

Jews for Judaism

Lifeline

KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

1:5772

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MISSIONARIES INVADE WALK WITH ISRAEL

Jews for Judaism confronts them every step of the way



Photos: Mozes Yehudaioff – www.mozphoto.ca

Julius Ciss, Jews for Judaism Executive Director, confronts a Jews for Jesus missionary on the Walk with Israel in Toronto.

Early Sunday morning, May 29, Jews for Judaism joined over 10,000 Jews who proudly proclaimed their strong support for Israel and participated in the UJA Federation's annual 8 km Walk with Israel in downtown Toronto.

Anticipating the undesirable attendance of Jews for Jesus missionaries, nine dedicated members of Jews for Judaism's Counter-Missionary Task Force were on hand to offer strong opposition. Like an army in battle, we dispersed into the huge crowd in search of the unwanted guests, using cell phones to coordinate our maneuvers. We also distributed flyers among the thousands of participants to advise them of a cell phone number to call if they encountered any missionaries.

Before the "Walk" even began, Jews for Judaism's ever-vigilant staff and volunteers were shocked to discover 10 missionaries mingling with the crowd and they were not the anticipated *Jews for Jesus*. Instead, they were staff and volunteers from *Life in Messiah Ministries* and *New Covenant Forum*, two additional Toronto-based missionary groups that aggressively target Jews for conversion.

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THE CONCERT THAT FORTUNATELY WASN'T

Jews for Judaism thwarts missionary's concert

When Julius Ciss noticed the huge poster for a "Jewish-flavoured" concert at Earl Bales Amphitheatre displayed in a Thornhill kosher eatery, it was not only the date of the event that shocked him. As the Executive Director of Jews for Judaism, Ciss immediately recognized that the kippah-wearing performer in the poster was Dan David, a rising star in Toronto's "Hebrew Christian" community.

The concert was presented as part of a summer series by the City of Toronto's Parks Department, whose promotional listings described David as an "Israeli Folk Group". The concert's advertising poster was clearly

designed to attract a Jewish audience. Aside from the prominent kippah on David's head, the performance promised "Jewish-flavoured music" and also claimed that a portion of the proceeds would be donated to benefit Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier held captive by Hamas in Gaza since 2006.

Furthermore, a quick glance at David's websites and Facebook page reveals that he is anything but a simple Israeli folk group. His self-presentation focuses on how he came to faith in Yeshua (Jesus) and how he uses his music to "encourage those who don't know Yeshua to seek after him". While describing his work as a "ministry", his Hoshiana Ministries explain

how he sees himself working in tandem with "other ministries that share the gospel of the Messiah". As well, he regularly performs for Christian missionary organizations throughout North America that target Jewish people of all ages for conversion. Clearly, Dan David did not provide full disclosure to the public and the City of Toronto in the promotion of his concert!

An article about David in the "Messianic Times", a missionary publication, revealed that he was born in Ukraine in 1977 to Jewish parents. His family name is Aronovitch, and they moved with him to Israel when he was one year old. Eleven years later, they resettled in

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However, instead of accosting the thousands of Jewish Walk participants with pamphlets as Jews for Jesus missionaries often do, they were using a completely different technique to grab their attention... they did absolutely nothing. They just stood around and let their T-shirts and distasteful slogans – “Jesus Loves You” and “Ask Me About My Rabbi” – do the talking for them. While waving their Israeli flags, they waited for people to approach them and sadly, some actually did.

As soon as the Walk began, our Task Force walked alongside the missionaries to “shadow” them and thus prevent them from engaging the Walk participants.

Just 15 minutes into the Walk, we received several calls alerting us of different missionaries elsewhere on the Walk who were distributing their literature at a nearby street corner. Help! It felt like we were being ambushed. Immediately, several Task Force members arrived on the scene to find two missionaries, one from *Jews for Jesus* and the other from *The Christian Jew Foundation* who were handing out provocative missionary pamphlets to the thousands of Jewish passers-by. Immediately yet again, Jews for Judaism went into action, alerting all the Walkers about these missionaries and distributing our counter-missionary leaflets to everyone who got a missionary tract.

While we “counter-leafletted” these missionaries, we engaged them in lively discussions and supportive passers-by voiced their approval, giving us the “thumbs up” for stopping them in their tracks. In particular, we challenged these two women, both of them Jews, to be intellectually honest and learn privately with us. They refused. However, disheartened and confused, these two women joined the other 10 missionaries, hoping their T-shirts would plead their case, and they completely stopped distributing their literature for the rest of the Walk.

Wanting to utilize every opportunity, Andrew, a Jews for Judaism student and supporter who discovered us on the Walk, got involved in the fray. Andrew is a recent immigrant from China who ran an anti-missionary blog in that country, fell in love with Judaism and is now in the process of converting. He knows his stuff! He confronted two *Life in Messiah* missionaries and blew them away with some exceptionally powerful arguments.

Throughout the entire four-hour Walk, whenever the missionaries tried to speak with participants, Jews for Judaism would quickly advise these Jewish individuals that they were actually speaking with missionaries and the conversation was over.

While tailing and shadowing the missionaries, Jews for Judaism’s staff and volunteers tried to involve them in cordial discussions and challenge them with the Jewish perspective on Christianity – but they flatly refused. To paraphrase one missionary, he said, “We’re not buying... we’re selling!”

Most importantly, we received much encouragement and approval from Jewish passers-by, many of them supporters, who told us how much they appreciated our counter-missionary work. As well, we all wore our new T-shirts with our new Canadian website www.jewsforjudaism.ca proudly on display.



Julius Ciss, Jews for Judaism Executive Director, tries to reason with *New Covenant Forum* (NCF) missionary leader.



Julius Ciss has a meaningful discussion with a NCF missionary volunteer.



Some of the missionaries that Jews for Judaism staff and volunteers “shadowed”.

Photos: Mozes Yehudaioff – www.mozphoto.ca

Following the Walk, we noticed an extraordinary surge in the number of “hits” our website received because of this exposure.

If you would like to be a Counter-Missionary Task Force volunteer on the next Walk or similar event, please contact us. Throughout the year we need “spotters”, people who see missionaries on street corners, shopping malls, public events, and Jewish neighborhoods, to immediately call us. We also need “counter-leafletters”, people trained by Jews for Judaism who quickly arrive on the scene to deal with these missionaries. Our “Spotters and Counter-Leafletters” project works in every city where there is a large Jewish population. Help us spot n’stop the missionaries and keep Jews Jewish! ■



Julius Ciss shadows flag-waving *Life in Messiah* missionaries.



Volunteer Andrew (R) challenges *Life in Messiah* missionaries with strong arguments.



Volunteer Charles Glina warns Walk participants about the missionaries.

MISSIONIZING THE MISSIONARIES

In the Comfort of a 4-Star Hotel Lobby

by Rabbi Michael Skobac



Jews for Judaism’s Rabbis (in white shirts) Michael Skobac (R), Eli Cohen (L) and Yisrael C. Blumenthal (M) engage two Messianic Jews in conversation in the lobby of the Embassy Suites Hotel in Dallas, Texas at the UMJC conference in July 2011.

One of the assumptions about our work at Jews for Judaism is that we are an “anti” organization. When people learn that we go to the major “Messianic Jewish” conferences every year, they imagine that we aggressively protest, engage in contentious arguments and angrily debate with Jewish missionaries. This perception is completely wrong.

In point of fact, we do not seek to antagonize Jews who have already converted to Christianity. We seek to reach out to them, in love, and help them return to Judaism, their rightful heritage. This year, we traveled to Dallas, Texas and braved the over 105°F degree weather to spend five days at the annual conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), an umbrella organization representing many of the hundreds of Hebrew-Christian churches in North America and worldwide.

Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education and Counseling for the Canadian branch of Jews for Judaism, was joined by Rabbi Eli Cohen, Director of Jews for Judaism in Sydney, Australia and Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal from Lakewood, New Jersey. After settling into our hotel rooms, we planted ourselves in the lobby, waited for attendees to engage us – and as we expected, it didn’t take very long.

In fact, as soon as we sat down, one of the messianic “rabbis” recognized Rabbi Cohen from his Facebook page and approached us. Although the discussion was intense, the feelings were warm. He returned for more serious conversations – some lasted for several hours. Our goal was to allow him, and all the others

we met, to get to know us – feel at ease with us – and then learn from us.

This approach is crucial because most Messianic Jews have never had the opportunity to spend time with traditional Jews who have dedicated themselves to understanding Christianity as well as Judaism. Furthermore, many of them have extremely negative stereotypes about us, often promoted by the leadership of their movements. When Messianic Jews get the chance to actually meet us and realize that we are sincere people who are extremely knowledgeable and spiritually involved, their preconceptions are shattered. As a result, they become more open to the ideas that we share. For most of them, our conversations mark the first time they have ever heard a traditional Jewish perspective on the beliefs that they have embraced.

Throughout the five days of the conference, we were constantly approached by many Messianic Jews and engaged in extremely deep and meaningful discussions with them. Several of them openly expressed their thanks and admiration that we cared so much about them that we travelled all the way to Texas, in the heat, to share our valuable time.

A number of people have remained in contact with us through email and Facebook, and we’re hoping to nurture these relationships. Since we began attending these Messianic Jewish conferences many years ago, we have witnessed a number of men and women return to Judaism because of our consistent “pro” – not “anti” – approach to our fellow Jews. G-d willing, this trend will continue to grow. ■

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO CANADA 2010

“Jesus is not the Jewish Messiah” — National Post, Dec. 24, 2010

On the morning of December 21, while Julius Ciss, Executive Director of Jews for Judaism (Canada), was casually reading the *National Post*, Canadian Jewry's daily newspaper of choice, one of Jews for Judaism's supporters emailed him a startling article from the *National Post's* online edition. Entitled, “The Jews Who Believe In Jesus”, journalist Allen Abel described his experience with Messianic Jews in a Messianic synagogue as follows:

“I am on a Christmas journey among believers and non-believers, spending a wintry Saturday morning with a congregation of Hebrews who believe that Jesus – they use his Hebrew name, Yeshua – is and was the Christ [Messiah] sent by the G-d of Israel, that the Biblical accounts of his virgin birth, his ministry and his resurrection are wonderful and true, and that the New Testament, as the rabbi informs me, ‘is a Jewish book written by Jews about Jews for Jesus.’”

“This particular congregation of Messianic Jews – one of hundreds across America – was founded in Baltimore in 1915. Today, their Sabbath service unfolds the customary Hebrew prayers, Torah procession, psalms, readings, and songs, plus the circle of reverent dancers, spliced and spliced with references to Jesus. But they don't do Christmas.”

Furthermore, Abel goes on to quote Barry Rubin, rabbi of the Messianic Jews of Clarksville.

“Christmas is a thoroughly Jewish holiday in essence. But like a lot of Christians, it has lost its Jewish roots. I honour the birth of the Messiah – that's important. Isaiah predicted it. It's foreshadowed in Genesis.”

Julius Ciss became livid for two reasons. Firstly, the *National Post* was promoting the very same missionary movement that he has dedicated his life to fighting. Secondly, the title of this very same article was changed in the print edition from “The Jews Who Believe In Jesus” to read “Christmas Unwrapped ‘It's about PRESENCE not Presents’”.

The following is the letter-writing blitz that Julius Ciss launched when he stood up for his Jewish faith and wrote a letter to the editor.

Jesus is not the Jewish messiah
Re: ‘Presence’ Not Presents, Allen Abel,
Dec. 21.

For five years, from 1975 to 1980, I was a Jew for Jesus or “Messianic” Jew, working in the Hebrew-Christian evangelical church in Toronto to convert Jews. However, after much introspection and studying the Hebrew Scriptures, I realized that Jesus is not the



Jews for Judaism's letter to the *National Post*, entitled *Jesus is not the Jewish Messiah*, sparked a strong reaction across Canada during Christmas week, Dec. 24-30, 2010. The writing blitz below, published in the “Letters to the Editor” section, ensued and recounts the many heated responses our letter generated.

Jewish messiah, that Christmas is not a Jewish holiday and that I had been misled by deceptive missionaries.

There was no Jewish organization to counter this missionary threat to the Jewish community, so I founded the Canadian branch of Jews for Judaism, and I have been working for this cause for the past 30 years.

Your article would have us believe that the religious beliefs of people like Barry Rubin represent a legitimate faith alternative for Jews. That is not so. The reality is that a Jew who practises and promotes Christianity, as Barry Rubin does, is a Christian. He is not a rabbi, but is an ordained Protestant Christian minister, and his “Messianic Synagogue” is an Evangelical Church. His deceptive blurring of theological lines is blatant evangelical subterfuge. Unfortunately, there are over 1,000 Christian organizations today that target Jews for conversion employing these very tactics.

The determination of who qualifies to be the Jewish Messiah is one that only Jews can make.

Rabbi Michael Skobac

The following three letters were written in response to Julius Ciss' letter and published in a special section entitled:

“Jewish Messiah” divides readers
Re: *Jesus Is Not The Jewish Messiah*, letter to the editor, Dec. 24

Probably only Jews have the right to say whether or not Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.

Obviously they said no. More interesting is the ambiguity of the New Testament over whether Jesus himself made the claim.

The accounts in the gospels tell of Peter acclaiming him the Messiah. It is not wholly clear whether he accepts the claim. He blesses Peter, but then tells him to keep quiet about it, on the ground that he will get himself killed, since in the eyes of the Romans the Messiah was a political figure, and a rebel against their authority, which is exactly what happened.

But the Messiah is not supposed to get killed, but to bring redemption to his people. If Jesus foresaw his death, it is difficult to suppose he thought he was the Jewish Messiah. So what is it?

William Nicholls, professor emeritus of Religious Studies, University of British Columbia.

Julius Ciss, Executive Director of Jews for Judaism, is incorrect in claiming that Jesus is not the Jewish Messiah. The reason Jews do not recognize Jesus is because they misinterpret Jewish Scripture and wrongly see in the Messiah a worldly king. In the presence of Pilate, however, Jesus propounded Jewish scripture, exclaiming that the Messianic kingdom is not of this world. Rather the Kingdom of G-d is within. And so the Jews, out of jealousy and hatred, put to death this Son of G-d on a cross.

Because the Messiah has already come, Christians have an obligation to bring the gospel to the Jews and convert, not only them, but those of other religious faiths through peaceful means. Barring this eventuality there will never be peace in the Middle East.

Larry Smith, Toronto.

The fear of assimilation (“Christian organizations...target Jews for conversion”) does not lead to theological truth. Letter-writer Julius Ciss claims that Messianic Judaism is not “a legitimate faith alternative for Jews” and calls it a “deceptive blurring of theological lines.”

Hmmm. A black person can be a Jew. A non-Zionist can be a Jew. Even an atheist can be a Jew. But a Jew that believes Jesus is the Jewish Messiah? Oy, no!

Just give me the evidence for or against the idea of Christ as Messiah, and give me the courage to go (or not) where the evidence leads.

Roger Pattenau, Windsor, Ont.

Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education and Counselling, Jews for Judaism (Canada), responded to these three letters with the following response published on Dec. 30, when two more letters were published.

Jewish Messiah (III)

Re: ‘Jewish Messiah’ divides readers, letters to the editor, Dec. 28.

Professor William Nichols rightly points out that the determination of who qualifies to be the Jewish Messiah is one that only Jews can make. Letter-writer Larry Smith insists that Jews have erred on this issue because we misinterpret our scriptures in seeing Messiah as an earthly king who is to bring real peace to the entire world rather than a transcendent inner peace to his followers alone. Scripture, however, is totally clear on this and doesn’t allow for Smith’s spin, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they practise war again (Isaiah 2).”

Letter-writer Roger Pattenau manages to squeeze several misconceptions into his letter, including a confusion of the words Jew

and Judaism. It is certainly possible for Jews to embrace atheism or non-Jewish religions. They don’t cease being a Jew — but they are certainly not living their lives in a manner consistent with the teachings of Judaism.

Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education and Counselling, Jews for Judaism, Toronto.

Letter-writer Larry Smith proclaims the “reason Jews do not recognize Jesus (as the Messiah) is because they misinterpret Jewish scripture” as if he is more capable of interpreting the scripture of the Jews than Jews themselves. And he states that “the Jews, out of jealousy and hatred, put to death this son of G-d” (as if in the Jewish view G-d can have a son) thereby promoting a perversion that has caused countless Jewish deaths. Not only that but he insists Christians have a duty to convert Jews, a view that has caused incredible misery.

Mr. Smith is free to believe what he wishes, as are others, but he should know that ideas

such as his have brought the opposite of peace and love for the last 2,000 years.

Hanoch Bordan, Toronto.

Dangerous Jews

Re: Jesus Is Not The Jewish Messiah, letter, Dec 24; & ‘Jewish Messiah’ Divides Readers, letters, Dec. 28.

The issue of Jews accepting Jesus as the Messiah is of little significance because only a small number of mediocre Jews believe this. Of greater concern is the hugely disproportionate number of elite Jews of our time who are or were atheists, the antithesis of belief in Judaism.

They include writers Mordecai Richler, Ayn Rand, Isaac Asimov; philosopher Bernard Henri-Lévy; film directors David Cronenberg, Woody Allen; comedian Bill Maher; physicist Stephen Weinberg; mathematician Paul Erdos; historian Simon Schama; actor Stephen Fry; neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks; psychologist Steven Pinker; astronomer Carl Sagan; playwright Arthur Miller; Israeli war hero Moshe Dayan.

Jacob Mendlovic, Toronto

And Julius Ciss responds once again.

Letter to the Editor

Re: Dangerous Jews, December 30

I question letter-writer Jacob Mendlovic’s claim that Jews who accept Jesus as their Messiah are “mediocre”. If he refers to their intelligence and potential to achieve greatness, then he is wrong. Since my original 5-year involvement in the Jews for Jesus movement from 1975 to 1980 and my last 30 years countering the same movement, I have met hundreds of Hebrew-Christians. Many were well-educated, bright, sensitive and some have become leaders in industry, science, education, politics and more. However, if Mendlovic refers to any meaningful knowledge about authentic Judaism, then he is right... it probably was mediocre at best.

Mendlovic said that “the issue of Jews accepting Jesus as the Messiah is of little significance.” I have great empathy for the ‘significance’ of 300,000 Jews worldwide currently involved in the Christian faith, as well as those illustrious Jews who appear on his atheist list, because sadly, both groups of people have much in common. They are spiritually malnourished and lack adequate knowledge about the profound depth, beauty and incalculable wisdom inherent in Judaism. They are unaware of the spiritual treasure in their own Jewish backyard.

Julius Ciss, Executive Director, Jews for Judaism, Toronto.

The *National Post* informed Julius Ciss that it could not publish his response because of its editorial policy of never printing a letter from a writer whose previous letter has appeared within the last 14 days. ■



JEWES FOR JUDAISM LIFELINE is a free publication of JEWS FOR JUDAISM (Canada). JEWS 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.

JEWS 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.

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Phone: (416) 789-0020 • Fax: (416) 789-0030

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Executive Director:

Julius Ciss

E-mail: julius@jewsforjudaism.ca

Education Director:

Rabbi Michael Skobac

E-mail: rabbiskobac@jewsforjudaism.ca

Board of Directors:

Michael J. Halbert • Frank Mayer

Editor:

Linda Shapiro

JEWS FOR JUDAISM Branches:

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



UJA Federation
OF GREATER TORONTO

OUR FIRST FABULOUS MEET AND GREET DINNER

Jews for Judaism is a unique organization that attracts a very special group of concerned people who support and assist our efforts. In order to enable the partners in our vital work to meet the Jews for Judaism staff and each other, a first-time "Meet and Greet" dinner was organized on February 24, 2011. Fifty Jews for Judaism supporters and volunteers converged on Milk n' Honey restaurant for a wonderful evening of shmoozing, dining and meeting their "team mates" and surprise... no solicitation of funds.

Julius Ciss, founding Executive Director of Jews for Judaism, Canada, emceed the evening and acknowledged attendees who have volunteered to assist our organization in various ways over the years. He called up Jerry and Sandy Genesove to receive the Most Cherished Volunteers Award. Julius noted



Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, Founder, Jews for Judaism Intl.

that the Genesoves have been tireless volunteers since 1995 when they organized the first Annual Cavalcade of Stars: Evening of Jewish Song at Shaarei Shomayim Congregation through the shul's Brotherhood and the Entertainment and Cultural Committee. The program will soon be entering its eighteenth year and continues to raise much-needed financial support for our vital counter-missionary work. All those attending the Meet and Greet dinner wished the Genesoves many more productive years and in good health.

Alex Katz, a long-time volunteer for Jews for Judaism was the first speaker of the evening. He shared the incredible story of how he came from Kiev at the age of 17 to live with his aunt in Toronto. He was not aware that his aunt had converted to Christianity, and she immediately set out to have him



Alex Katz entertains the crowd with his captivating story of rescue by Jews for Judaism.



Rabbi Michael Skobac addresses the evening's guests.

embrace the same path. Alex was taken to a "Messianic Synagogue" where he was overwhelmed by how friendly and caring everyone was. He continued to attend this congregation, came to accept Christian beliefs and began attempting to convince other Jews that they should also come to faith in Jesus.

Alex was ultimately introduced to Julius Ciss who explained that he had also been a member of the congregation Alex was attending and after five years, began having doubts about the congregation's beliefs. Julius left the movement after his questions were never really answered. After additional meetings with Julius, Alex began to have doubts as well, and after several more meetings with Julius, Alex decided to return to Judaism. Julius helped Alex integrate into the Jewish community, and today, he is married with two children attending Netivot HaTorah and reaches out with his wife to other Jews from the Former Soviet Union who are not yet involved with Judaism.

Julius then introduced the special guest speaker for the evening, Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, the founding Director of Jews for Judaism International, from Los Angeles. Rabbi Kravitz joked that he was unprepared for the cold and snow in Toronto, and that when he looked up the weather back in California, he saw that they had 10 inches of sunshine!

Rabbi Kravitz shared a story about the Baal Shem Tov, the early Hassidic master, who took his students out for a carriage ride one



Alex Katz (L), Michael J. Halbert (M) and Julius Ciss

cold Saturday night. They encountered two Russian peasants preparing to go ice fishing. But instead of cutting a hole in the ice, they cut out a cross. The Baal Shem explained to his puzzled followers that Torah is compared to water and that our practice of Judaism must always be filled with warmth. If, G-d forbid, our service becomes cold like ice, it's even possible to carve a cross into it.

Rabbi Kravitz explained how he has been able to rescue many Jews from the Church by opening his home and family to them and sharing the warmth and beauty of Judaism with them. There is no need to attack Christianity - letting the light and joy of Judaism work its magic is all that's needed according to Rabbi Kravitz.

The final speaker of the evening was Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education and Counselling for the Toronto branch of Jews for Judaism. Rabbi Skobac shared his journey as a teenager alienated from Judaism straight back into its arms. He described how his first involvement in counter-missionary work was back in 1973 and that many people ask him if he hasn't gotten tired and drained after all these years. Rabbi Skobac explained that aside from the fulfillment of helping people, he's energized by the wonderful fact that Jews for Judaism is an organization that unites the entire Jewish community in a common cause. There aren't many issues where the entire spectrum of Jews is on the same page, and when it comes to keeping Jews Jewish, we are all united. ■



David Diamond (L) and Julius Ciss



Julius Ciss (L) and Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz



Jerry Balitsky (L) and Alex Katz (R) joke with Julius Ciss.



Phyllis Friedman (L) & dinner organizer Carol Spodek



Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz (L) with Linda & Mike Joffe



Victor and Naomi Pamensky



Julius Ciss with Shia & Michal Rubinoff (R)



Volunteers Joanne & Martin Abeles with Julius Ciss (R).



Rabbi Jacob Kerzner (L) and Julius & Claire Ciss (R)



Sheila and Leo Wynberg



Rabbi Michael Skobac enlightens Michal Rubinoff.



Rabbi Kravitz (L), Andrew Brooke (M), Gary & Debra Chapman



Alex & Natalie Katz (L) and Jacques & Vivian Sayegh (R)



Sandy & Jerry Genesove, Most Cherished Volunteers Award recipients



David & Miriam Kleiman (L), Linda Shapiro (F) and Rabbi Michael & Chashi Skobac

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

by Rabbi Michael Skobac



Judaism is commonly understood to be a very action oriented religion. We've even come to describe commitment to Judaism based upon levels of "observance". Demographers and community planners are drawn to visible indicators of Jewish commitment that can be quantified - Shabbat, Kashrut, Tzedakah, Torah study and involvement with Israel. Yet the Torah repeatedly whispers to us that there is more - an inner and ultimate goal - "Love the Lord your G-d" (Deuteronomy 11:13, 22).

The contrast between religion and spirituality has been compared to the difference between reading a menu and eating the meal. When we recite the foundational Shema Yisrael prayer twice each day, "And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart" we are encountering Judaism's menu. We only begin to nourish ourselves spiritually when this recitation leads to contemplation. What does it mean to love G-d? Why should I love the Creator? How do I express this love? What should I do if I'm not feeling anything?

We have a long history of writers who have lamented the all-too-common reality of the practice of Judaism falling short of this mark. The prophet Isaiah (29:13) relates how G-d Himself bemoans those who serve Him "with their mouths and lips, but their hearts are far from Me and their reverence of Me is acted out mechanically". In the 18th century, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto's seminal *Path of the Just* begins with an observation of how common this superficiality is and the vital need for a conscious engagement with the spiritual bottom-line of Judaism.

Love of G-d is often associated in the Torah with the directive to "serve Him with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:12; 11:13). The service of G-d is identified by the Talmud as prayer (Taanit 2a). Significantly, the love and service

of G-d are connected with the ultimate spiritual goal of *devekut* - cleaving to G-d, striving to totally attach ourselves to Him (Deut. 10:20; 11:22). One of the meanings of the Hebrew word for prayer - *tefillah* - carries the idea of bonding and connection (Noam Elimelech). Clearly, prayer is meant to be far more than the mere recitation of liturgy. According to Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, prayer is to be a time when we are to palpably experience ourselves standing in the presence of G-d.

Luzzatto describes the fostering of this personal connection with G-d as life's greatest achievement and greatest pleasure (*The Way of G-d*: 2-

3). Along these lines, the Chassidic master Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin offered a wonderfully creative take on the Torah's directive to thank G-d after consuming a meal. The portion of *Ekev* contains the source for our *Birkat HaMazon* (*Grace after Meals*) "and you shall eat and you shall be satisfied and you shall bless the Lord your G-d" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The Karliner refocuses us: "and you shall eat, and you shall be satisfied when you bless the Lord your G-d"!

Of course, the sensitivity needed to nurture and take pleasure in developing this relationship with G-d doesn't come easily. Bachya Ibn Pakuda's classic *Duties of the Heart* suggests that it's impossible to progress spiritually if we are preoccupied with mundane pleasures and worldly concerns. The Torah relates that the miraculous daily manna which G-d provided for the Jewish people during their desert trek after leaving Egypt was a test (Deuteronomy 8:16). The Italian Bible commentator Ovadiah Sforno explained that the test was whether the people would be attentive to G-d if they wouldn't have to worry about their livelihood.

The lure of materialism is certainly powerful, and we must be extremely determined to withstand the test of affluence. One of the miracles in the Holy Temple was that the rains (*geshamim*) never extinguished the pyres on the altar (*Ethics of the Fathers* 5:7). May we, as well, retain our spiritual passion amidst the bounty (*gashmiyut*) with which we have been blessed. ■



At the Jews for Judaism table, Julius Ciss (L), Rabbi Michael Skobac (M) and summer intern Shoshana Gottfried fielded questions and greeted many of the 5,000 visitors at the Annual Israel Day Festival at Mel Lastman Square in Toronto.

THE CONCERT THAT FORTUNATELY WASN'T

Continued from page 1

Montreal and he then moved to Toronto and enrolled at York University. David was exposed to Christians in the music industry and eventually, he embraced their faith. At first, his parents were strongly opposed to his religious explorations, but after watching him perform on a Christian television show, they also converted. Today, they attend the City of David "Messianic Synagogue" in Thornhill, Ontario.

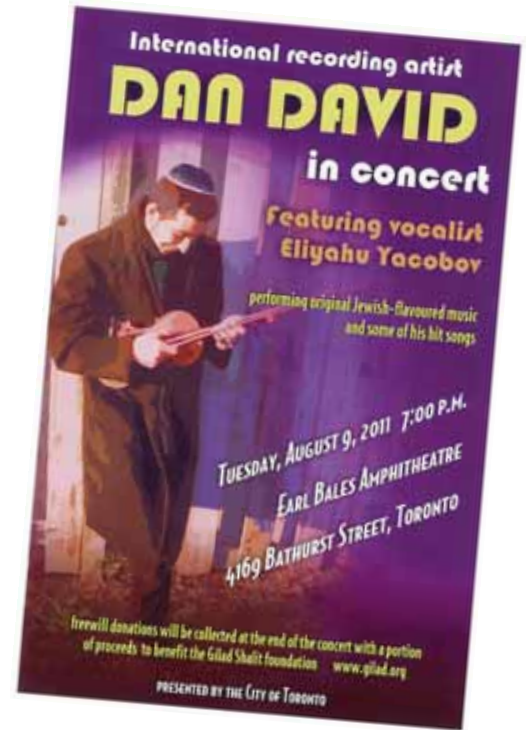
The prime danger of this event would not come from David's music or from what he would say while on stage. Because most people at the concert would be his fan base among Messianic Jews and evangelical Christians, these missionaries would mingle with the vulnerable Jews and would take full advantage of the opportunity to befriend them and share their faith. Missionaries refer to this conversion strategy as "friendship evangelism", and see it as one of their most effective ways of influencing people.

Obviously, David was not aware of the significance of the concert's August 9th date when he originally scheduled it. August 9th coincided with Tisha B'Av, the ninth day in the Hebrew month of Av. This ominous date

marks the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Holy Temples in Jerusalem, as well as other tragedies in the history of the Jewish people. It is also the last day of a three-week period of mourning for these catastrophes and traditionally, Jews fast and do not listen to music.

Jews for Judaism immediately alerted the City of Toronto's Parks Department that David was promoting his concert in a misleading and deceptive manner. We also warned the Jewish community about this potentially dangerous program, by contacting the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA - formerly Canadian Jewish Congress), sent alerts to all synagogues and wrote a Letter to the Editor of the *Canadian Jewish News* that was published in the July 28, 2011 edition. The City of Toronto took immediate steps to ensure that David would not proselytize at his event. Ultimately, David refused to comply with their conditions and cancelled the concert a few days before the scheduled date.

Another victory is claimed for Jews for Judaism's successful and unceasing counter-missionary efforts. ■



Deceptive poster for missionary Dan David's concert.



LETTERS

• Rabbi Skobac helped me to come out of intellectual belief of Christianity during his counter-missionary course 8 years ago. I recommend his teaching for anyone who doesn't know the distinct difference between authentic traditional Judaism and Christianity. Thank you. (Facebook Posting)

• Rabbi Skobac, I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for the videos you've posted through the Jews for Judaism website. What I appreciate most is the attitude you hold while discussing Christian misconceptions and errors. I don't recall hearing condescension in your words or tone even once. It meant a lot to hear your words without feeling like I was less of a person because of what I had thought to be true for so long. For that I will be forever grateful. Your videos and the other Jews for Judaism materials have answered so many questions that NO ONE could/would answer and helped me to find the truth that I think was there all along. I simply lacked the confirmation and therefore the courage to admit it.

PLEASE don't stop sharing your knowledge in love! It really does matter!

• Rabbi Skobac, the reason I wanted to become your friend on Facebook is to be able to "Thank You". Someone posted the link to all your wonderful Counter-Missionary Seminar lectures on an Internet site that I visit. You have no idea how invaluable your teachings are! I have downloaded all the programs into my MP3 player and have listened to the lectures over and over again. My favorite is the one on "Sin, Sacrifice and Atonement". I have learned so much through your lectures. Thank you so much for your much needed work that helped me leave my Messianic congregation.

• Dear Rabbi Skobac, I was touched that you took so much time to answer my letter to you. You obviously care a great deal about the future of the Jewish people and the spiritual paths they take. Thank you for hearing and validating my concerns. I know that one purpose of your presentation that I attended was to encourage Jews to look within Judaism for the answers to their questions. Your talk excited me because you indicated there are many Jews struggling with the same questions, like me, and moving down a similar path in their quest to find answers.

• We just received your latest booklet "The Real Messiah? A Jewish Response to Missionaries" and we would like to express our deepest appreciation for your unrelenting efforts on behalf of the Jewish community! There must be thousands of Jews who share these sentiments and encourage you in this wonderful work.

• With the help and information from Jews for Judaism, we have produced a PowerPoint presentation, and armed with your knowledge and resources, are now conducting workshops in Jewish day schools, educational institutions and other communal organizations to alert our community to this missionary threat. Thank you very much for all your help.

• I come from a Jewish family, but was raised as a Christian. Eventually, I became a Baptist preacher. My study of the Old Testament however, took me closer to Judaism and further from Christianity. Your website has been a great source of help to me. My wife and I have never been happier! Thanks.

• I check in with your website regularly and I just wanted to give you some feedback. I think it is wonderful and so informative and it just gets better and better. I know I searched everywhere and it wasn't until I read and re-read your website that I could truly start to realize that Christianity was a wrong turn in my life.

.ca NEW CANADIAN WEBSITE

Willie Sutton, the notorious American career criminal, was once asked why he robbed banks. He famously responded, "Because that's where the money is!" Missionaries have carefully followed his lead and also ply their trade where the fish swim. Over the past decade, this strategy has increasingly led them to Cyberspace. In fact, some missionary groups that target the Jewish community for conversion have observed that most of their contacts are met online.

To counter this serious threat and simultaneously reach out to vulnerable Jews, Jews for Judaism has established a number of vital Internet portals. Our main website, www.jewsforjudaism.org has been the world's leading counter-missionary online resource, receiving millions of hits each year. When Mel Gibson released his inflammatory film "The Passion of



the Christ", Jews for Judaism produced www.jewishpassion.com in order to provide the Jewish community with the vital resources to deal with the issues and challenges stemming from that offensive movie and its aftershocks. We also set up www.tworoadsonepath.com for interdating and intermarried Jews, as well as www.be-true.org, a special website for university students.

At the present time, to better serve the needs of Canadian Jewry, the Toronto branch of Jews for Judaism has launched www.jewsforjudaism.ca, the first and only Canadian counter-missionary website. The impetus for this new undertaking has been the recent developments in online culture, including the growing popularity of Youtube and social networking forums.

Jews for Judaism also has its own Youtube channel with numerous videos that can be accessed at our new website, www.jewsforjudaism.ca. In addition, we are filming all our programs and lectures so they can be archived and accessible to everyone. We regularly receive emails and comments about these videos from people who have found them to be a vital resource. Our new website will also be a repository of our audiotapes and CD recordings, as well as an archive for radio and television programs.

Our new website also features an expanded section containing our educational resources – a repository of

the books, booklets, pamphlets and articles produced by Jews for Judaism over the years that deal with a range of issues pertaining to the challenges that missionary and cult groups pose to Jewish continuity. Immediately accessible are such vital resources as, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* by Rabbi Bentzion Kravetz, now available in seven languages, Rabbi Michael Skobac's *Missionary Impossible* and Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's *The Real Messiah*.

The cornerstone of Jews for Judaism's educational work is our Speakers Bureau through which we have conducted hundreds of programs in the Greater Toronto Area, across Canada and in neighbouring American cities. Our new website is specially designed to promote these vital programs to an even wider audience than we have previously been able to reach.

We offer over 80 different lecture topics and some of our most popular are: "The Battle for the Jewish Soul: Today's Missionary Threat to the Jewish Community", "Is Religion Killing Judaism", "Evangelicals and Israel: Trojan Horse or Knight in Shining Armour" and "Cultivating Cult-Evading", a special critical thinking program for teens.

Of course, the most important and rewarding benefit of our new Internet presence is its potential to impact the lives of Jewish people of all ages who have drifted toward other religions. Our website is the frontline where people regularly make their initial contact with us.

We recently received an email from a Jewish man who has been involved with Christianity for many years. He explained that he began watching our Youtube videos – promoted regularly on our Facebook page – and now wants to discuss some issues that we raised.

As well, our new website features a special section called "Lives Changed" that chronicles some of the many individuals we have helped over the years. Hopefully, his story will also appear in our "Lives Changed" section!

Visit us, today, at
www.jewsforjudaism.ca.

INTERMARRIAGE: THE CHALLENGE

Is There Light At The End Of The Tunnel?



What accounts for the steadily rising rates of intermarriage over the past 50 years? What are the chances that children of a mixed marriage will grow up identifying with Judaism? Rabbi Michael Skobac will explore this disturbing growing development and offer the Jewish community encouraging, positive suggestions to help turn this crisis around.

with RABBI MICHAEL SKOBAC
Director of Education, Jews for Judaism

Monday, October 24, 8:00 PM
Shaarei Tefillah Congregation
3600 Bathurst St
To register or info call: 416-789-0020





Admission: **FREE**

THE FOREST BEYOND THE TREES

What is Judaism's Bottom Line? — Free Audio CD

Judaism can be a very busy religion and because we may attempt to do so many things in our observance, it is easy to get lost in the details and forget about the big picture – the forest beyond the trees.

So what is Judaism really all about? What is the ultimate goal of everything we do, as Jews? Where is Judaism supposed to be taking us?

The Forest Beyond the Trees: What is Judaism's Bottom Line? is an enlightening and inspiring audio CD by Rabbi Michael Skobac, Education Director of Jews for Judaism, that will add focus and clarity to your understanding of Judaism.

Rabbi Skobac's lively presentation, combined with his entertaining stories, will motivate you to experience Jewish life in a more profound and satisfying way.

The ideas presented in this audio CD are based on *Bilvovi Mishkan Evneh (In My Heart I Will Build a Sanctuary)*, a groundbreaking

book by Rabbi Itamar Schwartz. Based in Israel, Rabbi Schwartz is a renowned writer and speaker, whose pioneering work has helped thousands in our generation connect to Judaism's unique and powerful spirituality.

Today, an ever-increasing number of Jews are drifting further and further away from Judaism.

Why? Sadly, the majority of these Jewish people, young and old, have never experienced Judaism's deeper meaning and compelling spirituality... the vital force inherent in everything we do, as Jews.

To date, we have distributed 6,000 copies of this informative and entertaining CD. *The Forest Beyond the Trees: What is Judaism's Bottom Line?* is a CD that you will want to hear many times and share with others! Please contact Jews for Judaism (Canada) to order your free copy. ■



PACKING FOR UNIVERSITY?

The Top Ten Things Students Must Know Before They Go!



Cults are still prevalent worldwide, but members may not dress so provocatively today as they did in the 60's.

1. Jews are the target of choice of missionaries and various cult groups on almost every college and university campus in North America and Israel.

2. University campuses are fertile "market places" for proselytizing and recruiting young Jews into Christianity and cults because:

- Students are often willing to explore new ideas and philosophies at school.
- The newfound independence and freedom from their parents enable students to "try new things" and question their own values and beliefs.

3. Not all missionaries and cult-recruiters "look-alike" and they may use varied forms of deception, manipulation and "love-bombing" to attract and retain potential converts.

4. "Hebrew Christians" who claim to be "Fulfilled Jews" and usually refer to themselves as "Messianic Jews" or "Jews for Jesus" are, in fact, believers in fundamentalist Evangelical Protestant Christianity and believe that Jesus, or Yeshua as they prefer to call him, is G-d. These individuals and their groups are part of Protestant Christian Church and are not within the any accepted norms of any demonominations of Judaism.

5. Many Hebrew-Christian congregations perform Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, conduct Shabbat and High Holiday services, light Shabbat candles, and Baptize "new believers" (converts) in a "Mikveh-Ritual Bath", all in the name of Yeshua (Jesus).

6. Most successful proselytizing does not happen through professional missionaries, but through "Peer-to-Peer" or "Friendship Evangelism" by roommates, classmates, teachers, athletic coaches, co-workers and health care professionals.

7. Today's cults — not to be confused with Christian missionaries — are highly sophisticated, utilizing modern technologies and various marketing and business schemes to recruit and retain new members.

8. Although there is a great deal of variation among cults, certain common themes are present in destructive cult groups:

- Total submission to and unquestionable faith in the leader, namely their messiah/G-d
- Polarized worldview, meaning that only their group is good and the outside world is evil
- The "ends justify the means" in achieving the goals of the cult and recruiting
- Salvation, fulfillment and/or self-realization and personal gain can only come through the group
- Excessive financial sacrifice and/or "volunteer" commitments are requirements to be a part of the group
- Harassment and threats if one willingly chooses to leave the group

9. Cults are usually categorized as Bible Based, Eastern Meditation, Satanist/Occult, Political/Terrorist, Psychotherapy/Human Potential, New Age and Commercial, and never refer to themselves as a "cult".

10. If some group or person is offering you something that sounds just too good to be true, then it probably is. Can you be recruited into a cult or missionary group?

YES - IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU!

Need answers, more information or just someone to talk to? Contact JEWS FOR JUDAISM.

T: 416-789-0020 • TF: 866-307-4362
toronto@jewsforjudaism.ca
www.jewsforjudaism.ca

THE MESSIANIC JEW IN MY GRADE SEVEN CLASS

Thank you, Jews for Judaism. I was able to attend your Counter-Missionary Survival Seminar last fall and it was really informative. I learned how missionaries convince Jews to accept belief in Christianity, but more importantly, I learned how to respond to the missionaries' claims and stand firm knowing that Judaism has answers to any challenges that missionaries pose to young people like me.

I was motivated to attend your seminar because of what I experienced three years ago, when I was eleven years old in a public elementary school. Near the end of the school year, I was playing soccer during recess when I met Ben (not his real name). He was my age and was wearing a kippa and tzitzit (ritual fringes). We played and talked together a lot that day, but I didn't see him again until after summer holidays when we met at school in September.

It turned out that Ben was in my grade seven class. Great! I wanted to get to know Ben better because I liked him and we had something in common because he seemed to be an observant Jew like me. We frequently played together at recess having lots of fun and sometimes we would also walk home together.

One day when Ben and I were walking home together with my Dad, my dad asked him, "What kind of Jew are you... Orthodox, Conservative, Reform?" Ben responded, "I'm a Messianic Jew".

By coincidence the night before, my Mom had read an article to me from Lifeline, the popular Jews for Judaism newsletter, about how Christian Missionaries have developed a deceptive technique called "Messianic



by Yoseph Kleiman

Judaism" to convert Jews. By using Jewish words, symbols and customs, they succeed in deceiving Jews into accepting Jesus as the Jewish messiah and becoming Christians.

In class, there were times when Ben was regarded as an authority on what was Jewish and what was not because of his religious appearance. This disturbed me a lot because it misled other classmates, some of them Jewish, and gave the

Ben credibility as a Jew.

One day, our class had a pizza party and the pizza was not kosher so I declined to eat it. The teacher then turned to Ben, the Messianic Jew, and asked, laughingly, "It's not kosher?" Ben responded, "It's just cheese, of course it's kosher." I said to him "But it's not kosher cheese." Then, some of the kids in the class asked me why I didn't eat the pizza and I answered their questions as best as I could.

As soon as I came home, I told my parents what happened and then we all discussed it. They explained to me that it seems these Messianic Jews have gained acceptance in our society to such an extent, that those who don't know any better, consider them to be regular Jews. That's really scary!

When we told Jews for Judaism about Ben, they did some research and discovered that his parents weren't even Jewish. I had been totally deceived.

I realized that getting a good Jewish education is very important to help keep Jews like me Jewish and to stop the problem of missionaries converting Jews. I was fortunate that soon after this incident, I was able to transfer to Eitz Chaim Jewish Day School. Today, I am attending Ner Yisrael Yeshiva where I am trying my best to learn to be a true Jew for Judaism.

Editor's note: At 13-years old, Yoseph was the youngest student to ever attend the Jews for Judaism Counter-Missionary Survival Seminar. He was not shy during the sessions and asked Rabbi Michael Skobac many astute questions regarding Christian claims. Yoseph has made remarkable progress in his Jewish learning and Jews for Judaism is extremely proud of his hard work and success. When Joseph was first introduced to observant Judaism, he was only eleven years old, and in just three years, he progressed from a public elementary school to a world-class yeshiva. This hard work and dedication is extremely rare and encouraging to discover. Yoseph has done very well in all his subjects. We wish kol ha kavod to our dear friend, Yoseph Kleiman. Our Jewish community is very proud of you. ■



THE JEWS FOR JUDAISM COUNTER-MISSIONARY SURVIVAL SEMINAR THE NEXT LEVEL

ALL NEW PROGRAM with RABBI MICHAEL SKOBAC

Introducing new topics to counter missionary claims. Well suited for attendees of our First Level Counter-Missionary Seminar. You'll acquire knowledge and tools to respond boldly to missionaries who challenge your Jewish beliefs and gain a boost in your Jewish pride.

Topics include: The Eternal Torah vs. The New Testament, The Trinity • The History of Christian Anti-Semitism, Daniel 9:26 • Micah 5 • Zechariah 12 • Isaiah 9:6 • Satan How to Effectively Counsel Jews to Leave Christianity.

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