

STUDY* **One-Fifth of Jewish Millennials Believe Jesus Is The Son Of God****



Top portion of a full-page magazine ad by the Jews for Jesus missionary group promoting the report "Jewish Millennials" by The Barna Group

By Rabbi Michael Skobac

Any intelligent army planning to lay siege to a city will not just have its soldiers charge at the walls. Its generals will send out scouting parties to probe for weaknesses in the enemy's fortifications so they will know where to direct their attack. It is only this kind of strategy that will ensure they don't squander their resources but rather use them to best effect.

In targeting the Jewish community for conversion, today's sophisticated missionary organizations have always adopted this approach. In the early 1990s, these missionaries recognized that Jews leaving the former Soviet Union were extremely vulnerable to their overtures due to the weaknesses in their Jewish education. Consequently, they directed an enormous amount of effort to specifically reaching out to this population.

Recently, the Christian missionary group Jews for Jesus commissioned the Barna Group, a well-known polling organization, to undertake a study of Jewish millennials. These are young adults born between the years 1984 and 1999. When Jewish institutions undertake studies like this, it is for the purpose of promoting Jewish identity and continuity. When a group like Jews for Jesus carefully studies a segment of our community, it is clearly with nefarious motivations.

The report, *Jewish Millennials: The Beliefs and Behaviors Shaping Young Jews in America*, presents a complex and

sometimes paradoxical and confusing picture of these 18 to 31 year olds. On the one hand, they report that Jewish identity is very important to them, while on the other hand, they are not invested in traditional concepts of what it means to be Jewish.

For example, an impressive 80% self-identify as religious Jews and about half claim that being Jewish is very important to them. Approximately 25% attend religious services once a week and one-third report that they pray every day. These results contradict the findings of the PEW Research Center's 2013 study of American Jews, which showed a considerably lower rate of synagogue attendance and a much lower percentage saying religion was important to them.

The most surprising results of the Barna Group survey were that 21% of Jewish millennials believed that "Jesus was God in human form that lived

among Jewish people in the first century." In addition, 42% of this age cohort report that they celebrate Christmas and 56% believe that you can be Jewish and yet embrace religions other than Judaism.

One possible factor that might account for the seemingly skewed results of the Barna Group study is that it included Messianic Jews (Jews for Jesus) in its sample, a group that the PEW report excluded

from some questions. As well, 58% of the respondents in the Barna survey were the children of interfaith marriages, while the PEW study used a different definition of who to include as "Jewish" in its sample.

42% of Jewish millennials report that they celebrate Christmas and 56% believe that you can be Jewish and yet embrace religions other than Judaism

*The Jerusalem Post – JTA, November 1, 2017 – Survey by the Barna Group of **Jews born from 1984 to 1999.

When one considers that so many of the Jewish millennials surveyed had one non-Jewish parent, inevitably a Christian, some of these results are less shocking. Another study, conducted in 2015 by Brandeis University, of Jewish children of intermarriage found that 86% celebrated Christmas. It is also estimated that about one-quarter of Jewish millennials in the United States grew up attending church during their formative years.

Consequently, among millennials who had only one Jewish parent, 62% consider Jewish identity to be defined by something other than Judaism. An alarming 79% of this group expressed that they were somewhat open to exploring faiths other than Judaism.

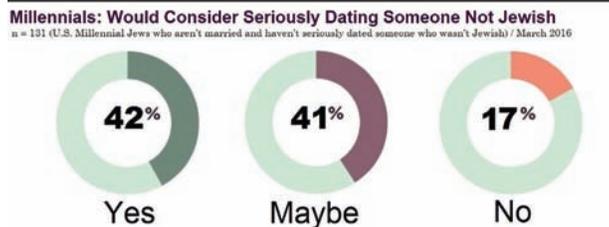
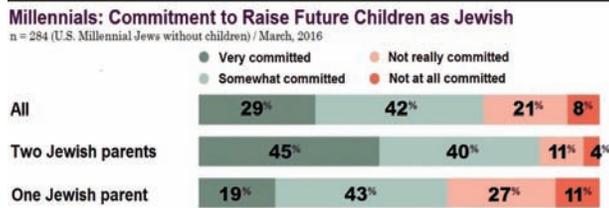
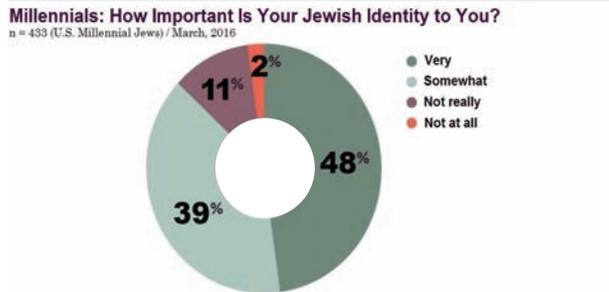
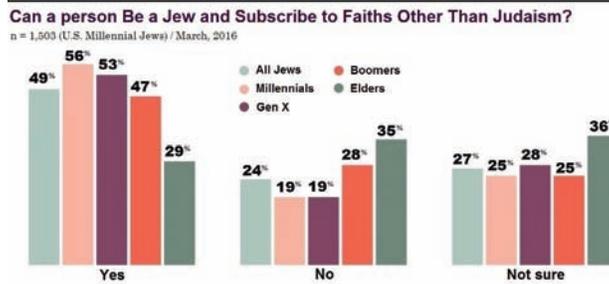
These young Jews see identity as fluid, something each person creates for oneself rather than something received. Millennials tend to view identity as a mosaic, with Judaism as just one tile of that mosaic. As a result, they tend to see less of a contradiction than do older Jews when other tiles of the mosaic come from other faith sources.

Another disturbing finding about this generation of young Jews is that only about 10% see affinity to Israel as being central to Judaism. This is despite the fact that 31% have been to Israel and about one-quarter of them have been on the ten-day free Birthright trip. The 2013 PEW study found that 39% of millennials felt no attachment at all to Israel.

With most Jewish millennials identifying as “left-leaning” politically and a very high percentage attending universities that are hotbeds of anti-Israel sentiment, these figures should not be shocking. These young Jews find themselves at odds with Israeli politics and American Zionism. Another issue behind this distance from Israel is the lessened relevance of and connection to the Holocaust for Jews of this generation.

Not only is this generation less affected by anti-Semitism in their lives, they feel less menaced by Christian missionaries. Millennials are not as agitated about Jewish survival in the ways that older Jews are. Surprisingly, 39% reported having a favourable view of the missionary group Jews for Jesus.

As soon as the Barna Group study was completed, Jews for Jesus staff undertook



Some of the graphic charts produced by the Barna Group analyzing U.S. Jewish Millennials

a careful analysis of the survey’s findings in order to seek out new ways to access this target population. They published their analysis of the data and the strategies and new initiatives they were developing to more effectively evangelize these young Jews. For example, there are specific programs geared toward interdating and intermarried Jews.

A number of outside reviews of the Barna survey questioned its methods

and accuracy, but even if some of the erosion may not be as dire as reported, it is safe to say that where there’s smoke there is fire. There are clearly trends affecting the spiritual health of Jewish millennials that cannot be ignored.

Because our world today is very impersonal and alienating, young Jews most likely are seeking meaning in life and ways of expressing themselves spiritually. However, for the most part, they are turned off by the established institutional fabric of the Jewish community. Millennials are not interested in synagogue membership or denominational affiliation. They are seeking stability and authenticity, as well as ways of positively affecting the world, and they want to do these things on their own terms.

We must recognize that there is no need to magically materialize a new Judaism in order to attract millennials. Our tradition has nourished idealistic people for thousands of years. With this in mind, it is vital to expose young Jews to the full range of rich spiritual wisdom and experiences that Judaism offers. This includes meditative prayer and the profound technologies of personal transformation taught by the Mussar movement. In our generation of serious concerns about the environmental health of our planet, it is critical for Jewish millennials to appreciate that their tradition has been teaching about ecological ethics and responsibilities for over 3,000 years.

Part of what has sustained Judaism for so long has been its insistence that each generation not only embrace its past but also creatively engage with, develop and interpret its teachings in the present. In the words of Rabbi Bentzion Klatzko, we must communicate the idea that Judaism is not a religion – it’s a relationship.

Ensuring Jewish continuity is not just the responsibility of rabbis and professional educators. Every Jew who is concerned must become part of the solution to this challenge. We begin by taking our Judaism more seriously, committing ourselves to deepening our personal connection to our heritage and seeking ways to inspire those within our personal orbits. And we must begin now. ■

JEWES FOR JUDAISM'S SIX AREAS OF OUTREACH

JEWES FOR JUDAISM (Canada) provides cutting-edge educational outreach programs that empower Jews to rediscover and strengthen their Jewish heritage.

Jews for Judaism is connecting with and helping countless "at-risk" Jews. We are affecting the lives of over 2,500 people worldwide every day!

That's hundreds-of-thousands of individuals and families who are benefiting from our specialized counseling services and education programs every year.

Jews for Judaism's programs connect Jews to the spiritual depth, beauty and wisdom of Judaism. Through a variety of free educational programs and materials, one-on-one counseling and global Internet outreach we are keeping Jews Jewish.

Jews for Judaism is fighting grave threats to Jewish survival on six fronts:

1. Christian missionaries and "Jews for Jesus" groups convert thousands of Jews worldwide every year. Jews for Judaism promotes a wide array of powerful educational programs to help inoculate Jews from these threats. Our free counseling services

help bring Jews who have been affected return to Judaism.

2. Destructive cults cause many Jews to abandon family, friends and careers. Jews for Judaism raises awareness about the deceptive recruiting tactics of cult groups and teaches vital critical thinking skills to help people see through their manipulations.

3. Eastern religions, Buddhism and Hinduism are popular choices for many Jews. When Jews assume that Judaism is only a heritage and tradition without spirituality, they will seek it elsewhere. Jews for Judaism exposes these seekers to the vibrant spiritual side of Judaism such as meditation.

4. Apathy and ignorance leave many Jews unaware, unaffiliated and assimilated. The most critical question for these people is, "Why Be Jewish?" Jews for Judaism's dynamic programs and resources offer powerful reasons that help them realize that Judaism is a path they can enrich their lives.

5. Intermarriage is exploding with a 75% rate in some North American cities. Jews for Judaism's inspiring lectures and literature provide young Jews with compelling reasons to value and maintain

their identity. Jews for Judaism provides counseling to families struggling with this challenge.

6. Anti-Israel sentiment and BDS movements on campus inhibit Jewish students from standing up for Israel. Jews for Judaism's: "The Jewish Connection to Israel" lectures, and online videos are a vital resource to young Jews, equipping them with responses to anti-Israel agitation and helping students feel confident and be proud supporters of Israel.

Every day Jews for Judaism receives urgent calls and emails from Jewish individuals and families. They tell us, "We had nowhere else to turn but you."

We have been making an impact. We regularly hear from grateful people we have helped.

"Rabbi Skobac, thank you for all that you do, day in and day out, to preserve the knowledge of Judaism and for being a personal catalyst in bringing my entire family out of the church and back to our Jewish roots." – Amy Z.

"I thank God for opening my eyes to the truth by leading me to Jews for Judaism. It's the ultimate resource for Jews coming out of Christianity!" – David H.

Thanks to support from our generous donors, Jews for Judaism is keeping Jews Jewish and helping to stop growing threats to Jewish survival that are devastating Jewish communities everywhere. ■

Jews for Judaism is helping countless of "at-risk" Jews. We are affecting the lives of over 2,500 people worldwide every day!

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LETTERS TO RABBI MICHAEL SKOBAC

I was a Jewish believer in Jesus for 42 years, but through the work of Rabbi Skobac at Jews for Judaism, I came to understand that believing in Jesus as Messiah/G-d/Son of G-d was nonsense and contrary to all that the Hebrew Scriptures teach. Thank you Rabbi Skobac for bringing me back to the core belief of Judaism that there is only One G-d and only G-d is to be worshiped. No one else. – *Jane D.*

As a teacher, I give Rabbi Skobac A+! Besides his amazing knowledge of the material, I liked the way he delivered it. He did not put down Christianity; he treated it with respect, consideration, sensitivity and Jewish humour. You could feel Rabbi Skobac cares tremendously about his mission and he puts in it his utmost. God bless you all for an amazing work you are doing. – *Rouhama D.*

I have listened to many of your lectures on YouTube. They are absolutely amazing!!! I

have never been a believer in Jesus myself, but the subject interests me and I found your lectures to be very educational and fascinating to say the least, as well as your level of expertise on Christianity, not typical of a Rabbi. I am trying to become more observant and I have learned a great deal about Judaism from your lectures. Thank you. – *Alla G.*

Thank you for your teachings at “Jews for Judaism”. So eye-opening, life-saving and inspirational! You helped me turn from idolatry to the only G-d, G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. May Hashem bless you and give you the strength to keep up the good work. – *Olga M.*

I am a 60 year old grandmother. Finding your videos and teachings have been an amazing source of clarity and the help I needed to shed the doubts and fears the missionaries put in me. – *Susana S.*

My husband and I are extremely grateful to Hashem for the job that you are doing

and how your teachings helped us in the past. May Hashem always guard and protect you that you may continue bringing Jewish souls back to Hashem and his holy Torah. – *Julie K.*

I greatly appreciate the tremendous work that you do to bring Jews back to Judaism. Your teachings had a great influence on me and on my wife. You are a kind of celebrity in our home. G-d Bless. – *Joseph L.*

Most people I know enjoy a fight, verbal or physical. You don't fight... but you win. And, you do it in a way that wins over opponents too. It's refreshing to witness you in action and I very much appreciate you modeling this method for others to emulate. – *Lenny M.*

Wow. What a beautiful message! Thank you for opening my eyes to the truth. When I watch these videos I cannot believe how I was so blinded. – *Keren C. ■*

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Campaign in Support of **JEWS FOR JUDAISM**

Some Christians maintain that God rejected Israel and our status as His Chosen People was assumed by the Church.

Has the Church Replaced

ISRAEL? A Jewish Response to a Pernicious Doctrine
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UPDATE: MESSIANIC MISSIONARIES IN ISRAEL

By Rabbi Michael Skobac

Many Jewish people in North America are aware of the numerous Messianic groups like Jews for Jesus and their extensive efforts targeting Jews for conversion. What is far less well known is the nature and extent of such missionary outreach programs in Israel.

One of the largest indigenous missionary initiatives in Israel is One For Israel. In a recent lecture to Christian supporters in the United States, its president, Dr. Erez Soref, outlined the history of the Messianic movement in Israel.

At the birth of the modern state of Israel, there were only about two dozen Jews who had embraced Christianity. Most Jewish converts to Christianity who had been living there fled the country just prior to the outbreak of the War of Independence.

The first formal study of Israeli Messianic Jews was conducted in 1989 by Dr. Jim Sibley. He found that in the forty years since the founding of the state, the number of Messianic Jews had grown to about 1,200.

Although there were many traditional churches in Israel in 1948, there were no congregations that were "Messianic." These are groups that place Christian worship within a context that superficially appears Jewish. This would include, for example, wearing a *tallit*, worshipping in Hebrew and celebrating the Jewish holidays. Dr. Sibley estimated that by 1989, there were about 30 such congregations in Israel.

The next formal study of this movement was conducted by two Danish Christian researchers in 1999. In the ten years since Dr. Sibley's report, the number of Messianics had risen from 1,200 to 5,000, and the number of congregations increased from 30 to 81. Significantly, fewer than 20% of these congregations were led by native-born Israelis.

The most recent survey of Messianic Jews in Israel was conducted by the One For Israel organization in 2017, and the unanticipated results were disturbing. In the 17 years since the previous study, the number of Messianic congregations and home groups has mushroomed from 81 to 300! The number of

Israeli Messianic Jews has swelled from 5,000 to 30,000! These numbers were impacted by the large numbers of Jews from the FSU who had already been converted to Christianity prior to making *aliyah*.

A large percentage of these Israeli Messianics serve in the IDF and this has helped them gain both acceptance and respect. (Hananya Naftali, the popular video blogger, has claimed that God put him in the IDF in order to share his faith in Jesus with fellow soldiers and to "be a light among the Jews.")

One For Israel has organized an extremely ambitious and aggressive constellation of programs in order to evangelize fellow Israelis.

Their major initiatives are based on the recognition that Israelis are the most digitally connected people on the planet. About 99% of Israeli households are connected to the Internet. Israelis are first in the world when it comes to time spent on Facebook and YouTube. Of Israelis aged 13 to 34, 97.6% are active Facebook users, and 70% of their time on their smartphones is not spent in speaking to friends and family but in searching the Internet.

This has led One For Israel, as well as other missionary groups operating in Israel, to make extensive use of specialized Hebrew-language websites, Facebook pages and YouTube videos. The numerous Hebrew-language evangelical videos produced by One For Israel have been viewed over 14 million times!

In addition, One For Israel runs the Agape Messianic radio station, the only Hebrew-speaking degree-granting Christian Bible college in Israel, and a specialized outreach to assist and evangelize Holocaust survivors.

With these kinds of disturbing developments in mind, Jews for Judaism has been increasing our efforts to promote our YouTube videos specifically to Israeli viewers, as well as beginning to have them translated into Hebrew. Every day, 75-100 Israelis are watching Jews for Judaism's online videos. The need to counter the aggressive efforts of missionaries operating in Israel is great. ■

The number of Israeli Messianic Jews has swelled from 5,000 to 30,000!

Your Gift is a Legacy for Tomorrow

A bequest to **JEWS FOR JUDAISM** will ensure that our vital counter-missionary work will continue now and into the future.

Gifts made through your will should be worded in one of the following ways:

- I give, devise and bequeath \$ _____ to Jews for Judaism, 3110 Bathurst St., P.O. Box 54042, Toronto, ON M6A 3B7.
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LIFELINE is a free publication of **JEWS FOR JUDAISM** (Canada). **JEWS FOR JUDAISM** counters the efforts of Christian missionary groups that target Jews and the impact of cults, eastern religions, assimilation and other challenges to Jewish continuity. We strengthen Jewish pride and identity and win back Jews who have been influenced by missionaries and cults. We offer free educational programs, materials, Internet outreach and counselling that connect Jews to the spiritual depth, beauty, wisdom and truth of Judaism. **JEWS FOR JUDAISM** unites the entire Jewish community in a common cause and is endorsed by a wide spectrum of Jewish agencies, rabbis and educators.

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JUDAISM'S ENCOUNTER WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

How are Jews to navigate a world where we exist among competing faith traditions?

In what has become an annual tradition, Jews for Judaism is offering a series of dynamic and provocative presentations on December 24-25 that will explore the interface between Judaism and other religions.

The entire program will be held at Shaarei Tefillah Congregation, 3600 Bathurst Street, and is free of charge.

Rabbi Eliezer Breitowitz will be delivering the first presentation on Sunday evening, December 24 at 8:00 p.m. His lecture, "Why Jews Don't Celebrate Christmas," will explore whether it is possible for Jews to share in the celebrations of another faith without minimizing or trivializing the theological issues that separate the two.

Rabbi Breitowitz is the distinguished Rosh HaYeshiva of Darchei Torah Yeshiva in To-

ronto. He was the founder and Dean of the Kollel and Mesivta in San Diego, California, and served as Educational Director of Ohr Somayach in Toronto. Rabbi Breitowitz is well known in Toronto for the many brilliant classes and lectures he gives for the public.

Large numbers of Jewish people can be found in virtually every religion in the world.

Penina Taylor will be giving two talks on Monday, December 25. The first, at 12:30 p.m., is entitled, "Coming Full Circle: A Jewish Woman's Journey through Christianity and Back to Judaism." Penina published her first book, an autobiographical account of her spiritual odyssey, under this title in 2009.

Penina is an international Jewish inspirational and motivational speaker, life coach, and author. She lives in Israel and is the Executive Director of the Shomrei Emet Institute for Counter-Missionary Studies and the founder of Torah Life Strategies.

Her second presentation, at 1:30 p.m., will

be a One-Hour Counter-Missionary Crash Course. This insightful lecture will share the basic knowledge to help any Jew respond confidently to Christian missionaries who challenge their faith.

The final installment of the series will be given by Rabbi Michael Skobac at 3:00 p.m. His topic will be "What Can We Learn from Those Who Stray?" It is well known that large numbers of Jewish people can be found in virtually every religion in the world. They can serve as a litmus test for the health of our community and a catalyst for addressing areas where improvement is necessary.

Rabbi Skobac was the founding director of Jews for Judaism in New York in 1988 and has been associated with Jews for Judaism in Toronto since 1992. He has been working in the counter-missionary field since 1983 and is currently the Director of Education and Counseling.

For further information about these programs, contact the Jews for Judaism office at (416) 789-0020 or carol@jewsfor-judaism.ca. ■

Four Amazing **jewsforjudaism** Programs



Why Don't Jews Celebrate Christmas?

with Rabbi Eliezer Breitowitz

Can committed Jews share in the celebrations of another faith without trivializing the theological issues that divide the two? **Dec. 24, 8:00 pm**

A Woman's Journey: Coming Full Circle

with Penina Taylor

A Jewish Woman's Journey through Christianity and Back to Judaism: A compelling spiritual odyssey with important lessons for us. **Dec. 25, 12:30 pm**



A One-Hour Counter-Missionary Crash Course

with Penina Taylor

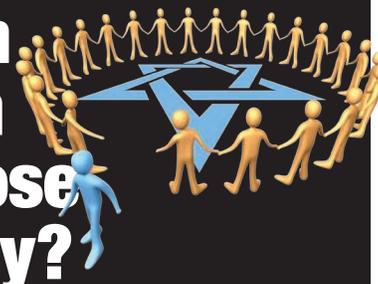
Learn how to respond confidently to the Biblical and theological claims of any Christian missionary who challenges your Jewish faith. **Dec. 25, 1:45 pm**



What Can We Learn From Those Who Stray?

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

Jews who've embraced other religions are a litmus test for the health of our community and indicate where improvements are necessary. **Dec. 25, 3:00 pm**



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