

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

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jewsforjudaism.ca

KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

THE CULT and CONSPIRACY CONNECTION

by Rabbi Michael Skobac

Jews for Judaism was initially launched as a resource for the Jewish community to deal with the danger of aggressive Christian missionizing. But at that time, there were no Jewish organizations dealing with the problem of mind-controlling cults, and so that issue, as well, became part of our mandate.

There is a widespread belief that cultic groups were an issue in the previous century but no longer exist today. Unfortunately, this is not true. Most experts estimate that more than 600 cults operate in North America, and some estimates are in the thousands.

Part of the problem is that most people don't have a clear understanding of what defines a cult. It is often assumed that they all centre on religious beliefs and spiritual practices. There are actually numerous varieties of cults, including political, commercial, psychotherapeutic and Internet based.

Cults are characterized by having a self-appointed leader or group of leaders who control and exploit the members of their group. Because cults are ultimately harmful, they employ deception in their recruitment process and use psychological and emotional manipulation to consolidate affiliation with the group.

An important question involves understanding why some people might be more prone to being recruited into a cult. Recent research has revealed a parallel phenomenon to this vulnerability, and that is the propensity among some



people to embrace conspiracy theories.

Since the beginning of this century, there has been a steady increase in the number of people who go down the rabbit hole of conspiracy thinking. For example, a Public Policy Polling study found that 4% of American voters believed that "shape-shifting reptilian lizard people control our world by taking on human form and gaining political power to manipulate our societies." This amounts to approximately 12.5 million Americans! Various polls reveal that 50–85% of North Americans embrace at least one conspiracy theory.

Significantly, many conspiracy theories morph into cults, and many cults are built around conspiracy theories.

In 2023, Professor Dan Ariely published a fascinating book entitled *Misbelief: What Makes Rational People Believe Irrational Things*. In this timely work, Ariely explores

the elements that lead people down what he calls the "tunnel of misbelief." These include emotional, cognitive, personality and social elements that tend to drive people towards conspiracy thinking.

Psychological stress is often the on-ramp leading into conspiracies. Personality traits such as intolerance of ambiguity lubricate the slide down the tunnel. Together with other risk factors, immersion in online groups can be the catalyst that locks people into the funnel.

Jews for Judaism will be having a lecture on Nov. 13, 2025, discussing this topic (see ad on page 3). Download our free booklet "Stolen Minds: Understanding Cults", a valuable resource for this issue at <https://bit.ly/stolen-minds>. ■

Most experts estimate that more than 600 cults operate in North America

THE MIND'S TRAPDOOR

The Cult-Conspiracy Connection

With Rabbi Michael Skobac



Why do people cling to conspiracy theories with the same intensity as cult devotion?

In this lecture Rabbi Skobac explores the striking parallels between cults and conspiracy theories, showing how both offer simplistic answers to complex problems and cultivate unwavering loyalty among their followers. He will examine the psychological, social, and emotional mechanisms that keep people drawn into closed systems of thought.

Thursday, November 13 • 8:00 PM ET • Admission FREE
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn, Toronto
No Charge • Attend LIVE in-person or ONLINE via ZOOM
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED: jewsforjudaism.ca/cults25
For more INFO: 416-789-0020 or info@jewsforjudaism.ca

[JewsforJudaism.ca](https://jewsforjudaism.ca)
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

שערי שומאים
SHAAREI SHOMAYIM

Why Jews Are Vulnerable To Missionaries

by Rabbi Michael Skobac



I regularly speak with people who can't understand how it's possible for a Jew to convert to Christianity. They believe that only the most naïve or mentally challenged people would ever go down that route. The reality, however, is that most of the Jews who embrace Christianity are of normal intelligence and mentally stable.

We must understand that there are several factors that could make otherwise healthy people vulnerable to missionary influence. One of the most critical is when people haven't received an adequate Jewish education. The prophet Hosea expressed this 2,700 years ago: "My people perish due to a lack of knowledge" (4:6).

A significant part of the missionary "sales pitch" involves citing passages from the Tanach (Hebrew scriptures) to give credence to their claims. Their presentations can sound very compelling. Of course, King Solomon wisely said that "the first to present his case seems correct, until another comes to cross-examine" (Proverbs 18:17).

However, Jewish people with low Biblical literacy cannot spot the flaws in missionary misreadings and misinterpretations of the scriptures. They are easily fooled by mistranslations and can't see through selective proof-texting that cites Biblical passages out of context.

A second serious vulnerability is a lack of meaningful Jewish spiritual experiences. I've spoken with hundreds of Jewish people who have embraced

Christianity. Most have told me that they went to Hebrew school, had a bar or bat mitzvah, lit Chanukah candles, had Passover Seders and attended services on the High Holidays. But they say that for them, Judaism was just an identity, a cultural heritage, a tradition or ethnicity — not a rich spiritual experience.

When you ask them what they found in church that drew them in, they will invariably say it was having a personal relationship with G-d. Many will share that there was never much talk about G-d in their homes or Hebrew schools. They didn't experience G-d as real. Now,

they say, G-d is the centre of their lives; they speak to Him every day and believe their prayers are answered. The fact that so many never knew that this is the bottom line of Judaism and that their first true spiritual experiences were in a church should be a wake-up call for all of us.

Jews for Judaism has been working tirelessly for decades, addressing both weaknesses in our community and having tremendous impact. Our educational website, YouTube channel and social media platforms teach the Jewish response to missionary claims and have inoculated countless Jews against their deceptive proselytizing. (See the ad for our upcoming Counter-Missionary Survival Seminar on page 5.) In addition, our many videos that illustrate the profound wisdom and spiritual richness of our faith have been a vital lifeline connecting Jewish people to the beauty of Judaism. ■

**Jews with low
Biblical literacy
cannot spot the
flaws in missionary
misreadings and
misinterpretations
of the scriptures.**

Part 2 of the **JEWISH** **with** **RESPONSE** **Rabbi** **TO CHRISTIAN** **Michael** **MISSIONARIES** **Skobac**

Rabbi Skobac boosts your Jewish pride and provides you with the knowledge, tools and spiritual survival skills needed to respond confidently to any Christian missionary who challenges your Jewish faith.

SEMINAR CURRICULUM:

- Did the Prophets Speak of Jesus?
- Daniel's Mysterious 70 Weeks Prophecy
- The Doctrine of the Trinity: Is G-d 3 or 1?
- Does G-d's Revelation Include an Oral Torah?
- How Judaism & Christianity Differ on Torah
- Did Christianity Inspire Hitler's Jew-Hatred?
- Rescuing Jews Who Embrace Jesus

This series offers lectures 9-15 of the full 15-part lecture series. (Lectures 1-8 will be offered next year in 2026.) Each week, after the presentation of the pre-recorded video lecture, Rabbi Skobac will answer participants' questions during a live Q&A session.

7 Consecutive Tues. evenings • Oct. 28 - Dec. 9 • 8:00 PM ET
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KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

Is The Jewish Bible A Mystery Novel?

by Rabbi Yisroel C. Blumenthal
JudaismResources.net

Christian missionaries read the Jewish Bible as if it were a mystery novel.

The Bible presents the missionary with an enigmatic puzzle that needs to be unravelled. Only the missionary knows that Jesus is the answer before he or she begins reading. The trick is to try to see Jesus behind every symbol and every metaphor that the poetic authors of the Bible bequeathed to us. When Jesus is “discovered,” the Jewish Bible has achieved its purpose and can now be summarily put aside.

The missionary approach to chapter 53 in the book of Isaiah illustrates the Christian attitude towards the Jewish Bible. The first, and often the last, question that the missionary asks concerning this chapter is: Who is the servant? If we could get sound-effects with the Bible, the missionary would have some eerie, mysterious music that rises to a crescendo as Jesus pops out from the page. And that brings the movie to its satisfactory conclusion — according to the missionary. Now that we “know” whodunit, we can close the book and move on to the “real thing,” the Christian Scriptures.

But is the Jewish Bible really a mystery novel? Is it an “I spy” game in which the



reader has to try to find that elusive Jesus? Is the Jewish Bible the ancient version of “Where is Waldo/Jesus”? Is that the purpose of the book? Were the Jesus-less chapters put in by the author just to provide some distracting background so that the puzzle can be challenging?

The Jewish Bible is G-d's instruction for the Jewish people

The Jewish Bible is not a mystery novel, nor is it a game of hide-and-seek. The Jewish Bible is G-d's instruction for the Jewish people. The question we are to ask concerning every chapter of the book is not: Who can I find here? Rather, we are to ask: What is G-d trying to teach us? What is the spiritual lesson?

Let us focus on the section of Isaiah that follows the Hezekiah narrative, the part in which chapter 53 appears. Chapters 40 through 66 in the book of Isaiah are separated from the rest of the book by the narrative that occupies chapters 36 through 39. This section opens with G-d commanding that His people be comforted because their measure of suffering is filled. “Comfort, comfort My people,” says your

G-d. Speak consolingly of Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her period [of exile] has been completed, that her iniquity has been forgiven, for she has received double for all her sins from the hand of the Lord” (40:1-2).

The prophet goes on to tell us how G-d's word endures forever and that those who had hoped to Him will ultimately be vindicated (40:27-31). Chapter 53 is situated in the midst of several passages of consolation in which G-d uses intense and vivid language to accentuate the extent of Israel's ultimate vindication.

But how can Israel be consoled? All the years that Israel was exiled from her land are understood by her enemies as years of widowhood, years in which her Divine husband had abandoned her and favoured them. But G-d promises that the shame of her widowhood will be forgotten and will no longer be remembered (54:4). How can the future erase the shame of the past?

Chapter 53 provides the answer to this question. The suffering was not in vain. The suffering that Israel experienced played an integral part in G-d's plan for all humankind. Israel's enemies understood her suffering as a sign that the Jewish people are more sinful than any other nation. But when the truth is revealed, all will suddenly understand that Israel's suffering was a sign of the deep relationship that existed between G-d and His chosen nation. This is expressed by the prophet Amos, “You alone did I know from among all the families of the earth; therefore I will hold you to account for all of your iniquities” (3:2).

The more her enemies have built theological edifices on the basis of their misunderstanding of Israel's suffering, to that same degree will they be shocked when the despised people are vindicated (52:14). The nations may think that Israel's suffering is a sign of their own righteousness, but the prophet encourages Israel with the message that her suffering

is an indication of her own closeness to G-d and the part that she plays in His cosmic plan.

Christian missionaries read the Jewish Bible as if it were a mystery novel

What is G-d trying to teach us? What is the spiritual lesson?

The underlying lesson of these later chapters in the book of Isaiah is that those who trust in G-d are relying on the one power that is worthy of trust. Every iota of labour and toil will be rewarded by G-d, because G-d is a Master who pays His servant who labours before Him (40:10; 61:8; 62:1, 11; 66:14). As G-d's servant, Israel is commissioned to bear witness to His truth (43:10; 44:8). Those who resist G-d's truth will persecute G-d's servant and this suffering is all a part of Israel's calling to bear witness to His truth.

All those who resisted G-d's message and contended with the truth of Israel's testimony will be confounded (41:11; 52:15; Micah 7:10). And Israel will rejoice and glory in the One G-d she always trusted in (Isaiah 25:9; 41:16; 54:1). ■

Jews for Judaism **Israel Advocacy Videos.** A Vital Need

by Rabbi Michael Skobac

Jews for Judaism was initially established to counter the efforts of aggressive missionary groups targeting the Jewish community. Over the years, our mandate expanded to include other threats to Jewish continuity, including destructive cults, the lure of Eastern religions, and assimilation.

Over the past ten years, another issue has emerged that has alienated countless young Jews from their own Jewish identities, and that has been the systemic vilification of Israel in the media, on university campuses and from many world governments. The impact has been devastating, as impressionable Jewish youth assume that if the entire world is against Israel and is rejecting the validity of Zionism, they can't all be wrong.

This motivated us to build a special playlist on our YouTube channel entitled "The Jewish Connection to

Israel," dedicated to countering the slander and misinformation that are hurled at Israel on a non-stop basis. We encourage people to remember that there are two sides to this issue, and they owe it to their own sense of intellectual integrity not to uncritically accept the case against Israel without seeking out the other side of the story.

Our videos calmly and rationally present well-reasoned analysis of the most frequently encountered attacks against Israel. We tackle the question of the rights of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and counter the claims that Israel is a colonial settler state founded on occupying stolen Arab land. And, of course, we address the vicious canards of Israel being an apartheid state carrying out a program of genocide against Palestinian Arabs.

Knowledge is power, and our Israel advocacy videos are a vital resource in today's battle for truth. ■



The Living Torah

A Journey through the Five Books of Moses

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

From the story of Creation to Israel's covenant at Sinai and Moses' final words, the Five Books of Moses serve as the foundation of Jewish thought. In this series, Rabbi Skobac guides participants through each book, highlighting its unique philosophical, theological and spiritual themes and the traditional commentaries that illuminate them.

Book I: Genesis - BEGINNINGS

The Story of Creation, Covenant and the Patriarchs

Book II: Exodus - THE BIRTH OF A NATION

From Redemption to Revelation

Book III: Leviticus - THE LAWS OF HOLINESS

From Ritual to Morality

Book IV: Numbers - THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

Forty Years of Trials, Faith and Wandering

Book V: Deuteronomy - A TESTAMENT OF FAITH

Moses prepares Israel for the Land and Beyond

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שַׁעְרֵי שׁוֹמַיִם
SHAAREI SHOMAYIM



Jews for Judaism's New Educational Seminars

by Rabbi
Michael Skobac

STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION

As is well-known, a building is only as strong as its foundation. Jews for Judaism is dedicated to strengthening Jewish identity, and as part of our programming, we will be offering two new series this fall. These will both deepen understanding and appreciation of Judaism as well as help participants resist the deceptive and manipulative arguments of missionaries seeking to convert Jews.

“The Living Torah: A Journey through the Five Books of Moses” is a new five-part seminar that will be suitable for people of all backgrounds. From the story of Creation to Israel’s covenant at Sinai and Moses’s final words, the Five Books of Moses serve as the foundation of Jewish thought. This seminar will guide participants through each book, highlighting its unique philosophical, theological and spiritual themes and the traditional commentaries that illuminate them.

Our second new program will be a series of six mini-lectures entitled “Imagining the Messianic Age.” This series of short, punchy talks will give participants a vividly clear picture of how to recognize the Messiah by confirming whether the dramatic events foretold by the Biblical prophets have transpired. These include the ingathering of Jewish exiles to the land of Israel, the restoration of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and the fulfillment of universal peace and knowledge of G-d. There is no Messiah without the utopian Messianic age described in prophecy, and these are the only criteria the Bible

provides to identify the Messiah.

Being confronted by aggressive Christian missionaries can be an intimidating experience for those not prepared to respond to their well-rehearsed sales pitch, which cites numerous cherry-picked passages from the Hebrew Scriptures.

There is an insightful parable that illustrates the most effective way of preparing for such encounters. It is said that the FBI in the United States is tasked

**Gain a genuine
understanding
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with combatting the scourge of counterfeiting operations that can threaten the integrity of the American economy when employed by hostile foreign governments. You might think that the agents trained for this assignment are shown numerous samples of

counterfeit bills and how they are made.

But this is not the case. Instead, the agents are shown how real currency is produced and they spend a tremendous amount of time examining various denominations of real currency. They become so immersed in viewing and handling genuine money and so intimately familiar with the real thing that they can immediately spot a counterfeit.

This perfectly illustrates the goal of our educational programming in general and these two new programs in particular. We seek to help Jewish people gain a genuine understanding of the spiritual depth and beauty of Judaism and what our Bible truly teaches. Fortified with this, the misleading claims of predatory missionaries will be easily resisted. ■

JEWS FOR JUDAISM'S
FALL MINI-LECTURES
with Rabbi Michael Skobac

Imagining the Messianic Age:

TOWARD IDENTIFYING THE MESSIAH

Three Mini-Lectures each evening!

Thurs
30
OCT

KICKSTARTING THE REDEMPTION:

Israel Returns to G-d and Torah Observance

SON OF DAVID:

The Lineage of the True Redeemer

THE GREAT RETURN:

The Messianic Ingathering of Israel

Thurs
06
NOV

THE HOUSE OF G-D:

The Restored Holy Temple in the Messianic Vision

GLOBAL CONNECTION TO THE ALMIGHTY:

Worldwide Embrace of G-d in the Messianic Age

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES:

Universal Peace as a Messianic Criterion

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Shaarei  Tefillah
Community Inspired Judaism

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Help Save Jewish Lives



and Keep Jews Jewish

Jews for Judaism is a global leader in Jewish outreach. We are at the forefront of addressing the most difficult and sensitive issues threatening Jewish survival. Our goals are to strengthen Jewish pride and identity and to win back those Jews who have been negatively influenced or coerced by missionaries, cults, eastern religions, the growing rate of Jewish apathy and ignorance, assimilation, intermarriage, anti-Israel BDS propaganda, antisemitism and other challenges to Jewish continuity that are devastating the Jewish community worldwide.

Jews for Judaism achieves its goals via local programming and worldwide Internet Jewish outreach. Over a million people access our social media platforms yearly. Thousands of Jews are helped by our YouTube video lectures, specialized intervention, one-on-one counselling, education programs, downloadable educational materials, and Shabbat and Jewish Holiday home hospitality.

Please Support Jews for Judaism

Jews for Judaism unites the Jewish community in a common cause. We have earned endorsements from a wide spectrum of Jewish agencies, rabbis and educators. We connect countless Jewish people to the spiritual depth, beauty and wisdom of Judaism. Please support Jews for Judaism. You can help keep Jews Jewish and save Jewish lives by giving now at www.jewsforjudaism.ca/donate/. Thank you.

JewsforJudaism.ca

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