigrants and intermarried couples. They deliberately misquote, mis-translate and misinterpret Jewish scriptures and rabbinical texts in an attempt to “prove” that Jesus was both the Jewish Messiah and God. Their delegitimization of Judaism, in concert with their misleading exploitation of Jewish symbols, religious artifacts and even traditional music, serves to confuse the potential convert, making him or her more vulnerable.

JEWS FOR JUDAISM THE RESPONSE TO AN URGENT NEED

These missionary groups – over 1,000 in North America alone – are active worldwide, and can be found in almost every Jewish population centre. Several groups have founded “Messianic

media advertising and the worldwide distribution of counter-missionary materials. We have produced a wide selection of literature and audio and video tapes available in English and Russian, Hebrew, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Additionally, we have a highly acclaimed website at www.jewsforjudaism.org.

The greatest antidote to the threat of missionaries is knowledge. This booklet has been prepared to provide you with the essential responses to the most common claims made by Christian missionaries. It has been designed as a practical guide to strengthen Jewish individuals, families and communities in our ongoing efforts to keep Jews Jewish.

* The complete unabridged version of this handbook can be downloaded in English, French, Hebrew, Russian, German, Portuguese and Spanish from www.jewsforjudaism.org

"JEWS FOR JESUS": BIBLICAL PARADOX OR RELIGIOUS REALITY

Many individuals are confused by the arguments of the "Hebrew Christians" or "Jews For Jesus" and are unaware of the Jewish response to their claims that:

- 1) Jews can retain their Jewish identity once they convert.
- 2) The Jewish Bible is full of prophetic references to Jesus.
- 3) Spiritual salvation and a personal relationship with G-d can only come through Jesus.
- 4) Miracles "prove" the validity of Christianity.
- 5) The Christian belief in the Trinity of G-d is compatible with Judaism.

It is our hope that by examining each claim and the corresponding Jewish response, Judaism's position will be clearly understood.

CLAIM # 1: "JEWS CAN RETAIN THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY ONCE THEY CONVERT"

In their attempt to convert Jews, missionaries claim that one can remain Jewish while practising Christianity. The use of terminology, such as "Messianic Jew," "Hebrew Christian," and "Jew for Jesus" is but a deceptive attempt to represent converted Jews as Jewish.* In fact, missionaries even go so far as to claim that a Jew who accepts Jesus (or "Yeshua" as they call him) is a "completed Jew" implying, of course, that all other Jews are incomplete.

The misrepresentation and deception employed in this attempt to disguise the seriousness of a Jew's conversion to Christianity is similarly reflected in the widespread misuse of Jewish symbols and customs, in the fabrication of Jewish texts, and in the misrepresentation of the background and Jewish education of many "Hebrew Christians." Numerous "Hebrew Christian" leaders dishonestly refer to themselves as "rabbis" and to their places of worship as "synagogues."**

These tactics are employed in an attempt to render their version of Christianity more palatable to the Jews they seek to convert. However, in the words of one of the numerous Christian groups which condemn "Hebrew Christianity," "These proselytizing techniques are tantamount to coerced conversions and should be condemned." (From a formally adopted statement issued by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, D.C.)

◆ THE JEWISH RESPONSE ◆

The fact remains that regardless of superficial attempts to sound Jewish, the term "Hebrew Christian" or "Jew for Jesus" is an oxymoron and a theological contradiction.

So-called "Hebrew Christians" argue that a person who is born Jewish can never lose his birthright or heritage. However, the Bible teaches that your beliefs do influence your Jewish status and that a person who was born a Jew can at some point temporarily cease to be called a Jew.



"Hebrew-Christians" ("Messianic Jews") conduct a "Shabbat" service at a "Messianic Synagogue". An authentic Torah scroll rests on the bimah.

In the Book of Kings, Elijah the prophet is sent to rebuke those Jews who were worshipping a foreign god called Baal. In I Kings 18:21, Elijah says to them, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is G-d, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." In other words, you are either a Jew or a worshiper of Baal; you can't be both. The story concludes with the Jews renouncing their idolatrous ways and returning to Judaism.

From this, we derive an important lesson. A Jew who follows another religion is Jewish only to the point that he retains a spiritual obligation to repent and to return to Judaism. However, as long as his beliefs are idolatrous and foreign to Judaism, he cannot call himself a Jew. (It is important to note that a non-practising Jew is different from a Jew who has chosen to follow a foreign path.)

The Torah teaches that Jews and non-Jews are given different paths to reach G-d. A Jew is obligated to follow the Torah, while a non-Jew must observe the Seven Laws of the Children of Noah. One group isn't better than the other, merely different. Therefore, certain beliefs and practices, like eating pork, are permissible for non-Jews but not for Jews. Similarly, the majority of Christian beliefs concerning G-d, salvation and the Messiah do not violate the Noahide covenant for non-Jews, but are absolutely forbidden for Jews. That is why the term "Messianic Jew," "Hebrew Christian" or "Jew for Jesus" is a contradiction.

CLAIM # 2: "THE JEWISH BIBLE IS FULL OF PROPHETIC REFERENCES TO JESUS"

"Hebrew Christians" believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and they attempt to prove this by quoting various passages from the Jewish Bible. Such quotations may sound impressive, overwhelming and confusing to anyone with only a passing knowledge of Judaism and with no command of the Hebrew language.

◆ THE JEWISH RESPONSE ◆

1) The only reason these passages or so-called "proof texts" appear to be alluding to Jesus is because they have been misquoted, mistranslated or taken out of context. Any written work, if mistranslated or taken out of context, can be made to suggest meanings which were never intended, as the following examples will clearly demonstrate.

The New Testament is no exception. For example, in the New Testament, (Luke 14:26) Jesus is quoted as saying:

"If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

An initial reading of this verse gives the impression that one must hate one's family, and even oneself, as a prerequisite to being a Christian. However, any Christian confronted with a literal reading of this passage will react defensively and insist that the verse doesn't mean that at all. It only appears that way, he or she will explain, because it is being read out of context and without a proper translation.

This is precisely the point we would like to make. What a verse says and what it means may be completely different. Before one can

* Missionary training manuals (see pg 5) encourage use of the expressions "believer" rather than "Christian," "Messiah" instead of "Christ," "tree" instead of "cross," and "New Covenant" instead of "New Testament," to promote a more Jewish-sounding message.

** In their attempt to justify their Jewishness, certain "Hebrew Christians" have labeled Rabbinic Judaism a cult since they claim that it "follows the words of men rather than G-d." Besides being false, this statement is also hypocritical since "Hebrew Christians" use these very same rabbinic traditions to lend their practices a guise of Jewishness.

understand any verse properly, whether from the Jewish Scriptures or from the New Testament, it must be read in context and with an accurate translation.

Similarly, when a missionary quotes a verse from Jewish Scriptures, one should ascertain that the verse is being rendered correctly. For example, Psalm 22:17 from the Hebrew Bible, when correctly translated, reads “*They surrounded my hands and feet like a lion**,” referring to King David being pursued by his enemies who are often referred to as a lion (as in Psalms 7 and 17). Yet, when read out of context and mistranslated as, “*They pierced my hands and feet,*” as appears in Christian versions (Psalm 22:16), the passage intentionally conjures up thoughts of Jesus.

This example demonstrates only one of the many verses that the missionaries twist and mistranslate to suit their purposes. Judaism has a response and an explanation for each such instance. The rule of thumb is to always ask, “Are these verses being read in context and with an accurate translation?” Sadly, most “Hebrew Christians” blindly accept the Christian interpretation without ever having heard or fully understood the Jewish view.

After an open-minded re-examination of both sides, many “Hebrew Christians” have returned to Judaism.

2) Missionaries often use the New Testament as proof that events or prophecies in their mistranslated passages have been fulfilled. However, to someone familiar with the Jewish Bible, it is obvious that the touted “inerrancy” (i.e., lack of error) of the New Testament is highly questionable. Consider the following examples:

- a) In three different places in the Jewish Bible, (Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5 and Deuteronomy 10:22) it is stated that the patriarch Jacob came to Egypt with a total of 70 persons. Acts 7:14 in the New Testament incorrectly gives this number as 75.
- b) Hebrews 8:8-13 of the New Testament, when quoting from Jeremiah, states that G-d replaced His Covenant with the Jews with a “*New Covenant,*” claiming that because the Jews did not keep the “*Old Covenant,*” G-d “*no longer cared for them.*” However, the original Hebrew text in Jeremiah 31:30 of the Jewish Bible does not say that G-d did not care for them, but rather that He “*remained a husband to them.*” Some Christians interpret their translation (in Jeremiah 31:31) to mean that G-d broke His Covenant and rejected the Jewish people. This is completely inconsistent with the biblical stance that the commandments are forever (Psalm 119:151-152) and that G-d promised to never reject or break His Covenant** with the Jews (Judges 2:1 and Leviticus 26:44-45).

- c) Hebrews 10:5 of the New Testament, when quoting Psalm 40, claims that G-d replaced animal sacrifices with the death of the Messiah by stating that, “*sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me.*” However, the original quote from Psalm 40:6 does not say this. It says, “*sacrifices and meal offerings You have not desired; My ears You have opened.*” This refers to G-d’s desire that we listen to Him, as it says, “*Behold! – to obey is better than sacrifice.*” (1 Samuel 15:22)

Fundamentalist Christians readily accept the Jewish Scriptures as the inspired and “inerrant” word of G-d and as the foundation for the New Testament. If they were to be logically consistent, it would follow that wherever the “Old” and “New” Testaments contradict each other, the New Testament must be admitted to be obviously the one which is in error.

CLAIM # 3: “SPIRITUAL SALVATION AND A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH G-D CAN ONLY COME THROUGH JESUS”

Missionaries claim that, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of G-d*” (Romans 2:23), and that there is no salvation from sin or any possibility of a personal relationship with G-d without belief in Jesus. Specifically with regard to Jews, their argument is that Jews have always needed animal blood sacrifices to rid themselves of sin. Since sacrifices were abolished after the destruction of the Temple in Israel, they claim that today Jews can find salvation from sin only by believing in Jesus, who “died on the cross and shed his blood as the final sacrifice.”

◆ THE JEWISH RESPONSE ◆

The notion that we are born condemned and that without the practice of animal sacrifices Jews cannot atone for their sins represents a blatant misinterpretation of the Jewish Bible.

First of all, the Bible teaches that sin is an act, not a state of being. Mankind was created with an inclination to do evil (Genesis 8:21), and the ability to master this inclination (Genesis 4:7) and choose good over evil (Psalm 37:27). Secondly, G-d gave us a way to remove our sins. When sacrifices were required, they were intended only for unintentional sins (Leviticus 4:1) and served as a means of motivating individuals to true repentance. Numerous passages, including Hosea 14, I Kings 8:44-52 and Jeremiah 29:12-14, inform us that today, without a Temple or sacrifices, our prayers take the place of sacrifices. In addition, we read, “*The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart*” (Psalm 51:22) and “*I desire kindness and not sacrifices, the knowledge of G-d more than burnt offerings.*” (Hosea 6:6) The Torah

Advertisement for a training seminar on converting Jews to Christianity.

teaches that through repentance, prayer, fasting and doing what is right, everyone has the ability to return to G-d directly.

This concept is beautifully illustrated in the books of Jonah and Esther where both Jews and non-Jews repented, prayed to G-d and were forgiven for their sins without having offered any sacrifices.

The Hebrew word for repentance is teshuvah–תשובה, and literally means to “return to G-d.” Our personal relationship with G-d allows us to turn directly to Him at any time, as it says in Malachi 3:7, “*Return to Me and I shall return to you,*” and in Ezekiel 18:27, “*When the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*” Additionally, G-d is extremely compassionate and forgiving as is indicated in Daniel 9:18, “*We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteousness, but because of Your abundant mercy.*”

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 teaches that this path to G-d is unquestionably within our grasp. Isaiah 42:6 teaches that it is the role of Judaism and the Jewish nation to show the world this path by serving as a “light to the nations.”

CLAIM # 4: “MIRACLES PROVE THE VALIDITY OF CHRISTIANITY”

Some “Hebrew Christians” argue that turning to Jesus changed their lives and that, as a direct result, they have even experienced miracles.

* The word “*ka’ari–כארי*” clearly means like a lion, as evident from its use in Isaiah 38:13.

** The Torah, G-d’s original Covenant, is eternal and the Jewish people are obligated to keep it. Free will enables them to choose between observing or not observing the Torah. The “*New Covenant*” that Jeremiah speaks of does not replace the original, but strengthens it. In the Messianic age, G-d will give us a “*new heart,*” thereby removing our temptation to do evil. From this point on, the Jewish people will serve G-d with all their heart and will never again break the original Covenant. (Jeremiah 32:38-40, Ezekiel 11:9-20, Ezekiel 36:26-27)

◆ **THE JEWISH RESPONSE** ◆

Claims of miracles and of changes in one's life are not unique to any one religion. Converts to cults and to other religions also relate miraculous experiences and events in their lives. The Jewish Bible warns that supposed "miracles" may, in reality, be a test from G-d. A classic example of this is found in the beginning of Chapter 13 of the book of Deuteronomy,

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises and gives you a sign or wonder [miracle], and the sign or wonder comes true, saying, 'Let us go after other gods whom you have not known and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your G-d is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the Lord your G-d and fear Him; and listen to His voice, and serve Him, and cling to Him." (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

These verses teach us that G-d may allow an individual to perform miracles in order to test us to see whether we will follow His will or be misled by so-called miraculous occurrences.

We also see from Exodus 7:11 that miracles do not necessarily have to be attributed to G-d. In this passage, Pharaoh commands his court magicians to imitate, with their magic, the miracles that Moses and Aaron performed.

These two examples illustrate that we cannot rely upon miracles as proof that our beliefs are true.

CLAIM # 5:
"CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN THE TRINITY OF G-D IS COMPATIBLE WITH JUDAISM"

The foundation of Christian theology includes belief in the bodily incarnation of G-d, that G-d exists as a Trinity and that Jesus was a mediator between G-d and man. "Hebrew Christian" missionaries claim that

this theology is totally compatible with Judaism.

◆ **THE JEWISH RESPONSE** ◆

1) The commandment to believe in G-d's absolute Oneness was given specifically to the children of Israel (the Jewish people), as is stated in the **Shema**, Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is **One**." The concept expressed in this verse not only refutes the plurality of gods, but also asserts that G-d is the only true existence. Biblically, G-d is not only infinite, but He transcends time, space and matter. G-d has no beginning and no end, as it says in Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first and I am the last and besides Me there is no other." While Judaism believes that G-d manifests Himself to His creation (humanity) in many ways (i.e. as a judge or a protector), G-d's essence itself is indivisible and therefore without any possibility of distinction. Something that transcends both time and space cannot be described as consisting of three different aspects. The moment we attribute any such distinctions to G-d's essence, we negate His absolute Oneness and unity.*

The following verses from the Hebrew Bible, when correctly translated, further substantiate this fundamental and crucial Jewish belief in the Oneness of G-d, "See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with Me" (Deuteronomy 32:39) and "There is nothing else besides G-d." (Deuteronomy 4:35)

2) Jews are also forbidden to envision that G-d has "any likeness of anything." Deuteronomy 4:15-19 and Deuteronomy 5:8-9 are only some of the many biblical references prohibiting Jews from believing that G-d dwells in bodily form, as claimed in the New Testament.**

3) The prohibition against a mediator is found in the Second Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) Therefore, the New Testament statement in John 14:6, that "No one comes to the Father, but through Me [Jesus]" is not acceptable to Jews. Even if he or she considers something to be a part of G-d, a Jew is not permitted to use it as a mediator. The Torah teaches that each person is capable of connecting with G-d directly.

CONCLUSIONS

One thing upon which the entire Jewish community and several Christian denominations agree is that "Hebrew Christian" movements are not a part of Judaism. To be a "Jew for Jesus" is as absurd as being a "Christian for Buddha" and as ridiculous as "kosher pork"; it is an obvious contradiction. To paraphrase Elijah, if you are



"How-to" manuals for the conversion of Jews have proliferated in recent years.

a follower of Jesus, call yourself a Christian. If you are a Jew, practise Judaism. Don't deceive yourself; you can't be both.

In reality, Judaism is a most beautiful and spiritually fulfilling path to serving G-d with all your heart, soul and might.

The Book of Proverbs 3:17-18 describes the Torah in these words, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and its paths are peace. It is a tree of life to those who lay hold of it." The best defense against the growing onslaught of missionary propaganda is a deep commitment to Judaism and a thorough understanding of the missionary arguments and the relevant Jewish responses.

* Missionaries are wrong when they argue that the use in Deuteronomy 6:4 of the Hebrew word for One (Echad- אחד), rather than the word unique (Yachid- יחיד), teaches that G-d is a "composite unity" instead of an "absolute unity." They claim that the Trinity is a composite unity just like a physical object that includes many different individual aspects (eg: one pen, composed of ink, plastic and metal). This reasoning is incorrect, since physical objects that exist within the context of time and space cannot be used to describe G-d who transcends these dimensions. Prior to Creation, G-d was alone and concepts of time, space and the plurality of numbers did not exist. The term unique (Yachid- יחיד), correctly describes G-d's existence prior to Creation since it indicates the absence of any plurality, or of rapport with any created object.

** Missionaries incorrectly claim that Genesis chapter 18 indicates that when three men appeared to Abraham, one of them was G-d in bodily form. A careful reading of this chapter, along with chapter 19, clearly indicates that these "men" were really angels. The Bible has many stories of angels taking on human form, and often refers to them with the name of G-d to indicate that they are His exalted messengers. This is similar to the common usage of one of G-d's names as part of the name of a holy individual or place. For example, in Hebrew, Daniel means "G-d is my Judge," Hezekiah means "strength of G-d," and in Jeremiah 33:16, Jerusalem is called "the Lord is my Righteousness."

COMMUNICATIONS CARD

1. USE THE RIGHT TERMINOLOGY

DO SAY (I Cor. 9:20)

(a) MESSIAH YESHUA
(b) BECOME A "COMPLETED JEW"
(c) A BIBLE BELIEVER
(d) COME TO A MEETING OF BIBLE BELIEVERS
(e) 2ND PART OF BIBLE or NEW COVENANT
(f) TREE

DON'T SAY

CHRIST JESUS
CONVERT
CHRISTIAN
COME TO CHURCH
NEW TESTAMENT
CROSS

EXPLANATION:

(a) The term "CHRIST" does NOT have a Jewish connotation to the average Jewish person.
 (b) "Convert" means to TAKE AWAY Judaism and to become a "goy," a Gentile. "Completed Jew" means to BUILD UPON OR ADD TO his Jewish heritage by gaining the atonement, gaining the Messiah and gaining a personal relationship to God.
 (c) ALL non-Jews are considered CHRISTIANS, even Hitler.
 (d) The term "Church" is too Gentile.
 (e) The New Testament is considered a NON-JEWISH book. Don't emphasize it; USE IT.
 (f) The "CROSS" has been a symbol of Jewish persecution.

Communications Card used to teach Christians the "do's and don'ts" in converting Jews and how to overcome Jewish resistance to the missionary message.

THE MESSIAH ACCORDING TO JUDAISM

One of the basic premises upon which Christianity rests is that Jesus was the Messiah predicted in the Jewish Bible. Judaism has always rejected this belief. Since the goal of “Hebrew Christian” missionaries is to convince Jews that Jesus did, in fact, fulfill the requirements of the promised Messiah, it is necessary to examine the Jewish understanding of the Messiah to understand why such claims are simply not true.

THE HEBREW ROOTS OF THE WORD “MESSIAH”

The Hebrew word for “Messiah” is “Moshiach – משיח.” The literal and proper translation of this word is “anointed” which refers to a ritual of anointing and consecrating someone or something with oil. (I Samuel 10:1-2) It is used throughout the Jewish Bible in reference to a wide variety of individuals and objects; for example, a Jewish king (I Kings 1:39), Jewish priests (Leviticus 4:3), prophets (Isaiah 61:1), the Jewish Temple and its utensils (Exodus 40:9-11), unleavened bread (Numbers 6:15), and a non-Jewish king (Cyrus king of Persia, Isaiah 45:1).

THE CRITERIA TO BE FULFILLED BY THE JEWISH MESSIAH

In an accurate translation of the Jewish Scriptures, the word “Moshiach” is never translated as “Messiah” but as “anointed.”* Nevertheless, Judaism has always maintained a fundamental belief in a Messianic figure. Since the concept of a Messiah is one that was given by G-d to the Jews, Jewish tradition is best qualified to describe and recognize the expected Messiah. This tradition has its foundation in numerous biblical references, many of which are cited below. Judaism understands the Messiah to be a human being (with no connotation of deity or divinity) who will bring about certain changes in the world and who must fulfill certain specific criteria before being acknowledged as the Messiah.

These specific criteria are as follows:

- 1) He must be **Jewish**. (Deuteronomy 17:15, Numbers 24:17)
- 2) He must be a member of the **tribe of Judah** (Genesis 49:10) and a direct male

descendent of **both King David** (I Chronicles 17:11, Psalm 89:29-38, Jeremiah 33:17, II Samuel 7:12-16) **and King Solomon**. (I Chronicles 22:10, II Chronicles 7:18)

- 3) He must **gather the Jewish people** from exile and return them to Israel. (Isaiah 27:12-13, Isaiah 11:12)
- 4) He must **rebuild the Jewish Temple** in Jerusalem. (Micah 4:1)
- 5) He must bring **world peace**. (Isaiah 2:4, Isaiah 11:6, Micah 4:3)
- 6) He must influence **the entire world to acknowledge and serve one G-d**. (Isaiah 11:9, Isaiah 40:5, Zephaniah 3:9)

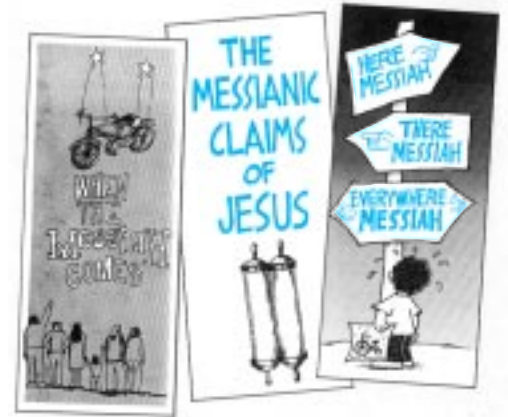
All of these criteria for the Messiah are best stated in the book of Ezekiel, Chapter 37: 24-28:

“And My servant David will be a king over them, and they will all have one shepherd, and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them, and they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant...and I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forever and My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their G-d and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

If an individual fails to fulfill even *one* of these conditions, he cannot be the Messiah.

WHY JESUS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE JEWISH MESSIAH

A careful analysis of these criteria shows us that although Jesus was Jewish, he did not fulfill any of the other criteria. An examination of the contradictory accounts of Jesus’ genealogy demonstrates a number of difficulties with the fulfillment of the second criterion. Specifically, the New Testament claims that *Jesus did not have a physical father*. The Jewish Scriptures, however, clearly state that a person’s genealogy and tribal membership is transmitted exclusively through *one’s physical father* (Numbers 1:18, Jeremiah 33:17). Therefore, Jesus cannot possibly be a descendent of the tribe of Judah or of King David and King Solomon.



Several of the many pamphlets used by Jews for Jesus.

There are even further problems with any attempts to use the Jewish Scriptures to prove Jesus’ genealogy through Joseph, the husband of Mary (Jesus’ mother). For the New Testament claims that Joseph was a descendent of King Jeconiah who, in the Hebrew Bible, was cursed to never have a descendent “*sitting on the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah*”. (Jeremiah 22:30) Joseph’s genealogy, even if it were transmittable to Jesus, would only serve to further disqualify Jesus as the Messiah.

Finally, there is the problem of the contradictory accounts of Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew, Chapter 1 and Luke, Chapter 3. The common Christian explanation of this contradiction claims that Luke’s genealogy is that of Jesus’ mother, Mary. However, this is unfounded, even according to the Greek original. In addition, it has already been established that genealogy is transferred solely through the father, making this attempted explanation completely irrelevant. Even if one *could* trace one’s genealogy through one’s mother, there would be the additional problem that Luke 3:31 lists Mary as a descendent of David through *Nathan*, Solomon’s brother, and not through Solomon himself as required according to the prophesy in I Chronicles 22:10 of the Jewish Bible.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth criteria have obviously not been fulfilled—neither during Jesus’ time nor since. Any Christian claims that these final criteria will be fulfilled in a “Second Coming” are irrelevant because the concept of the Messiah coming twice has no scriptural basis.

* Some form of the Hebrew word “Moshiach – משיח” is used over 150 times in the Jewish Bible. Christians consistently translate this word as anointed, except in the ninth chapter of Daniel. In this chapter, missionaries deviate from this and other correct translations in an attempt to prove that the Messiah came before the destruction of the Second Temple. Rather than speaking about “the Messiah” when read in context and with a correct translation, this chapter clearly speaks about two different “anointed” subjects hundreds of years apart: a) The first is the anointed King Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) who granted permission to the Jews to return and build the Second Temple 52 years “7 weeks of years” after the destruction of the First Temple; b) The second is the anointed priesthood (Leviticus 4:3) that was terminated 434 years “62 weeks of years” later.

REFUTING CHRISTIAN "PROOF TEXTS"

While traveling through a forest, a person noticed a circle marked on a tree with an arrow shot into the centre. A few yards away he noticed more targets, each with arrows in the centre. Later, he met the archer and he asked him, "How did you become such an expert that you always get your arrows into the centre of the bull's-eye?" "It's not difficult," responded the archer, "First I shoot the arrow and then I draw the circle."

When examining Christian "proof texts" that claim to point to Jesus as the promised Messiah, we should always ask: "Has an arrow been shot into a circle or has a circle been drawn around an arrow?" In other words, has the passage been mistranslated, misquoted, taken out of context or fabricated?

Here are examples of several ways that missionaries "draw a circle around the arrow" to prove their point.

EXAMPLE 1: THE VERSE HAS BEEN FABRICATED AND DOES NOT EXIST IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

The easiest prophecy to fulfill is one you have invented. The New Testament certainly bears witness to this principle, fabricating a number of "prophecies" out of thin air and attributing them to our Hebrew Scriptures.

The New Testament book of Matthew claims that Jesus was the Messiah since he lived in the city of Nazareth. The New Testament uses the following "proof text" to make its point, "He [Jesus] came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled. He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matthew 2:23) Since a Nazarene is a resident of Nazareth and this city did not exist during the time period of the Jewish Bible, it is impossible to find this quotation in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was fabricated out of thin air.

EXAMPLE 2: THE VERSE IS MISTRANSLATED

An effective missionary will work with crude English retranlations of earlier Greek mistranlations, and will avoid looking at the original Hebrew.

In Romans 11:26, the Christian Bible quotes Isaiah 59:20 as saying, "The deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob," thus attempting to establish scriptural support for the Christian belief that the Messiah will take away our sins. However, a careful examination of the Hebrew

original reveals a powerful dilemma. Isaiah 59:20 actually says the opposite, "A redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, declares the Lord." The Messiah's role is not to take away our sins; rather, when we turn away from our sins, the Messiah will then come! It is also noteworthy that many New Testaments translate this verse correctly in Isaiah and incorrectly in Romans.

EXAMPLE 3: THE PASSAGE IS MISTRANSLATED AND READ OUT OF CONTEXT

In an attempt to prove the concept of the "virgin birth," the book of Matthew 1:22-23 states, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Behold a virgin shall be with child and will bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel,' which translated means G-d with us". Missionaries claim that this is the fulfillment of a prophecy recorded in Isaiah 7:14 that actually reads, "Behold, the young woman is with child and will bear a son and she will call his name Emmanuel."

There are numerous inaccuracies in the Christian translation. For example:

- 1) The Hebrew word, "almah -עלמה," means a young woman, not a virgin, a fact recognized by biblical scholars.
- 2) The verse says "ha'almah -העלמה," "the young woman," not a young woman, specifying a particular woman that was known to Isaiah during his lifetime.
- 3) The verse says "she will call his name Emmanuel," not "they shall call."

Even apart from these inaccuracies, if we read all of Isaiah Chapter 7 from which this verse is taken, it is obvious that Christians have taken this verse out of context.

This chapter speaks of a prophecy made to the Jewish King Ahaz to allay his fears of two invading kings (those of Damascus and of Samaria) who were preparing to invade Jerusalem about 600 years before Jesus' birth. Isaiah's point is that these events will take place in the very near future (and not 600 years later as Christianity claims). Verse 16 makes this abundantly clear, "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

In fact, in the next chapter, this prophecy is fulfilled with the birth of a son to Isaiah. As it says in Isaiah 8:4, "For before the child shall know to cry, 'my father and my mother,' the

riches of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." This verse rules out any connection to Jesus who would not be born for 600 years.

EXAMPLE 4: VIEWED IN CONTEXT, THE VERSE COULD NOT REFER TO JESUS

In Hebrews 1:5, the New Testament quotes a verse from II Samuel 7:14, "I will be a Father to him, and he shall be a son to Me." This is said to be a prophetic reference to Jesus as the son of G-d. However, if we look at this verse from II Samuel in its entirety, the verse doesn't end with the phrase quoted in the New Testament, but continues, "When he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men." This cannot possibly fit the Christian Bible's view of a "sinless" Jesus. In addition, the verse is speaking specifically about King Solomon as is obvious from I Chronicles 22:9-10, "His name shall be Solomon . . . he shall build a house for My name and I will be a Father to him and he will be a son to Me."

The Bible frequently refers to individuals as G-d's "son." In fact, G-d refers to the entire nation of Israel in the following manner, "Israel is My son, My firstborn." (Exodus 4:22)

EXAMPLE 5: THE PASSAGE IS NOT A PROOF

Missionaries incorrectly claim that Jesus fulfilled a prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. They attempt to use Micah 5:1 as their "proof text":

"But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the thousands of Judah, out of you will come to Me one who will be ruler in Israel, whose goings out are from ancient time, from days of old."

This verse is not a prophecy that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. The passage simply states it has been preordained that the Messiah would be able to trace his roots back to Bethlehem. This is consistent with the Biblical statement that the Messiah will be a descendent of King David who was from Bethlehem, as seen in I Samuel 16:18.

There is another problem with this missionary "proof text". A major distinction must be made between a scripture that serves as a proof that someone is the Messiah and a scripture that simply states a requirement of the Messiah. A proof must be something so exclusive that only one individual can fulfill it. For example, one criterion of the Messiah is that he must be Jewish. If an individual is Jewish, he has fulfilled this particular requirement; however, in and of itself, this is obviously not a proof that the individual is the Messiah since millions of individuals are Jewish and they all meet this criterion. Therefore, the claim that Jesus was born in Bethlehem would not prove a thing, since thousands of children were born there.

SOLUTIONS TO THE MISSIONARY PROBLEM

The following questions and corresponding answers provide concrete recommendations to prevent missionaries from converting Jews and to counter missionary attempts which may have met with some success.

QUESTION: Is there anything that Jews can do to “immunize” themselves and their families against evangelists and cult recruiters?

ANSWER: As with so many facets of life, prevention begins at home. A Jewish home should *feel* Jewish. Parents can set the tone through their own positive example – by learning about Judaism and by observing and understanding its customs and traditions in ways with which they themselves are comfortable. A formal Jewish education is necessary. Parents who cannot adequately answer the questions every child asks about religion may unintentionally convey to their youngsters the impression that such knowledge isn't particularly important.

It is dangerous to give a child the impression that Judaism is a religion of convenience that allows one to pick and choose one's observances. This may leave the child with an impression that there are no consequences for his or her religious actions and that Judaism is both hypocritical and void of spiritual content.

Parents must maintain an open channel of communication with their children, whether their sons or daughters are in elementary school, high school or college, living on their own or married. Ideally, children should be able to discuss any issue with their parents. Establishing such a venue for communication during children's formative years will go a long way toward guaranteeing a lifetime of non-judgmental dialogue with which to address the difficult situations they may confront.

It is equally critical that parents both verbalize and demonstrate their love for their children. I've counselled too many Jews who have remarked, “My folks never cared about me *anyway*; why are they bothering me now?”

QUESTION: How can a parent know whether his son or daughter is at risk or under a missionary's influence?

ANSWER: Parents might discover pamphlets, New Testament tracts, jewelry representing a particular group or the Bible of a different faith. Sometimes the son or daughter will give verbal clues, such as “*We need to be saved*” or “*I'm getting salvation so I won't go to hell.*” Or the child may open a discussion by saying, “*Did you know that the 'New Testament' (or another book) says such and such?*”

Just as parental intuition can detect the onset of a physical illness before medical symptoms appear, it can frequently detect a spiritual malady, as well.

At times, the clue will be deeply buried between the lines, “*Why doesn't Judaism teach about life after death or about heaven and hell?*” Here, parents must not only hear the embedded message, they must also be capable of giving an effective answer.



Jews for Judaism's Julius Ciss (M) and Rabbi Michael Skobac (R) confront and reason with missionaries.

When incapable or unsure of how to deal effectively with a conflict over religion, parents may wish to discuss the problem with a rabbi. This is probably the best course to pursue when confronted by a child with questions, such as “*How do we know that Judaism is the 'true' religion?*” However, keep in mind that not all rabbis are experienced in dealing with the particular issues related to a cult or missionary problem. It is therefore advisable to turn to experts in this field, such as the specially trained staff of **Jews for Judaism** who travel throughout the world providing successful counselling services.

QUESTION: What happens if all these preventive measures are too late, and the son or daughter joins a cult or church?

ANSWER: The important thing is not to panic, explode, accuse, say “*Kaddish*” or otherwise provoke the person into avoidance of you or the issue. A calm demeanour, coupled with the open channels of communication mentioned earlier, will often facilitate the start of dialogue. Dialogue is the first step we take in attempting to persuade a person to reconsider his or her new religion or cult.

If parents or other significant family members *actively* listen, the “convert” may be more

than willing to discuss his or her motivation and reasoning. Such a discussion with **Jews for Judaism's** specially trained counsellors and rabbis may allow a point-by-point discussion of the new faith's merits, which will demonstrate how and why Judaism presents a better alternative for Jews.

QUESTION: What is the proper approach for the family?

ANSWER: Family members should do whatever they can to convince the individual to consider all sides of the issue and seek external support services. Just as people consider all options when choosing a career, a spouse or where to live, they should at least discuss the options provided by Judaism as opposed to the cult or any other religion he or she may have adopted. The individual will have to “open up” before family members or professionals can begin to achieve any success.

QUESTION: Does that mean that the family has to tolerate the trappings and ceremonies of another faith in their home?

ANSWER: No. If, in order to avoid confrontation, the family tolerates the person's decision to change religion, that person should also respect the family's wishes. The alien religion should be practised in the appropriate place, whether a church, ashram or the person's separate apartment. This arrangement also facilitates a more open atmosphere, more conducive to a willingness on the part of the individual and his or her family to meet with a trained professional.

It is important to respect each person's right to an honest mistake. Our goal is to carefully help him or her realize that the decision to adopt another faith is, both intellectually and emotionally, an honest mistake. We accomplish that goal, in part, by showing these people what Judaism is all about, rather than by merely disproving or rejecting their new philosophy.

QUESTION: What if none of this works? Is that person lost to Judaism forever?

ANSWER: Absolutely not. Those of us in the field can tell you hundreds of stories about people who spent years in Christianity or a cult, only to return to Judaism. That's why it's important to maintain an open channel of communication and set a good religious example. Family will almost always remain family; differences in belief and faith do not change a *lifelong* biological and emotional relationship. One should never stop hoping that the individual will return.

