

WHY JEWS DON'T SEE JESUS IN THE JEWISH BIBLE

Rabbi Michael Skobac

Many Christians have a very difficult time understanding how it is possible for Jewish people to study their Bible and fail to see it pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. Is it possible, as the Greek Testament claims (in II Corinthians 3:14-15, 4:3-4, and Romans 11:7, 25), that Satan has blinded the Jews, who now have a veil covering their eyes? Or is it possible that Christians have been seeing a mirage?

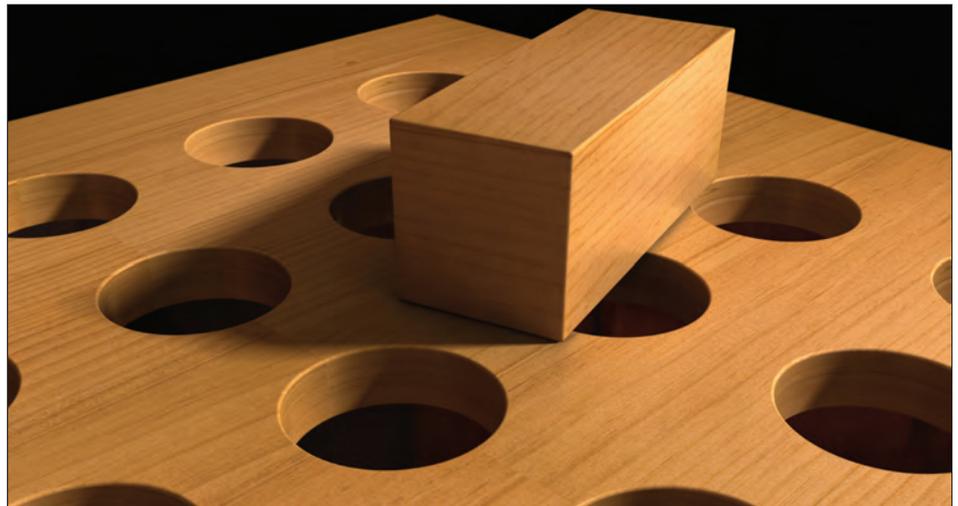
THE MESSIANIC TEMPLATE

There are passages where the Bible clearly speaks about the Messiah who will one day come to the world. These passages are so clear that Jews and Christians are in agreement that they describe the Messiah:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear. But with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion

The focus of scripture is not on the Messiah, but on describing what the world will look like when he is here



Proving Jesus is in our scriptures is like putting a square peg in a round hole—it just doesn't fit

and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all My holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
Isaiah 11:1-9

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In

his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: The Lord is our righteousness. Jeremiah 23:5-6 (See also Jeremiah 30:7-10 and 33:14-18)

My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow My ordinances and be careful to observe My statutes. They shall live in the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever. And My servant David shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will bless them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; I will be their God and they

Continued from page 1

shall be My people. Then shall the nations know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore, Ezekiel 37:24-28 (See also Ezekiel 34:23-31)

These passages describe a wise and righteous descendant of David who will rule Israel as king when the world has been transformed into a utopia of universal peace and knowledge of God. It is important to understand that the focus of scripture is not on this special anointed one, whom we refer to as "The Messiah," but on describing what the world will look like when he is here. While there may be about ten passages directly referring to this special king, there are over a hundred that simply paint a picture of the utopia that will flower when he reigns.

These passages speak about the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland after being scattered across the globe. There, they will live in peace, follow God, live according to the teachings of His Torah, and be sought by the nations of the world as spiritual teachers. The world will destroy their weapons of war and enter into an age of eternal peace and knowledge of God. (See Isaiah 2:1-4; Micha 4:1-4; Hosea 2:18; Isaiah 32:16-18, 60:18; Zechariah 8:23; Isaiah 60:3, 61:6,9; Zechariah 14:9,11; Psalm 86:9; Zephaniah 3:9; Isaiah 66:23; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:26-27; Deuteronomy 30:1-9; Isaiah 11:12, 40:11, 43:5,6, 49:12, 18, 22, 60:4, 66:20; Jeremiah 3:18, 30:3, 31:7, 32:37; Ezekiel 11:17, 20:41, 34:13, 36:24, etc.)

THE RETURN OF ELIJAH

Aside from Jesus failing to fulfill the central messianic criteria of the scriptures, there was also a prophecy that Elijah the Prophet must return before the Messiah's reign (Malachi 3:23-24 or 4:5-6 in non-Jewish versions). Bearing this in mind, the Gospel of Matthew asserts that John the Baptizer was Elijah (11:14, 17:12). This claim, however, does not hold up to scrutiny. John the Baptizer was actually very popular, and some people even thought that he might be the Messiah. When he was asked if this was so, he denied it. He was then asked if he was Elijah the Prophet, and he said, "I am not" (John 1:21). In addition, the prophet Malachi prophesied that when Elijah returns, he would "restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers," but there is no evidence that John the Baptizer fulfilled this.



The Messianic Age

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

The Christian doctrine that Jesus will return in the future to fulfill the Messianic prophecies in a "second coming" is an admission that he failed to do so 2,000 years ago. It is important to realize that the notion of a second coming can be used to rationalize the failure of any messianic candidate. We then have to question

If a false messiah is able to perform miracles, then miracles cannot prove that someone is the Messiah

why anyone should believe that person was the Messiah when he first came upon the scene. Christians have resorted to two basic arguments to promote the idea that Jesus qualified as Messiah 2,000 years ago despite not having fulfilled the clear Biblical messianic criteria outlined above.

THE APPEAL TO MIRACLES

One of these arguments is that the miracles Jesus allegedly performed attest that he must have been the Messiah. At this point, we will not discuss the historical credibility of the Gospel accounts. Suffice it to say, there are extremely strong grounds for

doubting the veracity of these stories. Let's assume, however, that it is possible Jesus performed numerous miracles. The question that needs to be asked is, "How many times does the Bible tell us that we will be able to identify the Messiah as a result of the miracles he will perform?"

The answer to this question is that the Bible never tells us that miracles are relevant in this regard. It is important to understand why this is so. Why didn't the Bible ever inform us that we would be able to identify the Messiah through his miracles?

The reason for this omission stems from the fact that miracles are an unreliable barometer of anything. While Moses performed miracles in Egypt, Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate them (Exodus chapters 7-8). In Deuteronomy chapter 13, we are told that false prophets will have the ability to perform supernatural miracles in order to test our fidelity to God. Interestingly, the Greek scriptures state that false messiahs will do incredible miracles to mislead people (Matthew 24:24). Clearly, if a false messiah is able to perform miracles, then miracles cannot prove that someone is the Messiah.

CHRISTIAN "PROOF" TEXTS

The second approach used by Christians is to assert that scripture actually both foretells and confirms that Jesus is the Messiah. Many Christians feel that these proof texts are so compelling that they find it impossible to understand how they have had no impact on Jews for the past 2,000 years.

Acquire the Knowledge that is Kryptonite to Missionaries at the

COUNTER MISSIONARY SURVIVAL SEMINAR

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

Pick up the survival skills that will empower you to leap over missionary arguments in a single bound and bend their Bible verses with your bare hands!

Tuesdays • 8 pm
Jan 27 - Mar 3, 2015
Lipa Green Centre
4600 Bathurst Street
Cost FREE • Registration 416-789-0020

Jews for Judaism
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH
UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

THE EASY WAY TO SHOOT A BULL'S EYE

The basic flaw with this approach stems from the way in which these passages have been mined. Rather than objectively reading the Bible to understand what it actually means, some Christians have approached it with a pre-conceived conclusion in mind. Like an "archer" who first shoots his arrow into a tree and then paints a target around the arrow, these Christians assume from the outset that Jesus was the Messiah and then try to find passages in the Bible which "sound like" Jesus. As a result of this circular approach to reading the Bible, the meaning of scripture has been distorted in order to shoehorn Jesus back into the text. If we wear red-tinted glasses, everything we see will appear red. Similarly, when Christians approach the Bible with "Jesus glasses," this colours everything they read.



Missionaries first shoot the arrow, then paint the target

CONFIRMATION BIAS

A few examples will help to illustrate how this approach leads to a distortion of the text.

And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in your hands? Then he shall answer: Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.
Zechariah 13:6

Numerous Christians have offered this verse as evidence that the Hebrew Scriptures make reference to Jesus of Nazareth. However, all that needs to be done to puncture this illusion is to simply read the entire chapter of Zechariah. It soon becomes clear that the passage is speaking about a false prophet. This example is so blatant that most Christian scholars and Bible commentators have acknowledged this (NIV Study Bible, New Interpreters Study Bible and many others).

Another verse from the Hebrew Bible marshalled to support the belief that Jesus was the Messiah is found in the 41st Psalm:

Yea, mine one familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.
Psalm 41:9

This verse is not only cited in countless missionary tracts, the Christian scriptures quote this verse as fulfilled in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot (John 13:18). Of course, even if we were to accept the assertion that this passage is a Messianic prophecy, would it really clarify that Jesus

was the subject? It is likely that the vast majority of humans in history would say that they were betrayed by someone close during their lifetime.

The critical question here is whether, in truth, Psalm 41 is a Messianic prophecy. Was it written in order to give the Jewish people vital information they will need in order to help identify the Messiah? Or is this simply another example of reading Jesus back into the Bible to buttress a belief in him arrived at independently of the testimony of scripture? Having already shot the Jesus arrow, the Christian then draws his target and declares this verse a Messianic prophecy because it seems to resonate with Jesus's life.

This exploitation of scripture can be confirmed by carefully reading the entire Psalm and asking, "How might someone have understood it before the advent of Christianity?" Is there any reason that someone living ten years before the birth of Jesus would have understood it as a Messianic prophecy? Is there any reason that someone reading it prior to Jesus would have even thought that this Psalm was a prophecy at all? There really is no compelling reason to make such assumptions.

When attentively reading Psalm 41, it becomes difficult to understand how any Christian would entertain the possibility that it is referring to Jesus. This is because the very person who exclaims that he has been betrayed by a close friend (verse 9) earlier beseeches God, "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against You" (verse 4). Since Christians believe that Jesus never sinned, having him as the subject of this passage would be like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Two very clear examples of how reading the Jewish Bible with Jesus-coloured glasses led to taking passages out of context in order to find "proof" texts can be found in the second chapter of Matthew. We are told that Joseph was warned to leave Bethlehem because Herod would attempt to kill Jesus. Joseph takes Jesus and Mary and flees to Egypt. Matthew then claims that this took place to fulfill a Messianic prophecy from the Hebrew Scriptures:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My son. Matthew 2:15



JEWES FOR JUDAISM LIFELINE is a free publication of JEWES FOR JUDAISM (Canada). JEWES FOR JUDAISM is the only international educational, outreach and counselling organization exclusively dedicated to counteracting the efforts of evangelical Christian missionary and cult groups that specifically target Jews for conversion.

JEWES FOR JUDAISM's two primary goals are to strengthen Jewish pride and identity and to win back those Jews who have been influenced by Christian missionaries, cults and other religions.

JEWES FOR JUDAISM works to achieve these goals and promote Jewish continuity through the following highly acclaimed programs and activities:

- 24-Hour Hotline
- Campus Programs
- Ad Campaigns
- Russian Outreach
- Books & Literature
- Outreach
- Library & Archives
- Community Liaison
- Internet Website
- Referrals
- Monitoring
- Facebook & Twitter
- Lectures & Classes
- Audio & Videotapes
- Exit Counselling
- Speakers' Bureau
- TV & Radio Programs
- Crisis Counselling
- Activism
- Volunteerism
- Shabbat Hospitality
- Counter Leafletting
- Information Requests
- YouTube Channel

To date, over 350,000 Jews worldwide have participated in JEWES FOR JUDAISM'S successful educational programs and counselling services.

One of JEWES FOR JUDAISM'S most outstanding accomplishments has been the uniting of the entire Jewish community in a common cause. JEWES FOR JUDAISM has earned endorsements from a wide spectrum of Jewish agencies, rabbis and educators.

Published by the Canadian office of:

JEWES FOR JUDAISM

2795 Bathurst St., P.O. Box 41032
Toronto ON Canada M6B 4J6

T 416-789-0020 • F 416-789-0030 • TF 866-307-4362

www.jewsforjudaism.ca

© 2014 Jews for Judaism

Publications Mail Agreement Number 1806041

Executive Director: Julius Ciss
julius@jewsforjudaism.ca

Education Director: Rabbi Michael Skobac
rabbiskobac@jewsforjudaism.ca

Board of Directors:

Michael J. Halbert • Frank Mayer • Charles Glina
Robert Walker • Bernie Moskoff

JEWES FOR JUDAISM Branches:

Toronto (416) 789-0020 Baltimore (410) 602-0276
Los Angeles (310) 556-3344 Sydney (04) 1051-3770
Johannesburg 2711-440-1033



For Social Media follow "Jews for Judaism (Canada)"



UJA Federation
OF GREATER TORONTO

However, if we examine the source of Matthew's quote, we see that he seriously distorted its meaning:

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. Hosea 11:1

The notion of a second coming can be used to rationalize the failure of any messianic candidate

Matthew goes on to claim that this story was anticipated in the Jewish scriptures:

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying: In

Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not. Matthew 2:17-18

The 11th chapter of Hosea describes the early history of the Jewish people after God redeemed them from the Egyptian exile. In scripture, the people of Israel are indeed spoken of as God's son (Exodus 4:22).

Matthew, here, ignores this context and distorts the true meaning of the verse by claiming that it was actually a prophecy about the childhood of Jesus. It is clear that Matthew obscures the actual meaning by quoting only the latter half of the verse. He omits the first half of the verse that clarifies that it is speaking about Israel.

Further on in the second chapter of Matthew, we are told that Herod was angered when the wise men failed to inform him of Jesus's whereabouts. In order to nip the messianic threat in the bud, Herod sends soldiers to kill all the baby boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and all the surrounding towns.

Here Matthew quotes the entire verse, but nonetheless distorts its actual meaning. By examining the original context of this verse from the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, we see that Rachel was not weeping for children who were murdered, but for children who were still alive, but taken into captivity:

Thus said the Lord: Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears. For your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in the end, says the Lord, that your children will come again to their own border. Jeremiah 31:16-17

WHEN CHRISTIANS TAKE OFF THEIR JESUS GLASSES

Submitting all Christian proof texts to this kind of scrutiny leads to similar results. Inevitably, they are all built upon circular reasoning that quotes these verses out of context in order to find alleged prophecies about Jesus. Numerous Christian scholars have acknowledged this process. One of these authorities is Walter Riggans, who honestly confesses:

Let me repeat this point: there is no self-evident blueprint in the Hebrew Bible, which can be said to unambiguously point to Jesus. Only after one has come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and more specifically the kind of Messiah that he is, does it all begin to make sense and hang together. ("Yehoshua Ben David" Olive Press, 1995, page 155)

Among Evangelicals, it is often claimed that only more liberal Christian scholars would make such an admission. Even if this were true, it misses the point. As Christians of any flavour, they don't approach the scriptures with a Jewish bias. They believe in Jesus. Yet their careful reading of these passages from the so-called Old Testament recognizes that they

Continued on page 5

IRATE DONOR INSPIRES AD CAMPAIGN

Missionaries Got You Confused? Knowledge is Power.



Discover the compelling Jewish response to Christian missionary claims that over a million people have learned. Watch Jews for Judaism's YouTube Channel videos and read our books at www.JewsForJudaism.ca.

YouTube video lecture topics include:

- The Real Messiah: Why He Is Not Jesus
- How Missionaries Misread Bible Prophecy
- Why Jesus Did Not Have To Die For Sins

Free books at www.jewsforjudaism.ca:

- Choose Life: A Counter-Missionary Guide
- Jews & Jewish Christianity • Stolen Minds
- The Real Messiah • Missionary Impossible

"Your videos helped me and my family come out of Christianity. It took over a year of intense study but it was to those videos and to Jews for Judaism that we owe special debt of gratitude. Your work is not in vain. Thank you." — Howard W.

The Jewish Response to Missionaries
Jews for Judaism 2795 Bathurst St. Box 41032, Toronto ON M6B 4J6
T: 416-789-0020 • TF: 866-307-4362 • toronto@jewsforjudaism.ca
www.jewsforjudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH



Jack Greenbaum (name changed for anonymity) felt it was bashert when he encountered Julius Ciss, Executive Director of Jews for Judaism, manning its information table at this year's Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto.

Jack, a Jews for Judaism supporter, was livid, because just a few hours earlier he had found slick missionary materials had been delivered to his front door. This proselytizing literature was part of an ongoing, two-year door-to-door campaign targeting Jews for conversion by the Christian missionary church called "City of David Messianic Synagogue."

"I'm on the warpath. What are you doing to fight this?" asked Jack.

Ciss responded that, for 25 years, Jews for Judaism has provided counter-missionary educational programming and counselling services to Jews across Canada. Now, with the advent of the

Internet, Jews for Judaism is having a profound worldwide impact by making its educational literature, audios, and dynamic video lectures available to Jewish communities everywhere.

"That's great," responded Jack, "but what can you do right now to respond to the missionary problem at my doorstep?"

Ciss said, "We could run a full page ad in the *Canadian Jewish News (CJN)* that responds to the missionary threat by directing people to our website and our popular YouTube channel."

Jack suggested that running quarter-page ads for five consecutive weeks starting Rosh Hashanah would be a much better marketing strategy and agreed to fund the entire campaign for both the Toronto and Montreal editions of the *CJN*.

As a result of Jack's generosity and passion, there was a 25% increase in activity on our website www.jewsforjudaism.ca and our YouTube channel. In addition, Jews for Judaism received a significant increase in requests for information and counselling. Ultimately, thousands of lives were affected by Jack's initiative. At left is one of the ads. ■

Jews for Judaism

Continued from page 4

do not clearly point to Jesus.

However, Walter Riggans is not a liberal Christian. He is a born-again evangelical. And there are many others. Michael Rydelnik, a professor at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, wrote of how disturbed he is about this development in an article entitled, "Some Bad News about the Good News":

There is bad news for the Messianic movement. Some scholarly followers of Yeshua are taking him out of the Hebrew Bible...I am convinced that an interpretive approach that negates Messianic prophecy is becoming prevalent among many scholars who believe in Yeshua... these believers adopt views that find it hard to see Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. (The Messianic Times, Summer 1997, page 5)

It seems that these scholars are willing to confront the Bible on its own terms without approaching it with an agenda. Of course, once someone believes something, they can find allusions to almost anything in the Bible if they are creative enough in spinning the text. (See *The Pooh Perplex* by Frederick C. Crews.)

While it may be possible to read the Bible from Revelation back toward Genesis and find passages that "sound like" Jesus, reading the Hebrew Bible without a preconceived conclusion (like Alice in Wonderland's verdict before the trial) will not lead to evidence for belief in the Nazarene.

ISAIAH 53

What about Isaiah 53? It should come as little surprise by now that numerous Christian scholars have come to the conclusion that this famous passage is not really a prophecy about Jesus. Indeed, they are in agreement with the way in which Jews have traditionally understood this chapter: as a passage about the historical suffering of Israel. (This view can be found in the New English Bible: Oxford Study Edition, The New Interpreters Study Bible, The Harper Collins Study Bible, and many others.)

Many Christians who insist that Isaiah 53 is an incontrovertible proof that Jesus was the Messiah have never really carefully studied the entire book of Isaiah. Is it possible to truly understand the 53rd chapter in isolation? Could it be that if they



Alice in Wonderland's verdict before the trial

were to approach this chapter in context and without a bias of finding support for their belief in Jesus, they might see things differently? This has been the case for numerous Christian scholars and Bible commentators who have sought to understand this chapter from Isaiah on its own terms.

Again, it is obvious that if someone approaches this text

with a prior belief in Jesus, they will see striking connections. But is this passage a clear Messianic prophecy? Would someone reading it prior to Christianity have necessarily understood it as such? And more importantly, even if one assumes that this passage is a Messianic prophecy, what evidence is there that it is speaking about Jesus? This is an important point. Imagine a verse in the Hebrew Scriptures that said, "The Messiah will come." Many Christians would insist that it is referring to Jesus. However, this is only so because they already believe in him as the Messiah. The verse (which doesn't exist) would merely be saying that the Messiah would come, but doesn't clearly and unambiguously identify Jesus as the subject.

It is possible to see that in the 1st century, the followers of Jesus did not understand this passage in Isaiah as a Messianic prophecy. In the 16th chapter of Matthew, Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah. At that point, Jesus tells his followers that he will go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and ultimately be killed. Peter should have said, "Of course! You are the suffering servant from Isaiah 53!" But Peter doesn't react this way. He protests and says that this can never happen to Jesus. In the 9th chapter of Mark, Jesus teaches his disciples that he will be delivered up to evil men who will kill him. However, Mark tells us in verse 32, "But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him." Clearly, these followers of Jesus did not assume that he came to the world in order to suffer and die. They were never led to believe that this chapter of Isaiah forecast the death and suffering of the Messiah.

Why is it that Jewish people (and

numerous Christians) have understood this chapter of Isaiah as referring to the historical suffering of the Jewish people? Is there any basis for such an understanding?

WHO IS THE SUFFERING SERVANT?

This chapter is the fourth of four "Servant" poems in the book of Isaiah and speaks about the Servant of the Lord. Who is this servant? Someone approaching this chapter with the benefit of having read the prior chapters of Isaiah would know exactly who the Servant is:

But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Israel My friend; You, whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts, and said to you: You are My servant; I have chosen you and not rejected you. Isaiah 41:8-9

You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen: That you may know and believe in Me and understand that I am He, before Me there was no god

formed, neither shall there be after Me. Isaiah 43:10

But now, listen, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you, and formed you from

the womb, who will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob My servant, Yeshurun who I have chosen... Remember these things O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant, I have formed you, you are My servant O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me. Isaiah 44:1-2, 21

For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have called you by your name. Isaiah 45:4

Go forth out of Babylon, flee from the Kasdim with a voice of singing, declare, tell this, say it even to the ends of the earth: say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob. Isaiah 48:20

And said unto me, you are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Isaiah 49:3

Actually, we see that in the Bible as a whole, not just in the book of Isaiah, the Jewish people are referred to as God's servant (see Leviticus 25:42,55; Jeremiah 30:10, 46:27-28; Ezekiel 28:25; I Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 136:22, 79:10, 135:1; Isaiah 54:17, 63:17, 65:8-9, 13-15, 66:14; Nehemiah 1:10-11; Deuteronomy 32:36, 43). The identification of the Servant in Isaiah 53 as the nation of Israel seems quite reasonable.

Actually, we see that in the Bible as a whole, not just in the book of Isaiah, the Jewish people are referred to as God's servant

In addition, the careful reader should consider the immediate surroundings of chapter 53. If we see that chapters 52 and 54 share a common theme, it would be reasonable to suspect that chapter 53 follows this pattern. Indeed, chapters 52 and 54 paint a picture that contrasts the historical degradation of the Jewish people at the hands of the nations of the world with their future redemption and exaltation by God. This is very helpful information in trying to understand the true meaning of chapter 53.

The Bible repeatedly tells us that the only people who will be shocked at the climax of history will be the nations of the world, not the Jewish people

ISAIAH 53 IN CONTEXT

All scholars agree that the Suffering Servant section of Isaiah 53 really begins with verse 13 in chapter 52. There, God announces that His servant will ultimately prosper, be exalted, lifted up, and very high. In verses 14-15 God tells us that when this happens, the kings and nations of the world will be totally shocked and astonished. This is worth thinking about. If the Servant here were Jesus, why would his ultimate elevation and exaltation surprise the world? There is no one person in the history of mankind who would shock the world less if he were to be lifted up and exalted in the future. The majority of people in the world actually believe that Jesus will return in the

future and that he will be exalted at that time. In reality, the only people who will be shocked if the subject of this chapter were Jesus would be the Jewish people. But we are not told that the Jewish people will be shocked when the Servant is exalted. It is the rest of the world that will be shocked.

Certainly the elevation and exaltation of Israel as God's servant would shock most of the world.

Indeed, the Bible never tells us that the Jewish people will be in for a big surprise in the future. Isaiah tells us that the nations and kings of the world

will be shocked because they never expected to see the redemption and exaltation of God's servant. The Bible repeatedly tells us that the only people who will be shocked at the climax of history will be the nations of the world, not the Jewish people (see Micha 7:15, Isaiah 41:11, and Jeremiah 16:19).

WHO IS SPEAKING?

The most critical question to ask when studying Isaiah 53 is: Who is speaking? Often, Christians assume that this is a speech that the Jewish people will make one day in the future when we recognize that we were wrong for rejecting Jesus. However, if we understand the flow of Isaiah 53 from the end of chapter 52 (and in the

original texts, these chapter divisions don't appear; they were inserted by Christian monks in the Middle Ages) we realize that the people exclaiming "Who would have believed what we are hearing?" in 53:1 are the very shocked nations and kings spoken of in the previous verses. In chapter 53, Isaiah is telling us the confessional speech that will be made in the future by the nations and kings of the world as they reflect back on their history of scapegoating and persecuting the Jewish people.

This theme, which tells of how the historically persecuted Jewish people will ultimately be redeemed and exalted by God and acknowledged by the nations of the world, is well-developed in scripture. We see this theme described very clearly in numerous passages such as Isaiah 60:1-3, 10, 14-15; 61:6-9, and 62:2-3.

While these thoughts merely scratch the surface of understanding this chapter of Isaiah, they begin to explain why both Jewish and Christian scholars have understood the 53rd chapter as a reference to God's servant Israel and not to Jesus.

IN CONCLUSION

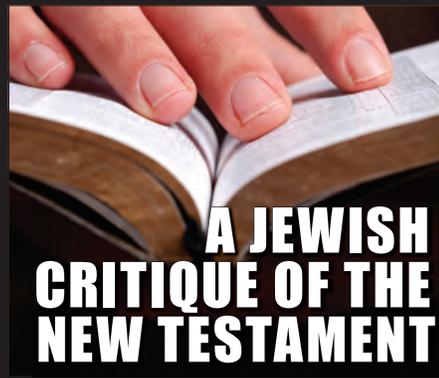
The fact that the Jewish people have never seen Jesus in the Hebrew scriptures has always been a thorn in the side of the church. After all, the Jewish people were the ones who walked with and knew the prophets whose writings are recorded in the Bible. We were the ones who studied these writings in their original language and lived and died for them for centuries before there was a Christian religion. And the people of Israel were the ones entrusted by God to preserve and transmit these scriptures for all time.

The Bible makes the incredible prediction that, one day, the entire world will acknowledge that the truth is in the possession of the nation of Israel (Zechariah 8:23) and that they will ultimately follow God's true servant. We are now witnessing the start of this prophecy unfolding. For the first time in history, thousands of Christians, serious students of the Bible, are beginning to recognize that the true understanding of the Hebrew scriptures has eluded them all these years and that it can be found with the true People of the Book. We, ourselves, need to more seriously embrace and study our own Bible because it is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey – and because others will be seeking to learn from us.

Rabbi Skobac is Director of Education and Counselling at Jews for Judaism (Canada).

He can be reached at RabbiSkobac@JewsForJudaism.ca.

Two Dynamic Jews for Judaism Programs

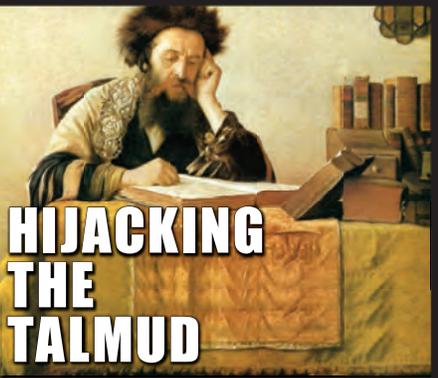


A JEWISH CRITIQUE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Why Judaism Does Not Accept the Christian Scriptures

A Lecture with
Rabbi Michael Skobac
Education Director, Jews for Judaism – Canada

Wed., Dec. 24 • 8:30 PM



HIJACKING THE TALMUD

Debunking Missionary Exploitation of Rabbinic Literature

A 3-Part Seminar with
Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal
Director, Judaism Resources – Lakewood, NJ

Thurs., Dec. 25 • 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Photo by Nadav Kaufman, Rabbi Resping the Talmud, 1921

Shaarei Tefillah Congregation
3600 Bathurst Street • Admission: **FREE**
For info: **416-789-0020** or toronto@jewsforjudaism.ca

jewsforjudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

[UJA Federation of Greater Toronto](http://www.uja.org)