

Passover is one of the most widely celebrated holidays among Jews globally. Studies reveal that 70 to 80% of the Jewish population participates in some way.

Seven weeks after Passover, we observe the holiday of Shavuot, which is the Hebrew word for weeks. Far fewer people celebrate this holiday, and many don't even know what it's about. This is truly unfortunate, as Passover marks our freedom from Egyptian slavery, but Shavuot's focus is what we were freed for.

Centuries earlier, G-d forecast the Egyptian saga to our forefather Abraham. In Genesis 15:13–14, we read, "Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not theirs — and they will serve them, and they will oppress them — four hundred years. But the nation that they will serve, I shall judge, and afterwards they will leave

afterwards they will leave with great wealth."

The simplest understanding of what this great wealth would be was the gold and silver that the Israelites received from the Egyptians (Exodus 12:35–36). But various Rabbinic Midrashim and commentaries such as the Maharal's see the "great wealth" G-d spoke of as spiritual wealth — specifically, the Torah they would receive at Mt. Sinai after leaving Egypt.

The holiday of Shavuot celebrates this unique moment in human history.

One thing that distinguishes Judaism is that, while every other religion begins with one individual who claims to have received a revelation from G-d, the genesis of Judaism was with a public national revelation where around three million people heard G-d speak.

"G-d said to Moses, 'Behold! I come to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people will hear as I speak to you ..." (Exodus 19:9; see also Deuteronomy, chapters 4–5). This distinction is critical because a private revelation can be

fabricated, but a public revelation can't be claimed if it never happened. If the revelation at Sinai had not been heard by everyone, this verse would have been strongly challenged.

Deuteronomy 4:32–33 proclaims that this kind of national revelation will never happen again in history: "... Has there ever been anything

like this great thing or has anything like it been heard? Has a people ever heard the voice of G-d speaking from the midst of the fire as you have heard, and survived?"

When G-d first spoke to Abraham, He said that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his descendants (Genesis 12:3). This is echoed right before the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai when G-d said that Israel will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). This means that ultimately, Israel is to bring the light of Torah to the entire world (Isaiah 60:1–3). ■

Passover marks our freedom from Egyptian slavery, but Shavuot's focus is what we were freed for. THE 15TH ANNUAL SPRING LECTURE SERIES

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Sharing this

history with Jews

who embraced

Christianity was an

important catalyst

in their return to

Judaism

t's important to understand that Jews for Judaism is not seeking to demean other religions. Our engaging with other faiths is not for the purpose of critiquing them. We delve into the beliefs of other religions for two reasons: to address the claims they make when they attempt to convert Jewish people and to help those who have been drawn to these faiths reassess their decisions.

With regard to Christianity, we take two different approaches when examining it. Our primary method is to

demonstrate that the beliefs and doctrines of Christianity are inconsistent with the teachings of Judaism based upon Hebrew scripture. This is important because the main tactic of missionary groups like Jews for Jesus is to claim that their beliefs are based upon the Jewish Bible.

Our second approach is to study the history of

Christianity to show how, over time, it radically departed from its original form.

On June 17, we will be presenting "Judaism Cross-Examines Christianity" at Shaarei Shomayim Congregation in Toronto. (See the ad on Page 5.) This lecture is an attempt to understand the evolution of Christianity from its origins as a splinter messianic sect emerging out of the Jewish population in the first century CE.

Historical sources, such as Josephus, inform us that there were several small Jewish groups at that time, led

by charismatic leaders seen by their followers as one who would liberate them from the brutal Roman occupation.

Jesus of Nazareth was the leader of one such group. He never left any writings, but we can get some idea of what he taught and what his immediate followers believed from their writings and from historical sources.

The general picture that emerges is that the disciples of Jesus, who were all Jews, believed he was the Messiah, but not a deity, and they maintained the

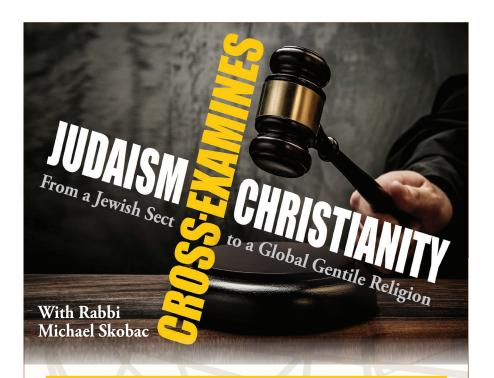
observance of the Torah.

One example is a passage in the Gospel of Matthew where someone approaches Jesus and says, "Good master, what good things must I do that I might have eternal life? And he said to him, 'Why do you call me good? There is none good but one — that is G-d. And if you seek eternal life,

keep the commandments."

However, by the third century, this picture changes dramatically. By this time, virtually all those who believe in Jesus are non-Jews. Moreover, they worship him as a deity and have developed a hostility to Torah observance and to Jewish people.

Over the many years that Jews for Judaism has been helping Jewish individuals who embraced Christianity to re-evaluate that decision, we have seen that sharing this history with them was an important catalyst in their return to Judaism.



In this lecture Rabbi Skobac will examine how, 2,000 years ago, a small messianic movement within the Jewish community in Israel transformed, in a short period of time, into a radically non-Jewish world religion.

He will discuss the Jewish roots of Christianity, and how, over time, those roots became obscured and ultimately cut off.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025 • 8:00 PM ET • FREE Admission Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn Ave., Rear Attend LIVE in-person or via ZOOM • Registration is required TO REGISTER please go to jewsforjudaism.ca/examines25 For more info: T 416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca

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KEEPING JEWS JEWISH



RESPONSIBILITY OF ISRAEL

by Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal, JudaismResources.net

od made a covenant with the nation of Israel when He took them out of Egypt. As part of this covenant, God entrusted the Jewish people with the responsibility of preserving His word and passing it on to the future generations. This was not limited to the preservation of the original books that God had given

them through Moses. The covenantal responsibility of Israel includes the task of identifying the true prophets and preserving their words. The 24 books of the Jewish scripture are here today because Israel discharged this duty under their covenant with God.

When God charged Israel with this responsibility, He

also gave them the means through which they can accomplish this goal. God supplied Israel with a standard against which every claimant to prophecy can be measured. Israel was directed by God to dismiss the most spectacular miracles and the most persuasive and forceful arguments if the claimant to prophecy fails to measure up to the standard God provided to His covenant community.

In order to empower Israel to resist the arguments of the false prophets, God provided Israel with the confidence and the conviction that His standard is true and immutable. This conviction would give them the strength to stand firm in a world intoxicated with the message of the false prophet. God empowered Israel with the fortitude to endure all the hell

unleashed by the frustrated followers of the false prophets. All of this is part of the covenant that joins Israel and their God

and their God.

What was the standard that God gave Israel against which they could measure the claims of the prophets? How did God give Israel the certitude and the conviction that this standard is true

and eternal? What was the strength that God poured into the hearts of His people that gave them peace in the face of the most violent aggression?

The standard that God gave Israel is their perception of God. God did not deliver this teaching to Israel through the medium of a book. God did not educate Israel on this matter through the agency of a prophet. God Himself imparted this teaching to

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the nation as a whole when He spoke at Sinai, saying, "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 5:6). The unparalleled miracles of the Exodus, which culminated with the revelation at Sinai, gave Israel their perception of God (Deuteronomy 4:35). Israel's perception of God is the standard

against which they measure any claim to prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:6).

The generation that left Egypt was taught by God Himself. God ensured that the message will be available to every subsequent generation of Jews. Not only did God

take care that His truth be preserved for future generations, but He made sure that the message retained its strength and vitality. The method that God set in place, through which His holy standard is preserved for all time, is the heart of the living nation of Israel. Through the living observance of the testimonial commandments, Jews learn the rock solid truth of God's oneness. The instruction and the living observance of one generation of Jews preserves God's message for the next generation and for every subsequent generation thereafter. When Jews

experience the Exodus and Sinai as these events reverberate through the hearts of our people, we are empowered with God's eternal truth. As God's chosen witness, we Jews are granted the strength to resist all falsehood (Isaiah 43:10).

When God spoke face-to-face with His chosen people, this was a burning kiss that connected the Divine Father with His beloved firstborn son. The fire of this love can never be extinguished, not by torture nor by persuasion (Song of Songs 8:7). In light of this truth, Israel recognizes that all of the claims of the false prophet are but an opportunity to demonstrate their love for God by remaining loyal to His holy standard (Deuteronomy 13:4).

Christianity bases its claims on the words of the Jewish prophets. Apparently, Christianity recognizes that Israel has properly discharged their covenantal duty of recognizing God's true prophets and preserving their word. At the same time Christianity contends that Israel's perception of God is erroneous and faulty. Christianity worships a trinity, which is precluded by Israel's perception of God. Christianity attributes deity to a human, which is likewise precluded by Israel's perception of God.

This attribution is absurd. Israel's perception of God is the standard that God provided to His people, through which

they could discharge their covenantal duty of canonizing the words of the prophets. This is the pillar upon which scripture stands. There is no way that we would have scripture if we do not first accept the standard through which Israel canonized

scripture, namely their perception of God. The Christian theology that disregards Israel's perception of God while accepting Israel's scripture is an exercise in self-contradiction.

The heart of Israel's covenant with their God is the truth that God granted them at Sinai. Throughout history Israel has been willing to be confined to ghettoes, to be denied the most basic civil rights, to be taxed of their worldly possessions, and sometimes even to give their lives. But Israel as a nation will never give up the heart of their relationship with God. ■

As God's chosen witness, Jews are granted the strength to resist all falsehood



The founder of Christianity stands as the polar opposite of the Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures

by Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal, JudaismResources.net

The Jewish prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. The Scriptures refer to the Messiah by the name: David.

"My servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them; they will follow My ordinances and keep My decrees and fulfill them." (Ezekiel 37:24)

"Afterward the Children of Israel will return and seek out Hashem their

G-d and David their king, and they will tremble for Hashem and for His goodness in the end of days." (Hosea 3:5)

"They will serve Hashem their God and David their king, whom I will establish over them." (Jeremiah 30:9)

Some understand this to mean that the Messiah will be David himself. According to these commentators,

God will resurrect David to reign as the Messiah of Israel.

Others understand that the Messiah will be a descendant of David. The prophets call the Messiah by David's name because the Messiah will occupy David's position.

All agree that in order to understand the Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures, we must study David. King David is either the Messiah himself or the chief Biblical prototype of the Messiah.

David's heart is open for us to read. The Book of Psalms are filled with David's praise for God, his love for God, his trust in God, his yearning for God, and his love for God's holy Law. David's complete dependence upon God is accentuated, emphasized, and displayed most openly again and again. David's book and David's life direct all of our attention, all of our hearts, all of our emotions, and all of our devotion and worship towards the Creator of the world. David diverts none of the attention towards himself.

On the contrary, David speaks most openly of his own sins, his faults, and his utter helplessness before God.

The Messiah, like David, will direct all of mankind's attention towards the Creator of the universe and only towards the Creator of the universe. When the Messiah's mission is complete, then;

"The Lord alone will be exalted on that day" (Isaiah 2:17).

The central character of the Christian Scriptures is a man who seeks attention for himself. His goal is to divert the heart, the emotions, the devotion and worship of mankind towards his own personality. He attempts to obfuscate his own helplessness before God with the veil of his claim to divinity.

If we were to say that this man cannot be the Messiah, we would have said too little. The founder of Christianity stands as the polar opposite of the Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures. ■

The central

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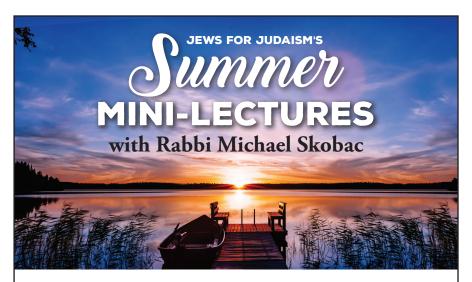
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