

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year



JewsforJudaism.ca

KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

Keeping Jews Jewish for 34 Years

By Alex Rose

Canadian Jewish News

Julius Ciss was a Jew for Jesus missionary during five years in the 70s. Ciss, Executive Director of Jews for Judaism, said, “Messianic Jewish missionaries disguise their Christianity to resemble Judaism so it’s palatable to potential Jewish converts. They fooled me.”

At Shabbat services in his messianic synagogue, men wore *kippot* and *tallitot* and there was an *Aron Kodesh* with a Torah scroll inside. The New Testament became the *Brit Hachadasha* (“New Covenant”) and names were Hebraicized: Jesus became *Yeshua*, Mary was *Miriam* and baptism was the *mikveh brit*. Even the three Passover Matzot symbolized the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jewish activists eventually got through to Ciss and in 1980, he left the Messianic Jewish movement. He spent the ’80s doing counter-missionary work on his own. Then, in 1989 he started Jews for Judaism in Toronto.

In the 34 years since then, Ciss, along with Rabbi Michael Skobac, has worked with countless Jewish Christians, teaching them that Messianic Judaism is simply Christianity in disguise, why it isn’t true and introducing them to the beauty, depth and wisdom of Judaism. Jews for Judaism also works to help assimilated Jews involved in cults, Eastern religions, intermarriage or apathetic about Judaism.

Jews for Judaism is now a leader in Internet Jewish outreach, connecting with 7,000 people daily. “Our educational programs inoculate Jews worldwide against the threat of missionaries, cults and other challenges to Jewish survival and give them a stronger understanding of Judaism,” Ciss explained.



Rabbi Skobac (R) and Julius Ciss reason with a Jew for Jesus in 1998.

Jews for Judaism’s outreach is focused on the over 450,000 Jews worldwide who’ve fallen for Christianity. Sadly, once a Jew feels comfortable in a Christian or Messianic Jewish community, it is very difficult to reach them. That’s why Ciss believes that preventive education is essential.

That’s also why the first step to reintegrating these Jews isn’t teaching them about real Judaism, said Rabbi

Skobac, the organization’s Director of Education. The first step in helping these Jews is establishing trust.

“Jews who are involved with Christianity are taught not to speak with us. They are told that we are Satan,” said Rabbi Skobac. “And they are thrilled with their Christian faith. They didn’t see anything in Judaism that was compelling. Now they have a rich, vibrant spiritual life – why should they sabotage what’s making them so happy?”

Instead of lecturing closed-off Messianic Jews about Judaism, Rabbi Skobac said the goal is to make them curious about Judaism.

“A lot of our work is trying to open people up to be willing to engage with us. Once that happens, we can usually succeed, because the case for Judaism is incredibly strong, while the foundations of Christianity are very weak,” said Rabbi Skobac. ■

The first step in helping these Jews is establishing trust.

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN CHALLENGES TO JUDAISM

The Jewish Christian Argument



with
Rabbi
Michael
Skobac

How should Jews respond to challenges from Christian friends, neighbours, business associates, or online articles and videos? These four lectures will focus on the basic concepts in the Jewish-Christian debate. Jews will grow confident in their commitment to Judaism and not feel intimidated by those seeking to undermine their faith.

- Nov 02 • **WHO IS THE MESSIAH?**
Why the Case for Jesus Fails
- Nov 09 • **WHO IS G-D?**
Christianity's Serious Error
- Nov 16 • **WHO IS A HUMAN BEING?**
Dealing With Our Imperfection
- Nov 23 • **WHO HAS TRUTH?** Competing
Claims for Scriptural Credibility

Four consecutive Thursdays – NOV. 2 to 23 • 8 PM ET
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn Avenue
LIVE or ZOOM Attendance • Registration is required
To Register go to www.jewsforjudaism.ca/challenges
For more info 416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca



Wish me Mazel Tov!



By Susan Mandel*

I was raised in Israel with no understanding of Judaism. So when a Christian friend asked that I join her to visit a “new” type of synagogue, I agreed. I thought it would be great to learn about Judaism.

When I arrived at *shul* on Shabbat morning, the men wore *kippot* and prayer shawls. On display were the Torah, a menorah and an Israeli flag. The lively music included familiar Hebrew songs. Strangely, the services prayers concluded with “we pray in the name of *Yeshua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah).”

The concept of Jews believing in Jesus confused me, so I approached the “rabbi” after the service. He explained there’s no contradiction between these two ideas. In fact, I could become a “completed” Jew if I believed that Jesus died for my sins.

I read all the materials he gave me and began regularly attending services and Bible studies at his “Messianic synagogue.” I was happy to be invited to their many parties and dinners and soon I considered that Jesus might be the Jewish Messiah.

At the congregation, I met an older woman who was very concerned about her nephew Jeff, who had been “Messianic” at one time. She wanted me to meet with Jeff and help bring him back to the fold.

When I met Jeff, he told me that he no longer believed in Jesus, but was now an observant Jew. We spoke for many hours and I quickly began to realize how very little I knew about Judaism. Because he couldn’t answer all of my questions, Jeff suggested I meet with Julius Ciss from Jews for Judaism. He said that I owed it to myself to examine both sides of this important issue.

When I met with Julius, I was surprised to discover that he, too, had once been a believer in Jesus and also had been a leader in the same Messianic Synagogue I was attending.

Unlike my “Messianic” friends who pushed me to accept Jesus on faith, Julius urged me to do the very opposite. He encouraged me to ask questions and use my reasoning abilities to understand the Bible. When I did so, with his help, the

Jewish perspective instantly made sense to me. When I confronted the “Messianic rabbi” with all the contradictions Julius had shown me in Christian belief, he was unable to explain these inconsistencies.

Now, thanks to Jews for Judaism, you can wish me “Mazel Tov!” Not only have I come back home to Judaism, but I also recently married a wonderful Jewish man. ■

**I could become
a “completed”
Jew if I
believed that
Jesus died for
my sins.**

*Names have been changed for anonymity.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Deepening Your Jewish Experience

with
Rabbi Michael Skobac

If you want to deepen your understanding of Judaism, are seeking more from your Jewish experience, or are just curious – then this is for you. Using six stimulating pre-recorded sessions, we will explore Jewish wisdom and inspiring teachings, discovering their profound relevance to our lives. Then during a live Question and Answer session afterwards with participants, Rabbi Skobac will answer all of your questions.

Six Consecutive Weds., Oct. 25 to Nov. 29, 2023 at 8 PM ET
ZOOM only • Registration Required for PW • Admission Free
To register or for curriculum: www.jewsforjudaism.ca/spiritual2
For more info go to: info@jewsforjudaism.ca • 416-789-0020



UJA FEDERATION
of Greater Toronto

JewsforJudaism.ca
KEEPING JEWS JEWISH

MISSIONIZING... On the Front Lines...

THE MI... with Jews

By Rabbi Michael Skobac

In July, Rabbi Eli Cohen and I checked into the hotel in Columbus, Ohio where the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) was having its annual conference. This is an umbrella organization of ‘synagogues’ where you will encounter virtually all the trappings and practices of a normal Jewish synagogue — but where all the congregants worship Jesus as their Messiah.

By using deceptive names, like Beth Shalom, Eitz Chaim and Rosh Pinah, these messianic synagogues disguise that they are actually Christian churches.

These “synagogues” have weekly Shabbat services and sing many of the same Hebrew songs and prayers that are familiar from normative Jewish congregations. They don’t celebrate Christian holidays but do mark all the traditional Jewish festivals. Of course, all the rituals are given a Christological interpretation: for example, the three *matzot* at the Passover Seder are an allusion to the Trinity.

Christian names are replaced with Jewish-sounding euphemisms. Jesus is referred

to by the Hebrew Yeshua, the New Testament is called the *Brit Hachadasha*, and baptism is *mikveh brit*.

Jews who convert to Christianity usually feel guilty for abandoning their traditions. Messianic Judaism was developed to help assuage this guilt and allow them to feel that they are involved in something that is very Jewish.

When members of the Jewish community tell me that they don’t think there is a missionary problem anymore, I ask them to consider the following. About 50 years ago, there were only a handful of these messianic congregations in North America — today there are about 500, with hundreds elsewhere on earth. The UMJC isn’t the only umbrella group for these congregations. There is also the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), the International Messianic Jewish Alliance (IMJA), the Coalition of Torah Observant Messianic Congregations (CTOMC), and several others.

This movement has been exploding in Israel, especially after the arrival of thousands of immigrants from the FSU who came as believers in Jesus. Thirty years ago, there were a dozen Messianic fellowships in Israel — today there are over 300!

And the movement has developed infrastructure. Focused on raising the next generation, they have established Hebrew schools and day schools for their kids, as well as summer camps. Several different “rabbinical” training programs have arisen to train “rabbis” for their congregations and teachers for their Hebrew schools. They have numerous musical groups and several publishers of messianic books and literature.

I’ve been attending UMJC conferences for over thirty years and have seen some of



Jews for Judaism Rabbis (in white shirts) engage Messianic Jews at UMJC conference

MISSIONARIES for Judaism



Rabbi Michael Skobac (L) and Rabbi Eli Cohen at the UMJC conference.

the children raised in this movement grow up to become “rabbis” and leaders themselves. I have observed many changes over these decades, one of them being an increasing focus on Torah observance among many in the movement. This was something that Rabbi Cohen and I saw at this year’s gathering.

We realize that it is somewhat intrusive for us to show up at their conference, so we are careful to maintain a very low-key presence. During the four days of the conference, we hung out on couches in the lobby of the hotel and made ourselves available to anyone open to speaking with us. This year many attendees ignored the official policy of not engaging with us, and we spent many hours each day engrossed in very deep conversations from about 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 a.m. and sometimes later each evening.

One young couple there recently had a new baby, and they celebrated the boy’s *pidyon haben* at the conference. The baby’s father spent hours speaking with us and asking questions about how to properly observe the Shabbat restrictions at the hotel.

I spent many hours with two very bright young men who had many questions and were concerned about the non-Jewish people in their movement who routinely appropriate practices that are normally only for Jews. They realized that in a movement that blurs the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity, and between Jews and non-Jews, this could be a problem.

People often ask me what we accomplish by attending these conferences. It’s important to understand that our approach is non-confrontational. We don’t come armed with Bibles seeking to argue about the meaning of polemical passages. This normally never gets anywhere. We are more interested in discussing issues that are important to attendees and giving them a chance to get to know us up close. Why is this important?

Christians, and people in this movement, refer to each other as “believers.” If you speak with Jewish people who were influenced to join this movement and embrace Jesus, and ask them what the attraction was, almost all of them will say that it enabled them to have a personal relationship with G-d. One of the boldest claims in the Christian scriptures is Jesus’s insistence that “no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

When people at this conference spend time engaged in serious conversations with Jews for Judaism rabbis, they meet people who know G-d, have personal relationships with G-d, take Him seriously and place Him at the centre of their lives. This simple reality is a dramatic and palpable refutation of one of the central pillars of their faith.

Our presence at these conferences has planted seeds with many people we have met who have since left the movement and ask us to help them grow spiritually. If you ever meet a Jewish person who identifies as a Jew for Jesus or Messianic Jew – don’t write them off as a lost cause. With love and care, they can be helped to return home. ■

Never write them off as a lost cause. With love and care, they can be helped to return home.

Know How To Answer



by Rabbi Michael Skobac

King Solomon, history's wisest person, wrote in Proverbs 18:17, "The first (to present his case) seems right, until the other comes and interrogates him."

So often, this is exactly what happens when missionaries seek to influence Jewish people by citing passages from the Bible. They will confront us with verses that are taken out of context and hard to interpret and challenge us to explain them. Of course, they are always ready to offer their stock answers that aim to substantiate Christian beliefs.

To people unfamiliar with these Biblical passages, it is easy to become confused and intimidated. Fortunately, Jewish people regularly turn to Jews for Judaism to help them cross-examine the missionary presentation.

One very popular example of this is from the seventh chapter in the Book of Daniel. Missionaries parachute into the middle of the chapter and confront Jewish people with verses 13–14.

"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man was coming. And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language, might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting

dominion which will not pass away, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

This is certainly a mysterious passage, and missionaries insist that it is speaking of their messiah. The next verses in this chapter tell us that Daniel himself was puzzled by the meaning of this vision that he had and so he sought an explanation from one of G-d's angels.

The angel clarified something critical for Daniel that strongly refutes the missionary interpretation of this passage. According to the angel, the "one like a son

of man" is not a person—it is a people, the Jewish people.

In verse 19 the angel told Daniel, "But the holy supreme ones will receive the kingship, and they will inherit the kingship forever, forever and ever."

In verse 27, the angel once again clarified who is being spoken of in verses 14–15:

"And the kingship, the dominion, and the grandeur of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the holy supreme nation. Its kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey it."

Missionaries can make their claims, but they don't stand up to cross-examination. The angel's explanation to Daniel rules out any Christological interpretations. ■

Missionaries can make their claims, but they don't stand up to cross-examination.

FALL MINI-LECTURES

with
Rabbi Michael Skobac

Wed., Dec. 6, 8 PM ET

- **What is Zionism?**
The “ism” That Triggers the World
- **The Controversial Ending of Mark’s Gospel:** Was Jesus Really Resurrected?
- **The Meaning of Shema Yisrael:** Understanding Judaism’s Declaration of Faith

Wed., Dec. 13, 8 PM ET

- **What Would G-d Do?**
Living Our Lives Emulating the Creator
- **Reasons for the Commandments**
The Flavours of Jewish Living
- **The Centrality of Loving Kindness in Judaism:** One of the World’s Foundations

Bais Dov Yosef Congregation, 3407 Bathurst St.
LIVE attendance or ZOOM • Admission is Free
Registration required: jewsforjudaism.ca/fallmini
For info: 416-789-0020 • info@jewsforjudaism.ca



Letters



Dear Rabbi Skobac,

You have made a tremendous impact on my life with the work that you do through Jews for Judaism. Before I met you online, Judaism was an insignificant part of my life. All Judaism really meant was having a Friday night meal with my parents, who were very upset that I was alienating myself from Judaism.

Rabbis in my community and even in Israel (when I would visit) tried to bring me closer to Judaism... but all failed. I was so not into religion. I shut myself off from their message. Many tried to reach me but I simply refused to listen and I let them talk to the wall. Since, as long as I can remember, I was always negative about Judaism.

But this ALL changed three years ago when I was searching 'Jews for Jesus' on YouTube. Surprisingly, some of your videos popped up when I typed 'Jews for Jesus' into the search bar. The first video, 'A Rabbi Cross-Examines Christianity' was the trigger video that changed my life... and everything else for me... about Judaism.

After watching that video I became addicted to learning more from you. I watched many of your videos. You became my good friend on YouTube as each time I had an opportunity to watch a video, whether during my long drives or going to the gym, I occupied my mind with learning more and more from you.

Rabbi Skobac, you are the only person who ever succeeded in bringing me closer to my Jewish identity, faith and heritage. I don't know where I'd be without you.

I am so grateful from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for me. I will forever remember that it was you who caused me to fall in love with Judaism... and I will remember this until my dying day.

Thank you. – Zohar S

Dear Rabbi Skobac,

I just wanted to let you know you have made a big impact on my life and my family's life! When we found your teachings on YouTube, we watched everything you had and gained so much from your teachings.

Thank you. – Joseph C.

I will forever remember that it was you who caused me to fall in love with Judaism.

Dear Rabbi Skobac, I had such a nice life before I started to listen to you. I was influenced by Evangelical Christians to believe that Jesus had died to atone for my

sins. I converted to Christianity and served Jesus for nearly 20 years until I found you and started to study your seminars and lectures on YouTube. You have opened my eyes and you have saved me.

I love you. – Simon R.

With Jews for Judaism's help and info, we produced a PowerPoint presentation. Armed with your knowledge and resources, we're conducting workshops in Jewish day schools, educational institutions and communal organizations to alert Jews to the missionary threat. Thank you for all your help. – Rachel W.



How To Get Your Prayers Answered

with Rabbi Michael Skobac

All prayers are answered – but sometimes the answer can be “no” or “not at this time.” Are there any strategies that we can employ to make it more likely that our prayers will be answered in a positive way? In this lecture Rabbi Skobac will share some ways of approaching our prayers where the possibility of a positive outcome may be more likely.

Wednesday – OCT. 18 • 8:00 PM ET • Admission Free
Shaarei Tefillah Congregation, 3600 Bathurst Street
Live attendance or ZOOM • Registration is required
To REGISTER: go to www.jewsforjudaism.ca/prayers

Help Save Jewish Lives



Support Jews for Judaism

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 Jews who have been negatively influenced or coerced by missionaries, cults, eastern religions, the growing rate of Jewish apathy and ignorance, assimilation, anti-Israel BDS propaganda, antisemitism and other challenges to Jewish continuity that are devastating the Jewish community.

We achieve our goals through local programming and worldwide Internet outreach. Last year, over two million people accessed our social media platforms. Thousands of Jews are helped by our YouTube video lectures, specialized intervention, one-on-one counselling, education programs, downloadable literature and audio materials, and Shabbat home hospitality.

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. With your generous donation, you can help keep Jews Jewish and save Jewish lives. Thank you. ■



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