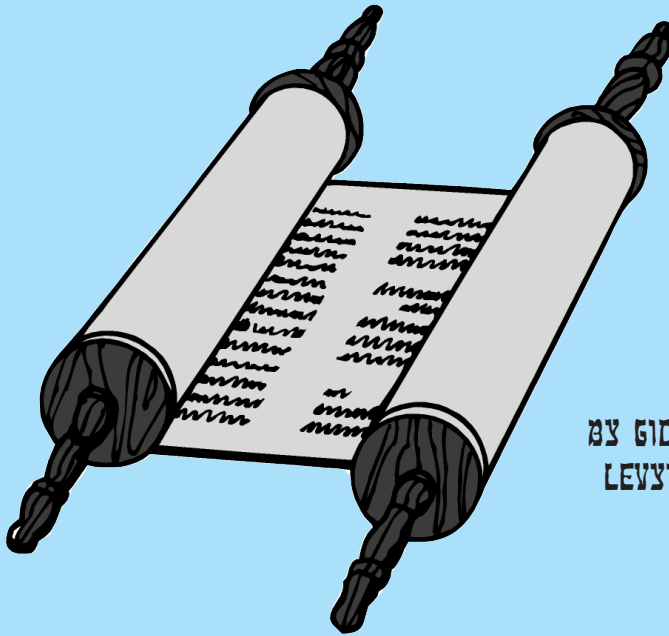


RESPONSE TO ANTI-MISSIONARIES



BY GIDEON
LEVYMAN

BY A JEWISH BELIEVER
IN THE LORD JESUS
— THE MESSIAH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: “What Do You Think About the Messiah?”	1
Claim #1: Is It True That Jews Lose Their Jewish Identity Once They Believe That Jesus Is The Messiah?.	2
Claim #2: Is It True That The Jewish Bible Has No Prophetic References to Jesus?	6
Claim #3: Is it True That The Spiritual Salvation And A Personal Relationship With God Come Through Repentance, Prayer, Fasting and Doing What is Right? . . .	15
Claim #4: Is It True That Miracles Do Not Prove The Validity of Christianity?.	23
Claim #5: Is It True That The Christian Belief In The Tri-unity of God Is Incompatible With Judaism? . . .	26
Conclusions	37
The Messiah According to Judaism	38
Why Jesus Is The Jewish Messiah	40
About Christian “Proof Texts”	45
Has Isaiah 7:14 Been Mistranslated?	48
Does This Verse Refer to Jesus?	51
Appeal	54
About The Author	55

Scriptures from *The New King James Version*, © 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. By permission.

Copyright©2001 Gideon Levytam. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this work in whole or in part without written permission of the author is prohibited.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE MESSIAH?"

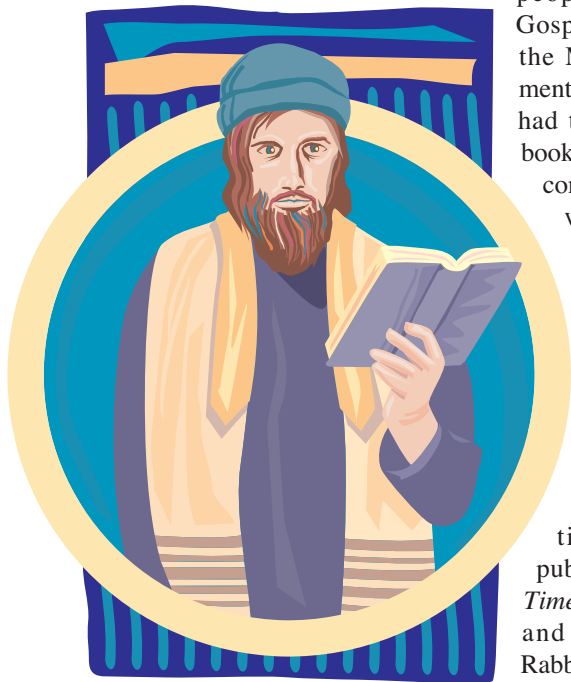
In the year 2000 a booklet, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*, 3rd edition, by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz was published in large quantities and circulated in the Jewish community in the city of Toronto by "Jews for Judaism." The purpose of this booklet was to warn the Jewish community against Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah, who are actively sharing with their

people the message of the Gospel about the Lord Jesus the Messiah and His atonement for our sins. I personally had the desire to review this booklet and respond to it in a constructive way, consistent with the Biblical teaching.

I have to say that the booklet in discussion is not **the** response of the entire Jewish community, but is just a voice among many and differs greatly from a more moderate "A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" published in *The New York Times* on September 10, 2000, and signed by 129 Jewish Rabbis.

As I put these words on paper, my desire and burden is to return to the principles taught in the Hebrew Scriptures and not to be preoccupied with the failures of either Gentiles or Jews over the years, whether they were believers in Jesus the Messiah or not.

As a Hebrew believer in Yeshua the Messiah, I must confess that I have experienced both love and care for my people from many Christians as well as attitudes which are insensitive to the Jewish mindset. In spite of many troubles throughout history inflicted on Jews



by people who claimed to be Christian, we should not be diverted from the issue at stake, which is the fact of the Messiahship of Yeshua and his work of salvation.

My intention in writing this booklet is not to attack my brethren according to the flesh, the Jewish people, whom I love. On the contrary, my wish and prayer to God is that they might find true salvation in the person of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who once asked the spiritual leaders of Israel: **“What do you think about the Christ (Messiah)?”** (Matthew 22:42). This question is the main purpose and theme of this reply to the authors of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*. As you read this booklet, I would like to ask you personally what **you** think of the Messiah. Do you know Him? My wish for you is that, as you read this booklet in connection with the Word of God, you might come to the appropriate conclusion.

CLAIM #1: IS IT TRUE THAT JEWS LOSE THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY ONCE THEY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH?

One of the statements the Anti-missionaries make in their booklet *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook* written by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz of “Jews for Judaism” is that a Jewish person who has chosen to believe in the Lord Jesus (Yeshua the Messiah) stops being Jewish. Is this true?

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

When dealing with this question, a linguistic problem should be addressed. Since the Jewish people are among the very few who, in the English language, represent not only an ethnic group but also a religion, certain distinctions need to be made.* The question is whether being a Jew means an ethnic affiliation or a religious one. As is probably obvious to our readers, it can be both. Rabbi Kravitz says that one’s beliefs

*Unlike English, Russian for example, makes a distinction between an ethnic Jew (*evrey*, i.e. “a Hebrew”) and a religious Jew, who is not necessarily an ethnic one (*iudei*).

“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” (p. 9).

According to him,

“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. (Obviously, a non-practicing Jew is different from a Jew who has chosen to follow a foreign path.)” (p. 9).

Let us look at the question of Jewish birthright and ethnic identity of Jewish people.

1. A Jew is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is a Hebrew through Abraham (Gen. 14:13). He is an Israeli through his connection to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen.32:27-28). He is a Jew, being a descendant of Judah and the rest of the children of Jacob (Gen. 46:8-28).

2. Every person who is born as a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a Jew and nothing can ever change this fact, even if he/she chooses not to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Therefore it is correct to say that a Jew always remains an ethnic Jew. In our view it is impossible to deny a person's ethnic identity, no matter what the argument is based on. The statement made by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz that a secular Jew remains a Jew, whereas a believer in Jesus the Messiah stops being a Jew, is not logical. If we accept his view that faith in the God of Israel constitutes one's Jewishness, it is inconsistent to declare that an atheist or someone who believes in a different god is still a Jew, and deny the same right to a believer in Yeshua. May we remind the reader and Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz that the passage in 1 Kings 18:21 deals with people who chose not to follow the God of Israel and worshipped a pagan deity instead. In spite of their decision, they still remained Jews (i.e. descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

Following Yeshua the Messiah is believing in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, since He is the Messiah, promised by the God of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz says that

“in their attempt to convert Jews, missionaries claim that one can remain Jewish while practicing 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 (*Yeshua*, as they call him) is a completed Jew, implying of course, that all other Jews are incomplete” (p. 8).

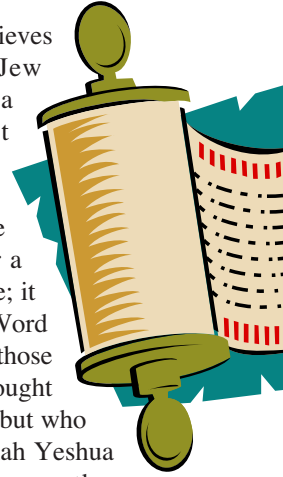
In my opinion, the most honest way for a Jew who believes in Jesus (*Yeshua*) to express him or herself is as a Jew believing in the Messiah. The word “Christian” means a follower of Christ and the word “Christ” is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, i.e. “Messiah.” Therefore, when a Jew acknowledges the promised Messiah of Israel, what other name should he call himself, but a Messianic Jew, a Hebrew Christian or a Jew for Jesus? It is exactly the opposite of being deceptive; it is being honest and frank in light of the teaching of the Word of God. I must say, that the deception is on the side of those who claim to be teachers of the nation of Israel, and who ought to lead the people back to God’s Word and His Promises, but who deny the clear teaching of the Bible concerning the Messiah *Yeshua* and the work that He accomplished for us. By doing so, they contradict the promises given to our forefathers in the Scriptures.

The word “Jew” (or *Yehudi* in Hebrew) means a person who gives thanks or praise (Gen. 29:35). While everyone who was born a descendant of Abraham is a Jew outwardly, a Jew believing in the Promises of God and acknowledging the truth of His Word is also a Jew inwardly, one who thanks and praises the Lord. I believe that a Jew remains a Jew no matter what and that when a Jew or Gentile come to know *Yeshua* as the Savior of this world and the Promised Messiah, they stand together before God as one, both forgiven by and through the Messiah.

Rabbi Kravitz says:

“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 ...” (p. 9).

It is true that there are differences of opinion with respect to some



Jewish symbols and customs. Nevertheless, it is a privilege for us to use them, since they were given to Israel by God and described in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah and who love the people of Israel want to share with our Jewish people what God declared in His Word. So the symbols are used to help them see the truth of the Messiahship of Yeshua on their own terms.

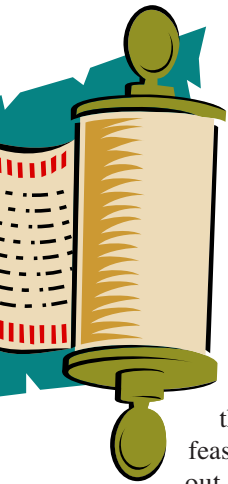
For example, the lamp stand (the *Menorah*), which is one of the articles God told Moses to build in the Tabernacle, is also a symbol of the 7-fold Spirit of the Lord, that would rest upon the coming Messiah. According to Isaiah 11:1-2 this promised Redeemer would come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and be the branch growing out of Jesse's roots. This person would have the Spirit of the Lord upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11 has a direct reference to the promised Messiah, who can only be the Lord Yeshua.

In light of this and other passages, He would be the One who would rule in righteousness. The customs and holidays that God gave to the people of Israel in the Bible all point to the Messiah of Israel. For example, one of the most important feasts given to Israel is Passover (Pesach). When our people came out of Egypt, delivered in a miraculous way, God told them in Exodus 12:1-14 to take a lamb on the 10th day of the month of Nissan, keep it for 4 days and kill it on the 14th day of the month. They were to take the blood of the lamb and to strike it on the two upper doorposts of their houses. God said to Israel:

“Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).

This feast shows the importance of redemption by blood. The Lamb had to be killed and its blood had to be shed for our people to be delivered. Any household in Egypt that had no blood on its doorposts was punished by God. Blood has always represented life:

“For the life of the flesh *is* in the **blood**, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make **atonement** for your souls; for it *is* the **blood** that makes **atonement** for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).



In the New Covenant, Yohanan, the son of Zechariah, said when he saw Yeshua the Messiah:

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, 36).

Every time the Jewish people celebrate the feast of *Pesach* (Passover), it immediately ought to remind them of a lamb’s blood, shed to redeem our people of old in Egypt, but also to direct us to the Messiah Himself, who, according to the Prophet Isaiah 53:7 became “*the Lamb, which was brought to the slaughter*” for the sins of the nation of Israel and the rest of the world (read the whole chapter 53 of Isaiah).

There are many other symbols and customs we can speak about, and there are various views of what should and should not be used. The fact is, however, that these symbols are used not to deceive our people, but simply to unfold the truth concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Many people came to acknowledge that Jesus (Yeshua) is truly the Messiah not because of the symbols, but because their hearts were open to see from the Word of God that they as Jewish people, like all others, have sinned before God like all others and stood in need of forgiveness. They realized that Yeshua IS the promised Messiah, who loved them and came to this world to lay down His life and shed His blood to make an atonement for their souls. I hope and pray that it is not the symbols and customs that might draw you to come to Yeshua, but His Person, Beauty and the work He has accomplished out of love for Israel and the rest of the world.

We must also bear in mind that one day each person must stand before our God. The question that we will have to answer is not whether we are Jewish or not, but what we have done with the offer of salvation which God provided through the Messiah. Therefore I, a Jew who believes in the Messiah, am much more concerned about the eternal destiny of my soul than the temporary opinion of men, who say that I am no longer a Jew.

CLAIM #2: IS IT TRUE THAT THE JEWISH BIBLE HAS NO PROPHETIC REFERENCES TO JESUS?