

WOLVES IN SHEEPS' CLOTHING

Missionaries Within Our Community

Part 1: By Suri Epstein

Jews understand the historical price for rejecting Christianity. We have, after all, 2,000 years of anti-Semitism to show for it. Yet, despite that past, something unprecedented and unthinkable in Jewish history is now taking place.

More Jews have converted to Christianity in the last 20 years than in the last 20 centuries.

What exactly is going on?

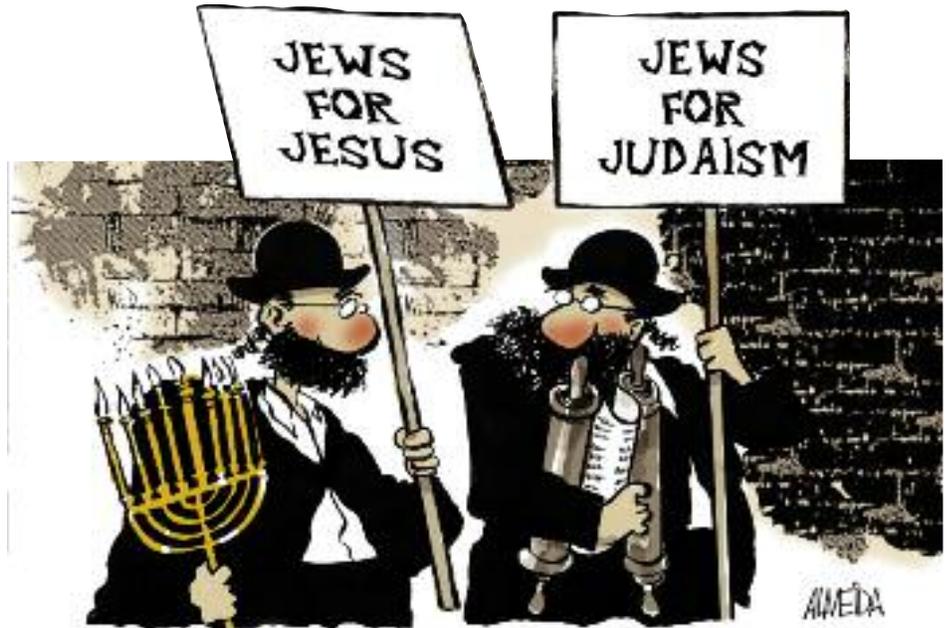
"In the last two decades, the missionary game has changed" says Julius Ciss, founder of the Toronto branch of Jews for Judaism, an organization dedicated to responding to missionaries, cults, intermarriage, and other challenges to Jewish continuity. Until recently, Christianity, which claims 2.18 billion adherents worldwide – roughly one-third of the planet's population – was never really able to penetrate the Jewish market.

But after 2,000 years of failure and frustration, North American Evangelical Christians were driven to study the issue and re-think their approach. According to Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education and Counselling at Jews for Judaism, they realized they had a public relations problem on their hands.

"For centuries, Jewish people have had overwhelmingly negative associations with Christianity. We went through the Crusades, Inquisition, pogroms and endless persecution," he says.

The solution for missionaries has been to convince Jews that historic anti-Semitic activity was perpetrated by people who were not *real* Christians. "They had to convince Jews that they support them and love them," Rabbi Skobac says, "that real Christians love Jews."

The second part of their approach addressed the common aversion that Jews often feel toward the acceptance of Jesus, which is seen as a betrayal of one's Jewish identity. "How do you get Jewish people to feel less



Many Jews think that the issue of Jews for Jesus or Messianic Jews is a joke. Nothing could be further from the truth.

uncomfortable, less guilty, to accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour?" Rabbi Skobac states. "After all, to Jewish ears the name 'Jesus' sounds like the scratching of finger nails on a black board."

For Evangelical Christians, whose primary role is to share the gospel, there could be no rest until a strategy was developed. They finally decided that in order to make Christianity palatable to Jews, they would re-package their Christian core beliefs into soothingly familiar practices and disguise their product with Jewish ritual. This, they realized, could finally break down Jewish resistance to Christianity.

This new proselytizing pitch basically assures Jews that it's not necessary to convert to Christianity to accept Jesus as their saviour. Rather, a Jew can remain a good Jew while still believing in Jesus. "The basic message of the missionary today is that everything they're teaching about Christianity is consistent with the Torah," says Rabbi Skobac.

And unfortunately, this new approach is

working. It starts with its new label, "Messianic Judaism," a seemingly innocuous term with a Jewish resonance.

But for Messianic Jews, the word *Mashiach* (Messiah) has a whole different meaning. That's because in the world of "Messianic Judaism," their messiah died 2,000 years ago, and supposedly did so to atone for our sins.

There are numerous YouTube videos and websites that offer a taste of what their worship looks like. They come from literally hundreds of congregations all over the world, with names like Beit Mashiach, (Alabama), Beit Tefilat Yeshua, (Rio de Janeiro) and Baruch Hashem, (Dallas). Most unsuspecting Jews would not realize that Toronto's Talmidei Yeshua Fellowship actually means the Students of Jesus Fellowship or Panama's Bet Yeshua translates to House of Jesus or Indianapolis' Ahavat Yeshua means the Love of Jesus.

Imagine a church service that is designed with one purpose in mind – to make Jews comfortable. A typical YouTube video starkly por-

Continued from page 1

trays this deceptive and insidious approach to marketing Christianity.

A congregation filled with men and women sing joyously together. There are no crucifixes in this house of worship. There is no Christian iconography on their walls or stained-glass windows. And there are no priests wearing prayer robes or collars.

What we see, though, is a gathering of people wearing *kippot* and *talleisim* (skull caps and prayer shawls).

They sing *Ki Mitzion*, their *talleisim* fluttering as they lovingly remove the *Sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) from the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark). They're *shuckling* and swaying as they kiss the *Sefer Torah* as it is gently carried to the *bima* (Torah table). The Torah reading is then sung in the standard Ashkenaz *trop* (incantation).

When you watch this, you have to remind yourself that these people are actually worshipping the Christian messiah... Jesus!

Finally, after 2,000 years, they've devised a formula that has struck missionary gold.

The numbers confirm this success and they're alarming. As recently as 1967, not one "Messianic Synagogue" existed anywhere in the world. By 1998 there were 350, and today that number runs as high as 800.

Demographic studies confirm this disastrous trend and indicate that the problem will only intensify. When the last American National Jewish Population Survey was published in 2000, it revealed that 1.4 million Jews are members of, or affiliated with, a religion other than Judaism, the most popular religion being Christianity. It's safe to assume that the number has risen sharply in the 12 years since then, and will only continue to grow.

Christianity is the dominant religion in North America and is the primary source of active proselytizing, but it's not the only beneficiary of this exodus from the Jewish community. "About 30% of non-Asian Buddhists in North America come out of the Jewish world," Rabbi Skobac reveals. "Hinduism, Sufism, as well as Baha'i also have a disproportionate number of Jews."

The exploding success of the Messianic approach is now being adopted by Christian denominations across the missionary world. There are currently more than 1,000 proselytizing organizations based in North America that specifically target Jews worldwide, including Israel.

If you walk into the conference hall at one of their annual Messianic conferences, you'll witness a scene that is nothing less than surreal.

Rabbi Skobac, who has been attending these annual Messianic conferences every year for almost three decades, relates that he has witnessed an extraordinary increase in the adoption of Jewish practice.

"More and more Messianics are dressing to



Jews for Judaism's Executive Director, Julius Ciss (L) and Rabbi Michael Skobac, Director of Education

look like Orthodox Jews. About half of the participants are wearing *tzitzis*, (ritual fringes) he says, "and many of them have *techeilis* (a blue thread)." Rabbi Skobac has noted an increase of men with black hats and on occasion has even seen Messianic men sporting *payos* (earlocks).

In the world of the Messianics – or "completed Jews" as they call themselves – Christmas and Easter don't exist. Instead, they observe all Jewish holidays including Yom Kippur, Chanukah and Passover.

A second-generation David Chernoff, Messianic missionary, describes their doctrine on his website. "We celebrate all of the feasts because it is instructed by G-d in the Torah for Israel to observe these festivals forever." He goes on, however, to clarify

the fundamental purpose underlying their celebrations. "When we, as Messianic Jews, celebrate the festivals, we do so in a Messianic way, with the view that *Yeshua* [Jesus] is the fulfillment of all of these Holy Days, i.e. He is our Passover Lamb, our Atonement on Yom Kippur, etc." Rabbi Skobac says, "They have developed a way for Jews to embrace Jesus and still feel Jewish."

"Over the last 30 years, they have felt that as a genuine expression of their own spirituality they should be learning the Torah." Rabbi Skobac continues. "Many of the gentiles in the movement feel that this is how Jesus would have lived and prayed." Rabbi Skobac has also noticed that more and more people are following kosher

dietary laws. This was not the case 25 years ago when this movement was in its infancy.

This pseudo-Torah "observance" among Messianics has grown to the point that many of them actually identify themselves as "Torah Observant Messianic Jews." The Observant Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Organization runs its own *Beit Din* (Rabbinic court). The Coalition of Torah Observant Messianic Congregations has affiliates all over the world – including Toronto.

Congregation Melech Yisrael is located on Ranee Avenue. It bills itself as a "Torah Centred Messianic Synagogue" and features a *D'var Torah* related to the weekly Torah portion on its home page. Toronto has a number of Messianic congregations. Beit Haderech is located on Dufferin Street and offers a weekly *Kiddush*, *Cheder* (Hebrew school), and Torah classes. Talmidei Yeshua in Vaughan is a "community of Torah-observant messianic believers," and City of David Messianic Synagogue is located on Yonge Street.

None of these organizations has reached the heights of ambition as the [Messianic] Jerusalem Council though. They have plans to establish a "Messianic Sanhedrin."

According to their vision statement, "The Jerusalem Council vision includes the creation of an Orthodox [Messianic] Rabbinical Yeshiva for students to earn a degree in [its] rabbinic studies, and then be qualified to receive *Smicha* (ordination) by an Orthodox [Messianic] Jewish Beit Din, after which they can better serve their existing communities, as well as the global body of Messianic Jewish believers."

According to Rabbi Skobac, there are about 10 "Messianic Yeshivas" in North America.

Some of those *Smicha*-granting institutions have names like Netzer David International Yeshiva and Yeshiva Yesodey HaEmunah. The latter has a student population of over 1,500. Such rabbinic students must study from numerous categories including *Midrash Rabbah*, Talmudic study, Answering Jewish Objections to Yeshua, Kosher laws, and Shabbat observance and laws, among others.

Even though Messianic doctrine claims to descend from first century Jewish Christians,



Members sing *Ki Mitzion* as they remove a Torah from the *Aron HaKodesh* at Baruch HaShem Messianic Synagogue, San Antonio, TX



Recent Jews for Jesus promotional image

they seem to have no qualms about appropriating Jewish works that are based on the Oral Torah and were written over 1,000 years later.

Beit HaShofar is a 40-year old congregation in South Seattle that offers a class in Parshat Hashavua (the weekly Torah portion), using the Artscroll Chumash commentary. They have both a men's and women's *Chevra Kadisha* (burial society) as well as *Bikur Cholim* (visits to the ill) and *Chessed* (kindness) groups.

"Rebbetzin" Malka set up a special website after she stumbled upon the teachings of the 19th century *Mussar* (ethical self improvement) movement. "It became apparent to me that the best way to emulate the ethical lifestyle that Mashiach Yeshua (Messiah Jesus) spoke of was through *Mussar*," she says on her blog.

The first thing she did was to order charts of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter's *Thirteen Middot* (character traits) to teach the congregation's children in the Messianic synagogue *cheder*. She was then inspired to expand the scope of her mission and establish the Riverton Mussar Project to encourage people to set up a *chavruta* (study partner) and to learn *Mussar* intensely.

She encourages the use of classical Mussar texts such as *Messilas Yesharim*, *Orchos Tzaddikim*, *Chovos Halevavos*, *Cheshbon Hanefesh* and *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*.

The blueprint of this approach to co-opting traditional Jewish practice was carefully articulated by California pastor, Reverend Ray Gannon in 1974. "The discipling of Jewish people can be done in two ways," he writes in his introduction to *Everything You Need to Grow a Messianic Synagogue*. "The normal way is to innocently but gradually 'gentilize'

the Jewish believer." Acknowledging the historic failure of that approach, he writes, "The better way, by all current mission strategy and thought, is to win Jewish people to our Saviour with nonchalantly or unintentionally divorcing them from their Jewish cultural heritage."

He advocates using euphemisms for Christian concepts when talking to Jews. Instead of the word Christian, he encouraged the use of the term "Messianic believer." The Messianic movement substitutes *Yeshua HaMashiach* for Jesus Christ and *Rav Shaul* instead of the Apostle Paul. The New Testament is referred to as the *Brit HaChadasha* and the Christian baptism as the *mikvah* service.

In 1981 Reverend Phillip E. Goble recognized the spectacular success of the Messianic approach. "The Jewishness approach... is where our hope is in seeing tens of thousands of Jewish people saved," he wrote. He made a plea for the establishment of Messianic synagogues that "are desperately needed today in the Jewish communities of the world. These congregations can be multiplied as quickly as Messianic synagogues can be organized to equip and train their leadership. As Jewish leaders are trained, they will learn through the yeshivas how to plant a new congregation, how to preach in a Jewish style with new Covenant substance... wherever there are Jewish population centres in the world."

His strategy has been a smashing success and the effect on Jews is alarming. Julius Ciss relates the story of Dena, a woman from the Former Soviet Union. She had arranged for Natalya, who had almost no connection or knowledge of Judaism, to participate in two traditional Passover Seders. After the holiday, Dena called Natalya to find out how the Seders went.

Natalya was thrilled. Although the Haggadah was read in Hebrew at the first Seder, the food was delicious. The second Seder was conducted in Russian so she was able to follow along. "But the third Seder was the best," she told Dena.

"The third Seder?" Dena asked. "Natalya told her that Chosen People Ministries of Toronto invited the Russian Jewish community to a *Pesach* Seder where they could learn the true meaning of Passover." Ciss says. "She told Dena how they sang beautiful songs at the Seder and danced the *Horah*. We learned that the three matzos at the Seder represent the *Av*, *Ben* and *Ruach HaKodesh* (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). We even dipped the greens in salt water, which symbolizes the tears Jews will shed at the end of history when they realize they've killed their messiah."

"Dena was sick about it," says Ciss. "But this

kind of gathering is not an isolated event."

The first generation of Messianics, both Jewish and Gentile, are having children. They obviously cannot send their kids to Jewish schools, but don't want them to attend public schools or Christian schools either. So who better to imitate than the Jewish community itself? Yes, they indeed have a growing day school movement. Toronto has Melech Yisrael Academy, Baltimore has the Eitz Chaim Day School, and Philadelphia has the Chalutzim Day School.

Finally, after 2,000 years, they've devised a formula that has struck missionary gold

As the movement grows in numbers, one can assume that they will begin to flex their legal muscles. This is already the case in *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel), where the concentration of Jews makes it an irresistible target for missionary efforts. According to the *U.S. International Religious*

Freedom Report for 2011, there could be 150 congregations there. Some estimates of Messianic Jews are as high as 20,000.

In 2008 it was discovered that one of the top four Israeli finalists for the *Chidon Hatanach* – the Israel Bible Contest – was a Messianic Jew. Fearing a lawsuit, she was allowed to compete in the contest. Messianic Jews in Israel however, consider themselves a persecuted minority and with the help of foreign money, have gone to the Israeli Supreme Court to fight their case. Messianics celebrated when on April 16, 2008 the Supreme Court ruled that they had the right to make *Aliyah* under the Law of Return.

In 2009, a Messianic Jew applied to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy and requested to wear a Star of David on his lapel to signify that he is a Jewish chaplain. Thankfully Vice Admiral M.E. Ferguson ordered that he wear a cross. The applicant decided to leave the Navy, but one has to wonder about the future as their critical mass grows. Will there be legal challenges as they continuously lay claim to be actual Jews?

These issues reflect the overall state of the Jewish people. "We have Jews growing up with no Jewish identity," says Ciss. "They're turned off. And the messianic movement comes along and merges Christian culture with the culture they grew up with and assuages the guilt that they would have in converting to Christianity. Their presentation is that 'embracing Jesus is the most Jewish thing a Jew can do!'"

This has created a tremendous urgency for Jews for Judaism who facilitate over 1,450 counselling sessions a year. They teach, lecture and share the spiritual depth of Judaism to as many people as possible. They have a growing presence on the Internet where their videos are viewed by thousands each day on YouTube and KosherTube. And the problem is not limited only to Christian missionaries. "We're also dealing with cults, eastern religions including Islam and intermarriage," Ciss states.



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. Shabbat candle lighting at Beth Ariel Messianic Synagogue, Los Angeles, CA. 2. Baruch HaShem, one of the largest Messianic Synagogues in America, San Antonio, TX. 3. Shabbat Horah dancing at Baruch HaShem Messianic Synagogue, San Antonio, TX. 4. Jews for Jesus missionary confronts Chassidic Jews in Brooklyn, NY. 5. Messianic Rabbi at Beth Goyim Messianic Congregation, Fairview, NJ. 6. Torah procession at Hebrew Roots Network Shabbat service, Lebanon, TN.

“When Jews are not really connected to Judaism, they become vulnerable to all kinds of things,” Rabbi Skobac says. “If a person does not appreciate the spiritual beauty of Judaism, what’s to stop them from intermarrying, or becoming Bahais, Buddhists or Christians? For us the real issue is not Christianity – it’s the tenuous connection that Jews have with Judaism.”

And therein lays the crux of the problem. “After many years we realized that Jews for Jesus is not the problem,” Rabbi Skobac states, “They are merely a *symptom* of the problem.”

Missionary activity flourishes by feeding off the alienation and ignorance of Jews. That alienation has created a fertile breeding ground for the rise of the Messianic Jewish movement.

The mandate of Jews for Judaism has broadened into preventative educational efforts as huge swaths of the Jewish population plunge farther into the precipice of spiritual self-destruction.

“These are spiritually starved Jews tragically discovering G-d in Christian settings,” Ciss says. “They’re discovering a personal relationship with G-d. Evangelical Christians love G-d and their love is something that is palpable. It affects people and seduces them.”

Missionary activity flourishes by feeding off the alienation and ignorance of Jews

“We live in a world that’s so confused,” Ciss claims. “When Jews see people like this who are certain of their belief in G-d, and are full of joy and meaning, and you see that their faith has impacted the way they live – that certainty is attractive. Their prayer services are very passionate, vibrant and alluring.”

Rabbi Skobac points out that even though the faith of these Christians is intense, we should remember that because they ultimately worship a human being, Jesus – we’re dealing with something Judaism regards as idolatry.

“We’re working to strengthen the Jewish community at large,” Ciss states. Jews for Judaism sees its role as spiritually inoculating Jewish people. That goal is one of the reasons that they chose to name their organization Jews for Judaism and not Jews *against* Jesus. They are invited to speak locally and internationally to every kind of group and denomination within the Jewish community. Their repertoire of classes, lectures, seminars, and YouTube videos has found an unusually broad appeal among all segments of the Jewish community.

“We do programs for everyone from 12-year olds to seniors,” Rabbi Skobac says. “Our goal is to alert, equip and inspire as many people as possible from across the Jewish community.”

Sometimes the response to Jews for Judaism’s efforts and interventions takes years and sometimes it’s immediate. Rabbi Skobac recalls getting a distress call from the family of a young man who was going to university in England and who had converted to Christianity. “We studied together for an entire summer, three times a week,” Rabbi Skobac says. At the end of the summer, he left and Rabbi Skobac had no idea what happened to him. But then three years later, his mother called to say that he had rejected his Christian beliefs, committed himself to Judaism and was about to marry a religious Jewish girl from the United States.

“In counter-missionary counselling, discovering the ‘rest of the story’ years later happens routinely,” claims Rabbi Skobac.

“Our mission is to help the entire Jewish world connect more deeply to the spiritual power of Judaism,” Ciss says. “We’re proud to unite the entire Jewish community in the common cause of keeping Jews Jewish.” ■

- With the exception of *Messy Antics and Hypocrisy*, all articles in this newsletter were written by Suri Eptstein and have been reprinted, with some editorial changes, with permission of *Iraynu* magazine.

MESSY ANTICS AND HYPOCRISY

The Ultimate Desecration of the Torah

By Rabbi Michael Skobac

When a YouTube video of a notorious missionary desecrating a Torah scroll surfaced on the Internet recently, it took only a few days for it to go “viral” and receive widespread media attention. On January 29, “Messianic Rabbi” Ralph Messer visited the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church near Atlanta and “coronated” Bishop Eddie Long by wrapping him in a Torah scroll, fitting him with a *tallit* and parading him around in an uplifted chair.

Messer claimed that the scroll used in this bizarre ceremony came from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The credibility of this has been questioned along with the credibility of virtually everything he said about Judaism during his offensive spectacle. This included referring to the Torah’s cover as a “foreskin” and asserting that the Jewish kings were wrapped in Torah scrolls. Long is currently embroiled in scandal after being accused of sexual misconduct by five young men.

The entire Jewish community was justifiably outraged at this deplorable violation of the most sacred ritual object of Judaism being used as a prop in a Christian worship service. Numerous Christian leaders also expressed their disgust over the disrespect and insensitivity shown toward Jewish tradition. Bishop Long as well expressed regret and apologies for the incident.

For Messer, a non-Jew and leader of Simchat Torah Beit Midrash, a “Hebrew-Christian” congregation and school based in Colorado, this was not his first wrapping of a besieged Church leader in a Torah scroll. In a video he released on the Internet after the controversy broke, Messer unapologetically offered a rambling hour-long explanation and justification for his Torah travesty.

But the most ironic reaction to the growing scandal came from the so-called “Messianic Jewish” community. Numerous leaders and organizations were quick to try and distance themselves from Messer, claiming that he wasn’t a legitimate rabbi and that he perverted and misrepresented Jewish symbols and Jewish tradition. As one Messianic leader lamented, “Judaism is not a toy box for Christians to rifle through.”

Of course there is tremendous truth to the old adage that when you point your finger, you have three pointing back at yourself. When Messianic Jews give their ascent to every single doctrine of Evangelical Christianity, can they honestly claim that



“Messianic Rabbi” Ralph Messer “coronated” Bishop Eddie Long by wrapping him in a Torah scroll, fitting him with a *tallit* and parading him around in an uplifted chair.

their leaders are legitimate rabbis? When the Messianic movement routinely perverts and distorts Jewish traditions, as their insistence that the three matzot at the Passover Seder symbolize Christianity’s Trinity, how can they in all good conscience distinguish themselves from Messer? Methinks the missionaries doth protest too much!

David P. Gusbee, professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University, observed that “One problem with Messianic Judaism, in which leaders attempt to fuse Jewish and Christian traditions and symbols, is that it can easily stray into profound insensitivity.” Yehudah Ilan, who converted to Judaism after a long involvement in the Messianic movement, astutely observed that Messer’s wrapping of a Christian in a Torah scroll is actually an act that most aptly embodies the very *modus operandi* of Messianic Judaism - the wrapping of Christianity in the cloak of Torah. ■



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
- 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., PO Box 41032
Toronto ON Canada M6B 4J6

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

Website: www.jewsforjudaism.ca

© 2012 Jews for Judaism

Publications Mail Agreement Number 1806041

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 • Charles Glina

Editor: Linda Shapiro

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



UJA Federation
OF GREATER TORONTO

FROM RUSSIA COMES LOVE

Missionaries Within Our Community - Part 2: By Suri Epstein

When Sasha immigrated to Canada at the age of seventeen, he only knew one person in Toronto – his aunt Irina. Irina welcomed Sasha to her home and invited him to stay with her on one condition. She was a Jew who had become a Christian, and insisted that Sasha join her at her messianic synagogue. “I’d like you to come and experience my beliefs,” she said.

Sasha attended services with her at Congregation Melech Israel on Ranee Avenue where he found the people warm and welcoming. He had never experienced Jewish observance before in his life in the Former Soviet Union and enjoyed the services. He continued attending with Irina over the course of six weeks.

During that time she pressured him to accept Jesus or else he’d have to leave her home. He ultimately moved out and the only place he could afford was a dingy apartment in a drug-infested building in Parkdale. Alone and lonely, the only friends he had were the members of Congregation Melech Israel. Over the next few months, he became more and more involved with the congregation, finally

accepting their Christian beliefs.

After six months in the squalid Parkdale apartment, he reached his limit. He saw an ad for a basement apartment at Finch and Bathurst. Just before Shabbat, he showed up at the house, owned by Bella, an Orthodox Jewish woman.

After seeing the apartment, Sasha wasn’t interested in renting it. As he was leaving the house, Bella said, “You wouldn’t happen to be Jewish, would you?” She then invited him to join her family for Shabbat. Although he was surprised, he agreed to stay. Seated around the Shabbat table however, Bella was shocked when he spent the entire meal talking about *Yeshua Hamashiach* (Jesus the Messiah).

“What did I get myself into?” she thought.

Still, her husband took him to *shul* (synagogue) the next day, where he continued haranguing everyone within sight about *Yeshua Hamashiach*. Finally, after Shabbat, in desperation Bella called Jews for Judaism’s Executive Director Julius Ciss and begged him to make contact with Sasha. He did and they hit it off immediately. Ciss told him that he used to be a member of Melech Israel and had



Photo: Brent Roatad

believed in Jesus just like Sasha until he realized that he had made a terrible mistake accepting Christianity.

They decided to get together and Ciss found him to be a very likeable person. He agreed to attend some Jewish programming. Ciss was able to demolish his Christian beliefs and with the help of members of the Jewish community, he ended up attending CHAT, a Jewish high school. Today he is married and is an active participant of Aish HaTorah where he and his wife are involved in outreach to other Russian Jews.

“Today, we’re like family,” Ciss declares. “Sadly, because of the Holocaust, I have few relatives. Sasha also has little family. He’s an orphan. But we have a great connection with each other. I was the *sandek* at his son’s *Bris*. It’s beautiful.” ■

A QUEST FOR JEWISH KNOWLEDGE

Missionaries Within Our Community - Part 3:
By Suri Epstein



In 1999, Nathan and Temima Feldman, arrived in Denver’s Orthodox Jewish community. Originally from Platteville, Colorado, they had come to learn and grow in their *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism). Nathan quickly attained work in the community after advertising as a “*frum* (religious) handyman.” The community helped the couple celebrate a kosher wedding as well as the *Bris* of their new son. Their two daughters attended the local Chabad school. Nathan received hundreds of hours of one-on-one learning at the Denver Community Kollel where the couple became deeply involved. According to an article in the *Intermountain Jewish News*, the Feldmans organized the *Kollel* Community Dinner in January and Nathan was offered a teaching job at Denver’s Hillel Academy. They spent every *Shabbat* as guests in the homes of the community, and received money from the Interest-Free Loan Society.

It was only when they were about to make *Aliyah* to Israel that the lives of the family and the trust of the Denver *Kollel* community came crashing down. A Jewish cardiologist who had formerly been involved with the Church of the Living God in Fort Collins, Colorado recognized the couple. Their actual names were Tim Ryan Williams and Amber Williams, and they were members of the Messianic Synagogue where Amber’s father was the pastor. Confronted simultaneously by two Denver rabbis, the couple tearfully admitted that they had defrauded the community by misrepresenting themselves as Jews. Likely, the purpose of their infiltration was to become more effective missionaries by familiarizing themselves with Judaism and a Torah lifestyle. ■

DEFUSING THE MISSIONARY NUCLEAR BOMB

ISAIAH 53

A Counter-Missionary Seminar with Rabbi Michael Skobac

ISAIAH 53 is the go-to chapter in the Jewish Bible for missionaries seeking to convert Jews. They believe it is their best punch. This 3-part seminar will expose the fallacies in the missionary presentation of this difficult chapter and unravel its actual meaning.

SEMINAR CONTENTS:

- 1: Messiah, Sin & How Not to Misread the Bible
- 2: The Missionary Manipulation of Isaiah 53
- 3: Who is Isaiah’s Suffering Servant

Dec 25, 2012
10:30 AM – 4 PM
Shaarei Tefillah Cong.
3600 Bathurst Street
Lunch by Milk n’ Honey
Cost: \$20 – Registration Required
416-789-0020 • toronto@jewsforjudaism.ca