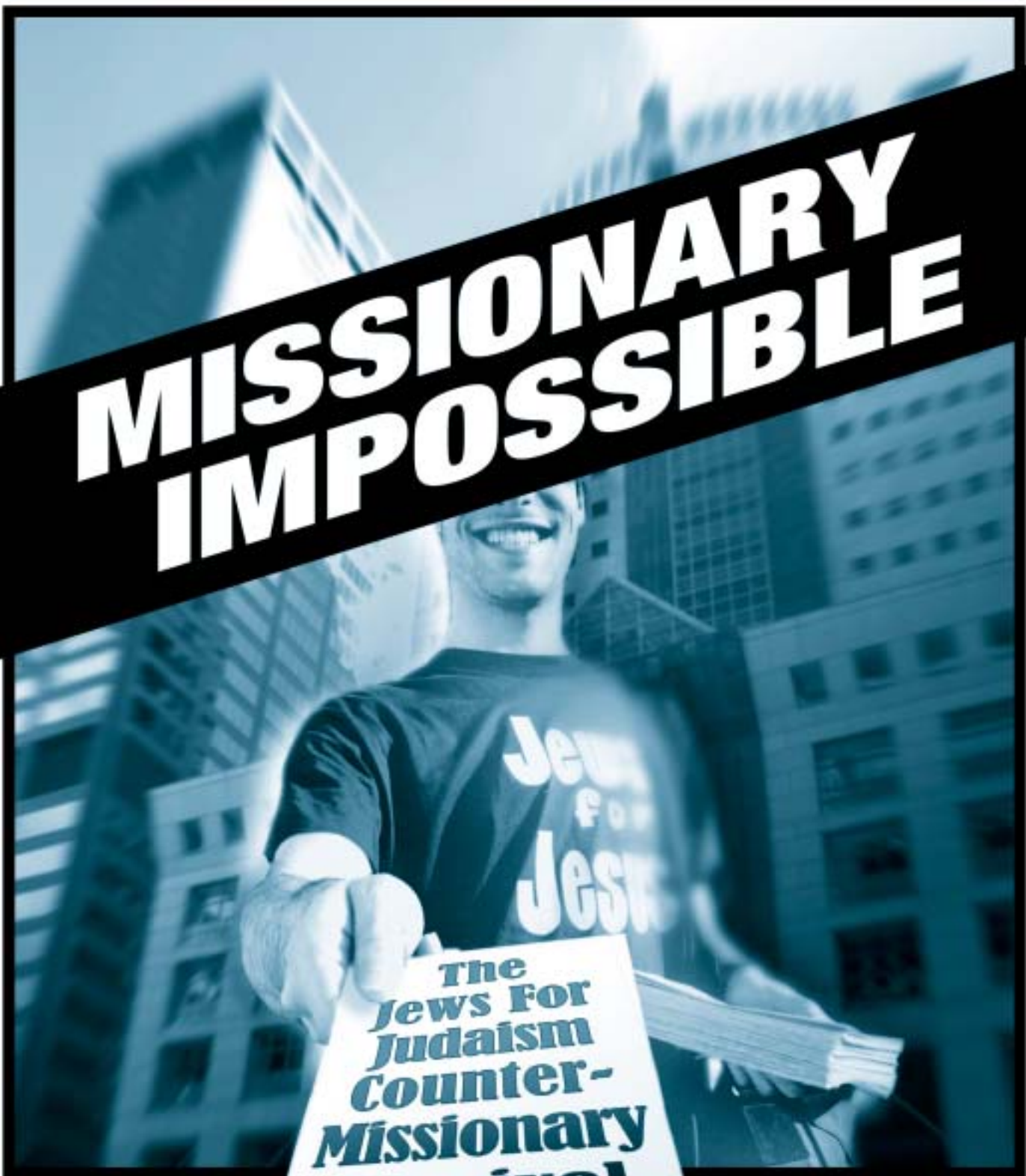


MISSIONARY IMPOSSIBLE



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Canadian Jewish Congress
Ontario Region

**The
Jews For
Judaism
Counter-
Missionary
Survival
Guide**

BY RABBI MICHAEL SKOBAC

Most likely you've had at least one encounter with someone who has tried to influence you to embrace the Christian faith. It may have been a Christian friend, neighbour or business associate. Or, maybe someone approached you from a missionary group like Jews for Jesus. You may have received an unsolicited email advancing missionary arguments, or heard an invitation to "get saved" from a television evangelist while channel surfing. JEWS FOR JUDAISM, the world's leading counter-missionary organization, has prepared this booklet to help you understand the tactics and respond to the claims of missionaries who challenge your faith.

WHO'S BEHIND JEWS FOR JESUS?

Most Christian denominations, including Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and most mainline Protestant groups, such as the United Church, no longer have programs to convert Jews. On the other hand, Evangelical Protestants, who constitute about 10% of the Canadian population, devote a tremendous amount of money and energy to promote their faith among Jews. These Evangelicals fund over 1,000 different ministries worldwide, with over 40 in southern Ontario, that specifically target the Jewish community for conversion. Jews for Jesus is the largest and best-known of these groups.

- *Why do Evangelical Christians seek to convert us?*

Evangelicals assert that the only way to have a relationship with G-d is by embracing Jesus. They feel driven to "save" all non-Christians who they believe will be doomed to an eternity in hell unless they convert.



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

Over 250,000
Jews have
been converted to
Christianity over
the past 30 years.

- *But isn't it true that Evangelical Christians are very supportive of Israel?*

Yes. Many Evangelicals are lending important political and financial support to the State of Israel. However, most of them also engage in, or support, efforts to convert Jews.

- *Are these missionary groups really a serious threat?*

Unfortunately, these groups have become increasingly successful. Over the past 30 years, more than 250,000 Jews have been converted and the numbers continue to grow.

- *Why are these missionaries so successful?*

There are two significant factors. The first is the increasing vulnerability of Jews due to a lack of solid Jewish education and meaningful Jewish spiritual experiences. The second is the missionaries' development of a cunning marketing strategy designed to overcome resistance to conversion and feelings of guilt by promoting the deceptive message, "It's Jewish to believe in Jesus". Some of their tactics include mimicking Jewish holidays and rituals. For example, missionaries may wear skullcaps and prayer shawls, light Shabbat candles and celebrate Chanukah. They distort the meanings of these practices, claiming, for example, that the three matzos at the Passover Seder symbolize the Christian Trinity. In addition, they frequently use misleading euphemisms, such as 'rabbi' in place of pastor, 'become a completed Jew' instead of 'convert to Christianity', 'mikvah service' for baptism and 'synagogue' instead of church.

FAST FACTS ON JEWS FOR JESUS

- *Jews for Jesus and similar groups claim to be Jews who have come to believe in Jesus.*

Actually, many members of groups like Jews for Jesus and even their leadership are gentiles. They are not and have never been Jews.

- *They claim that it is “Jewish” to believe in Jesus and that Jews can retain their Jewish identity even after becoming Christians.*

Being Jewish is not just a matter of lineage, but includes being part of a faith community. Therefore, people who were not born Jews can become Jews by embracing the spiritual path of Judaism. Jews who convert to another religion voluntarily cut themselves off from the Jewish faith community.

That Jesus and his followers were Jews does not automatically confer Jewish legitimacy to their movement. The worshippers of the Golden Calf in the desert were also Jews – but being Jews didn’t make them right. There was nothing “Jewish” about their idol worship.

As soon as the followers of Jesus changed the Jewish concept of Messiah from a human redeemer who leads the world to a utopian age into a divine saviour who dies to atone for sin, they began transforming into a different religion. This critical change led to the development of a comprehensive theology that dramatically veered from its Jewish roots, and was eventually formalized with the canonization of a set of scriptures vastly different from Judaism’s Bible.

Regardless of their superficial attempts to appear Jewish, “Jews for Jesus” is an oxymoron and a theological contradiction. Putting on skullcaps or sprinkling their conversations with Hebrew or Yiddish expressions doesn’t change the fact that they are following a religion that is not Jewish! A Jew who converts to Christianity is like a vegetarian who begins to eat meat. Even if he continues to eat vegetables, his diet can no longer be considered vegetarian.

Today’s missionaries promote the deceptive message that “It’s Jewish to believe in Jesus.”



A Jews for Jesus promotion that appeared on large public billboards and as full-page newspaper ads depicts their missionaries as Chassidic Jews at the Kotel.

- *Since they clearly identify themselves as “Jews for Jesus”, they deny being deceptive.*

This claim itself is not true, as many of their missionaries are not Jews. In addition, they are often not totally up-front about their beliefs. While focusing on the claim that Jesus was the Messiah, their actual belief is that Jesus was god incarnate, the second person of the Christian Trinity. Although Jews for Jesus rejects the validity of rabbinic teachings, they use many practices instituted by these same rabbis in their evangelistic presentations. Their primary deception is promoting Christianity as Jewish, and because of these tactics, many Christian groups condemn them. The Long Island Council of Churches accused Jews for Jesus of “engaging in subterfuge and dishonesty” and of “mixing religious symbols in ways that distort their essential meaning.”

WHAT ARE THE JEWISH ANSWERS TO THEIR CHALLENGES?

QUESTION: Why don't you believe in Jesus?

ANSWER: Although Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, he died without fulfilling the Biblical criteria that define the Messiah. The essential concept of the Messiah is of a wise and righteous king who will reign over a restored Jewish homeland and bring about a utopian world of universal peace and universal knowledge of G-d. (Isaiah 11:1-9; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Ezekiel 34:23-30, 37:24-28; Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 8:23; Psalm 86:9 and more.) In light of Jesus' failure to fulfill these and numerous other prophecies, early Christianity proposed that Jesus would return in the future and bring about a redeemed world. Aside from the fact that this claim could be made for any failed Messiah, this concept simply does not appear anywhere in the Jewish Bible.

Furthermore, the Jewish belief in G-d as absolutely one and non-corporeal (Deuteronomy 4:12,15,35; 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11, 45:5-6, 46:9) makes it impossible to accept the Christian belief that Jesus was god incarnate. The Torah warns us against worshipping a concept of G-d that our ancestors didn't know (Deuteronomy 13:3,7,14) and our ancestors had no concept of a Trinitarian Deity.

QUESTION: Did you know that the Jewish Bible contains many passages proving that Jesus was the Messiah?

ANSWER: This claim is baseless. Christians believe in Jesus as a matter of faith, but there is nothing in the Torah that can be used to prove this belief. Many Christian scholars acknowledge this fact. Some of the "prooftexts" used by missionaries are based upon mistranslations. For example, their claim that the Jewish scriptures contain a reference to the Messiah being born to a virgin has been repudiated by almost all modern Christian translations of the Bible.

Most missionary "prooftexts" are quoted out-of-context and are based upon circular reasoning.

Christian missionary Walter Riggans states in his 1995 book entitled *Yehoshua Ben David*, "Let me repeat this point, there is no self-evident blueprint in the Hebrew Bible which can be said to ambiguously point to Jesus." Some "proofs" cited by missionaries are actually based upon texts that are totally fabricated.

QUESTION: But didn't Jesus perform miracles, and don't many Christians experience miracles today?

ANSWER: The Jewish Bible never teaches that we will be able to identify the Messiah by the miracles he will do. The reason is that even false prophets may have the ability to perform miracles (Deuteronomy 13:2-5). Even the Christian scriptures acknowledge that false Messiahs can perform supernatural miracles (Matthew 24:24).

Miracles cannot prove that a particular religion is true because people of all religious faiths experience them. This is also true of subjective feelings of joy and spiritual fulfillment. No religion has a monopoly on these, either. Furthermore, Jews don't necessarily accept all of the stories in the Christian scriptures as historically true. Interestingly, even Jews for Jesus' publications maintain that many claims of the miraculous by contemporary Christians are highly questionable.

QUESTION: How will you get forgiven for your sins today without Temple sacrifices?

ANSWER: It is an error to think that animal sacrifices were the essential way of dealing with our personal failures. None of the Biblical prophets taught that animal sacrifices were indispensable in order to be forgiven for our sins. As a matter of fact, the prophets constantly berated people who mistakenly thought that sacrifices, in and of themselves, can attain forgiveness (Isaiah 1:11-20; Amos 5:22-24; Psalm 51:17-19*; Jeremiah 7:1-10; Micah 6:6-8).

Biblical "prooftexts"
used by missionaries
are based upon circular
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verses out-of-context
and mistranslation

The Bible clearly teaches that the only way of atoning for sin is through repentance – a process of transformation that includes acknowledging our wrongdoing and confessing it to G-d, feeling regret, making restitution if we harmed someone, resolving to improve our behaviour, returning to G-d and praying for forgiveness (II Chronicles 7:14; Ezekiel chapters 18 and 33; Jeremiah 36:3; Isaiah 55:6-7 and Jonah 3:10).

The Bible's sin offering was only mandated for unintentional sins (Leviticus 4) and only when the Temple was standing in Jerusalem. Someone too poor to offer an animal could bring fine flour to the Temple (Leviticus 5:11-12). The sin offering was supposed to be an outward symbol of the person's inner change; it didn't secure forgiveness by itself. Today, in the absence of the Temple, we reconnect with G-d in the wake of sin through sincere repentance (I Kings 8:46-50).

QUESTION: Did you know that you can have a personal relationship with G-d through Jesus?

ANSWER: Every person has a personal relationship with G-d because we are His creations and we all possess a Divine soul. All we need to do is turn to G-d with a sincere heart and this action awakens our intrinsic spiritual closeness with Him. The Bible teaches, "G-d is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him with sincerity" (Psalm 145:18).

The Bible never speaks of the need to approach G-d through an intermediary. The Bible's holiest people, such as Moses and King David, experienced deep intimacy with G-d directly, without believing in Jesus. Prayer, Torah study, acts of charity and kindness, and living in obedience to G-d's will are the means of developing closeness with Him.

**(In some Bibles, Psalms 51:15-17)*

UNDERSTANDING & DEALING WITH MISSIONARY TACTICS

Note: Missionary groups may not employ all of the following techniques. These are some of the tactics that you might encounter.

Famous scientist Louis Pasteur used to say, "Fortune favours the mind that is prepared." It is crucial to realize that missionaries operate as salespeople and not as educators. Knowing their techniques of influence and developing your own critical thinking skills is vital to resisting their overtures.

1. ASSUMING SUPERIORITY

Missionaries may attempt to elicit as many "I don't know" responses as possible in order to establish their superiority and credibility. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated. Bear in mind that they are not interested in a genuine exchange of ideas. Missionaries are driven by their agenda of attempting to sway you from your faith. Their "questions" are not really questions seeking an answer, but set-ups to their sales pitch. You can simply state that you would prefer to learn about Biblical concepts from someone who doesn't have a hidden agenda.

2. DECEPTION

Missionaries may claim to have traditional Jewish backgrounds with a solid Jewish education. All too often, this is an exaggeration or outright fabrication designed to establish their credibility.

The implied message is that this Jew for Jesus came to accept Christianity after knowing and overcoming all the Jewish objections. Some missionaries may even present traditional Jewish objections to their position and then demonstrate how these objections lack substance. Don't expect to hear a fair or accurate presentation of the Jewish position from the missionary.

3. LOVE BOMBING

Salespeople often flatter and charm potential customers to prime their receptivity and clinch the sale. Someone's warmth and friendliness has nothing to do with the validity of their ideas or sales pitch.

4. COVER-UP

Missionaries may focus on issues where there is little resistance and may avoid revealing beliefs that are less palatable. For example, they may stress the idea of Jesus as the Messiah while avoiding the bottom-line Christian doctrine that Jesus was actually god incarnate. Missionaries may also gloss over their conviction that good people who don't accept Jesus will be consigned to eternal damnation in hell.

5. THE NUMBERS GAME

Some missionaries may inundate you with endless lists of verses from the Bible. Of course, truth is not determined by volume. They may claim that there are over 300 Biblical “proofs” for their position. A careful examination of the passages – in context – will immediately refute their presentation. They may hide behind the numbers and say, “You may be right, but if you look at all the ‘proofs’ together, they are pretty impressive.” It’s important to remember that numerous weak pieces of evidence don’t become stronger by combining them. 300 x 0 is still 0!

6. MANIPULATIVE LOGIC

Occasionally, missionaries may try to force you into accepting a proposition with false premises. One popular example is the assertion that “Jesus was either a lunatic, a liar or the Messiah.” Missionaries assume that you won’t feel comfortable with the first two options, and you’ll accept the third. Of course, there are other possible explanations, such as Jesus sincerely believed he was the Messiah, but he turned out to be mistaken. This scenario is consistent with Jesus’ dying words related in the Christian scriptures, “My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

7. EXPLOITING AMBIGUITY

We live in a confusing and frustrating world where reality is more often gray than black and white. Sometimes, missionaries may attempt to intensify your anxieties and insecurities by focusing on issues about which you feel powerless, such as terrorism, war, rampant immorality, illness and your own mortality. Or, they may play on the guilt you feel over a personal failure. Then, they offer simplistic answers to these critical problems. The lure and comfort of certainty can sometimes interfere with our normal instinct to verify their claims.

8. SHORT-CIRCUITING THOUGHT

Some missionaries may denigrate your desire to carefully analyze and evaluate their claims by stating, “You rely too much on your head – you have to open your heart!” The Torah never tells us to base our critical decisions upon our emotions. Our Torah always warns us to think and use our

minds because our hearts can often lead us astray. Another tactic the missionaries use is to pressure you for a quick commitment, such as, “What is preventing you from accepting Jesus into your heart right now?”

9. PROVOKING US TO JEALOUSY

Most Jews who convert to Christianity never experienced Judaism as a real spiritual path – as a way of developing a personal relationship with G-d. Missionaries readily exploit this weakness by introducing potential converts to their enthusiastic worship services full of music and emotion. Bear in mind that a person’s passion does not prove the truth of their beliefs. Every religion has adherents who have profound spiritual experiences and intense worship. The great tragedy of our times is that far too many Jews are unaware of this vital potential within their own faith.

10. PRESUPPOSITION

A common technique employed by missionaries is to throw out the challenge, “Why don’t you pray to Jesus and ask him to reveal himself to you, or give you a sign?” This is a manipulative tactic to preempt thoughtful consideration and maneuver you to tacitly accept their position. And, of course, missionaries will interpret virtually anything that happens to you as a divine sign, as something “meant to be.”

It is tragic that too many Jews are unaware of the profound meaning and spirituality within their own faith.



A “Hebrew Christian” congregation in Toronto uses an authentic Torah scroll at their “Shabbat service”.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Missionaries working with organizations like Jews for Jesus are well-trained, like an aggressive sales force, to push their product. They are taught to overcome all your objections and “close the sale”. It is unlikely that you will be able to reason with them. Therefore, JEWS FOR JUDAISM strongly recommends that you avoid trying, unless you’re thoroughly schooled in the relevant biblical and theological issues. A polite but firm, “No thank you.” is the most appropriate response.
- Resist the temptation to respond angrily or with hostility because this reaction only bolsters their determination. Remember, although you may feel offended by their activities, they are not behaving in this way to offend you. For the most part, Jewish converts to Christianity are not villains, but the unfortunate victims of Jewish educational and spiritual malnutrition.
- Please report any missionary activity to JEWS FOR JUDAISM and their staff and trained volunteers will respond.
- The most effective way to counter the efforts of predatory missionaries is to make ourselves, our families and our communities less vulnerable. Missionaries can only be successful where there is an educational and spiritual vacuum. It is vital that

all Jews have a meaningful Jewish education that leads to a profound appreciation for the wisdom and beauty of Judaism. Obviously, intellectual knowledge of Judaism alone isn’t enough. We must bring the teachings and spirituality of Judaism into our hearts, our homes and our daily lives. When our lives are enriched by Jewish living, when we embrace our Judaism with passion, we become inoculated against the missionary threat and are less likely to stray to alien faiths.

- We realize that not knowing how to answer all the questions posed by missionaries seeking to convert you can be frustrating. This booklet is only a brief introduction to issues you may want to explore on a deeper level. JEWS FOR JUDAISM has an extensive array of educational materials and offers stimulating speakers and classes throughout the year. We are available to answer your questions. As well, we provide counseling to families dealing with a loved one who has embraced another faith, and we have been successful in helping these people return to their families and to Judaism.

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“Whoever saves a single Jewish soul is as if he saved an entire world.”
Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a)



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Growing numbers of missionary groups are waging increasingly aggressive campaigns to convert Jewish people to the Christian faith. This concise booklet provides a critical understanding of the tactics of groups, such as Jews for Jesus, who make the audacious claim that converting to Christianity is the “most Jewish thing you can do.”

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