



**COUNTER-MISSIONARY
SURVIVAL SEMINAR**

Session #4

Introduction to Prooftexting -
Hitting the Bullseye

INTRODUCTION TO PROOFTEXTING

- ✓ Is the verse in context?
 - ✓ Is the verse prophetic?
 - ✓ Is the verse messianic?
 - ✓ Does the verse exist, and if so, has it been edited and translated correctly?
 - ✓ What proof is there that it is referring to Jesus? Could it apply to another person(s)?
 - ✓ IS THE VERSE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT?
-

A) QUOTATIONS OUT OF CONTEXT

MATTHEW 2:13-18

¹³And when they departed, behold, the angel of the lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek to destroy the young child." ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child by night, and went down into Egypt. ¹⁵ And stayed there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the lord by the prophet, saying, "**Out of Egypt have I called my son.**" ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was very angry, and sent out, and killed all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from age two years and under, according to the time which he diligently inquired of the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁸ **In Ra'ma was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**

EXODUS 4:22-23

²² And you shall say unto Pharaoh, Thus says the L-rd, **Israel is my son, my first born:** ²³ And I say unto you, **Let my son go,** that he may serve me: and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, even your firstborn.

HOSEA 11:1

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

JEREMIAH 31:15-17

¹⁵ Thus says the L-rd; "**A voice was heard in Ra'ma, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.**" ¹⁶ Thus says the L-rd; "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded," says the L-rd; "**and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.**" ¹⁷ **And there is hope in your end,**" says the L-rd, "that your children shall come again to their own border."

ZECHARIAH 13:1-6

¹ In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. ² And it shall come to pass in that day, says the L-rd of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. ³ And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, "You shall not live; for you speak lies in the name of the L-rd:" and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesies. ⁴ And it shall come

to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he has prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: ⁵ But he shall say, "I am no prophet, I am a husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth." ⁶ And one shall say unto him, "What are these wounds in your hands?" And he shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

HEBREWS 1:5

For to which of the angels did G-d ever say, "You are my son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father and he will be my son"?

DEUTERONOMY 32:18

You were unmindful of **the Rock that bore you**; you forgot the **G-d who gave you birth**.

2 SAMUEL 7:12-14

¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who

shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ **I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me.** When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

PSALM 41:1-10

¹ Happy are those who consider the poor; the L-rd delivers them in the day of trouble. ² The L-rd protects them and keeps them alive; they are called happy in the land. You do not give them up to the will of their enemies. ³ The L-rd sustains them on their sickbed; in their illness you heal all their infirmities. ⁴ As for me, I said, O L-rd, be gracious to me;

heal me, for I have sinned against you." ⁵ My enemies wonder in malice when I die, and my name perish. ⁶ And when they come to see me, they utter empty words, while their hearts gather mischief; when they go out, they tell it abroad. ⁷ All who hate me whisper together about me they imagine the worst for me. ⁸ They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not

rise again from where I lie. ⁹ Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me. ¹⁰ But you, O L-rd, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them.

JOHN 13:18

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, "He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me."

B) CIRCULAR REASONING

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-18

¹⁵ The L-rd your G-d will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶ This is what you requested of the L-rd your G-d at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the L-rd my G-d any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." ¹⁷ Then the L-rd replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of that prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command."

ISAIAH 11:1-3

¹ A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of

his roots. ² The spirit of the L-rd shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the L-rd. ³ His delight shall be in the fear of the L-rd.

MATTHEW 4:13-16

¹³ And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: ¹⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ The land of Zabulon and the land of Naphthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; ¹⁶ The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

C) MISTRANSLATION

PSALM 22:1-22

¹ To the Chief Musician upon Ayelet Hashachar, A Psalm of David. My G-d, my G-d, why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ²O my G-d, I cry in the daytime, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. ³ But you are holy, O you that inhabits the praises of Israel. ⁴Our fathers trusted in you: they trusted and you did deliver them. ⁵ They cried unto you, and were delivered: they trusted in you, and were not confounded. ⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. ⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying. ⁸ "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. ⁹ But you are he that took me out of the womb: you did make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ I was cast upon you from the womb: you are my G-d from my mother's belly. ¹¹ Be not far from me; for trouble is near: for there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. ¹³ They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and you have brought me into the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: **they pierced** my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. ¹⁸ They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture. ¹⁹ But be you not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, make haste to help me. ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. ²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth: for you have heard me from the horns of the unicorns. ²² I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise you.

ט מפני רשעים זו שדוני אבי
בנפש יקיפו עלי:
י חלבמו סגרו פימו דברו
בגאות:
יא אשרינו עתה סבבנו
עיניהם ישיתו לנטות בארץ:
יב דמינו כאריה יכסוף לטרוף
וככפיר ישב במקטרים:

הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי
יתנשא לא ישכב עד יאכל
טרוף ודם חללים ישתה:

כרע שכב כארי וכלביא מי
יקימנו מברכיך ברוך
וארריך ארור:

קשר נביאיה בתוכה כארי
שואג טרוף וטרוף נפש אכלו
חסן ויקר יקחו אלמנותיה
הרבו בתוכה:

שויתי עד בקר כארי כן
ישבר כל עצמותי מיום עד
לילה תשלימיני:

כי סבבוני כלבים עדת
מרעים הקיפוני כארי ידי
ורגלי:

ב יקוק אליהי כד חסיתי
הושיעני מכל רדפי
והצילני: ג פן יטרוף כאריה
נפשי פרק ואין מציל:

PSALM 17:9-12

⁹ From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. ¹⁰ They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. ¹¹ They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; ¹² **Like a lion** that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

NUMBERS 23:24

Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a **young lion**: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

NUMBERS 24:9

He couched, he lay down **as a lion**, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesses you, and cursed is he that curses you.

EZEKIEL 22:25

There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like **a roaring lion** ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

ISAIAH 38:13

I cry for help until morning; **like a lion** he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.

PSALM 22:17

(Jewish Translation)

For dogs have encompassed me; a company of evil-doers have enclosed me; **like a lion**, they are at my hands and my feet

PSALM 7:2-3

² O L-rd my G-d, in the do I put my trust; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: ³ Lest he tear my soul **like a lion**, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

D) FABRICATED REFERENCES

MATTHEW 2:19-23

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰ "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." ²¹ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.

²³ There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "**He will be called a Nazarean.**"

Navv (5), 1 Ki. 9:26-27; 10:11. ²²

Nay (51), Gen. 18:15; 23:11; etc.

Communication be yea, yea, n. , n. ,

Mt. 5:37; 2 Cor. 1:17-19; Jas. 5:12

Nazarene (1), native of Nazareth, Mt. 2:23

Nazarenes (1), a title of scorn for Christians, given by Jews, Acts 24:5

Nazareth (29), a village in Galilee where Jesus was brought up, k 56-4*; h 61-4*; Mt. 2:23; Lk. 1:26; 2:4, 39, 41: 4:16; Jn. 1:45-46. He was called Jesus of N.

**From Strong's Exhaustive
Concordance**

JUDGES 13:5

For, lo, you shall conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head; for the child shall be a Nazarite unto G-d from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

MATTHEW 27:6-10

⁶ And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, it is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. ⁷ And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Wherefore that field was called the field of blood, unto this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; ¹⁰ And gave them for the potter's field, as the lord appointed me."

ZECHARIAH 11:12-13

¹² And I said unto them, If you think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

¹³ And the L-rd said unto me, cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the L-rd.

JEREMIAH 18:1-6

¹ The word which came to Jeremiah from the L-rd, saying, ² "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words."
³ Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. ⁴ And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. ⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying. ⁶ "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

JEREMIAH 32:7-9

⁷ Behold, Ha-nam-e-el the son of Shalum your uncle shall come unto you, saying, "Buy my field that is in An-a-thoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it." ⁸ So Ha-nam-e-el my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, "buy my field, I pray you, that is in An-a-thoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the L-rd. ⁹ And I bought the field of Ha-nam-e-el my uncle's son, that was in An-a-thoth, and weighed him the money, seventeen shekels of silver.

MATTHEW 1:18-23

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, desired to put her away privately. ²⁰ But when he thought of these things, behold, the angel of the lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, you son of David, fear not to take Mary as your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. ²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." ²² Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the lord by the prophet, saying, ²³ **"Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanu-el, which being interpreted is, G-d with us."**

ISAIAH 7:14

לִכְן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הַיְהוָה הַעֲלֵמָה הַרְהוּ וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל:

¹ And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not prevail. ² And it was told to the House of David, saying, "Syria is allied with Ephraim," and his heart and the heart of his people trembled as the trees of the forest tremble because of the wind. ³ And the L-rd said to Isaiah, "Go now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Yashuv, your son, at the end of

the conduit of the upper pool, on the road of the fuller's field. ⁴ And you shall say to him, 'Listen and calm yourself, do not fear, and let your heart not be faint because of these two smoking stubs of firebrands; because of the raging anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you saying, ⁶ 'Let us go up against Judah, and provoke it, and let us take it over, and let us crown a king in its' midst, the son of Tabeel:'" ⁷ Thus says the L-rd G-d, "It shall not succeed nor come to pass. ⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within 65 years Ephraim will be destroyed, and it will no longer be a people. ⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you don't believe me, surely you will not remain." ¹⁰ Once again the L-rd spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask for yourself a sign from the L-rd, your G-d; ask it either in the depths, or in the heights above." ¹² And Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not test the Lord." ¹³ And he said, "Listen now, O House of David, is it little for you to weary men, that you weary my God as well? ¹⁴ **Therefore the L-rd, himself will give you a sign; behold, the young woman is with child, and she shall bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel.** ¹⁵ Butter and honey shall he eat so that he may know to refuse evil, and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child shall know to refuse evil, and choose good, the land who's two king you dread, will be abandoned."



ISAIAH 8:3-8,18

³ And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bore a son. Then said the L-rd to me, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. ⁴ For before the child has knowledge to cry 'My father and my mother' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." ⁵ The L-rd spoke also unto me again, saying, ⁶ Forasmuch as

this people refuses the waters of Siloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; ⁷ Now therefore, behold, the L-rd brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: ⁸ And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the

stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land O Immanuel.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the L-rd has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the L-rd of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion.

2 KINGS 15:29-30

²⁹ In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Iyyon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, with all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.

³⁰ Then Hoshea, son of Elah formed a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him, killed him and

usurped the throne in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah.

2 KINGS 16:7-9

⁷ Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria to say, "I am your servant and your son. Come and save me from the king of Aram and from the king of Israel, who are attacking me." ⁸ Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the house of the L-rd and in the treasuries of the royal palace, and sent them to the king of Assyria as a bribe. ⁹ The king of Assyria listened to him; he advanced on Damascus, captured it, deported its inhabitants to Kir, and put Rezin to death.

TRANSLATION

יד לָכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֵם אוֹת הַנִּיחָה הַעֲלָמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל:
 Emmanu-el his name and she will call and will give birth to a son is with child the young woman Behold a sign to you G-d will give Therefore

1 SAMUEL 20:22

But if I say thus unto **the young man**, "Behold, the arrows are beyond you; go your way: for the L-rd has sent you away."

ISAIAH 54:4

Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be confused; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of **your youth**, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.

PSALM 89:46

The days of **his youth** have you shortened: you have covered him with shame. Selah.

JOB 33:25

His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of **his youth**:

שמואל א כ

כב וְאִם כֹּה אֵמַר לְעַלְמֵם הַנִּיחָה הַחֲצִיִּים מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאָה לִּי כִּי שִׁלַּחְתָּ יְקֹנִק:

ישעיה נד

ד אֵל תִּירָאִי כִּי לֹא תִבוֹשִׁי וְאֵל תִּכְלָמִי כִּי לֹא תִחַפְּיִי כִּי בִשָּׁת עֲלוּמִיָּךְ תִּשְׁכַּחִי וְחָרַפְתְּ אֲלִמְנוּתֶיךָ לֹא תִזְכְּרִי עוֹד:

תהילים פט

מז הַקְצַרְתָּ יָמַי עֲלוּמִיּוֹ הַעֲטִיתָ עָלָיו בּוֹשָׁה סָלָה:

איוב לג

כב רִטְפַּשׁ בְּשָׂרוֹ מִנְעֵר יָשׁוּב לִימֵי עֲלוּמִיּוֹ:

EXODUS 2:7-8

⁷Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call to you a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" ⁸And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." And **the maid** went and called the child's mother. (KJV)

PROVERBS 30:18-19

¹⁸ There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I do not know: ¹⁹ The way of the eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with **a maid**.

שמות ב

⁷ וַתֹּאמֶר אַחֲתוֹ אֶל בַּת פַּרְעֹה הַאֵלֶּף וְקָרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקוֹת מִן הָעִבְרִית וְתִיַּנֵּק לְךָ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד: ⁸ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַּת פַּרְעֹה לִכִּי וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעֲלָמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת אִם הַיֶּלֶד:

משלי ל

¹⁸ שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה נִפְלְאוּ מִמֶּנִּי וְאַרְבָּעָה לֹא יָדַעְתִּים: ¹⁹ דֶּרֶךְ הַנֶּשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם דֶּרֶךְ נַחֲשׁ עַל־צוּר דֶּרֶךְ אֲנִיָּה בַלֵּב יָם וְדֶרֶךְ גִּבּוֹר בְּעֲלָמָה:

בתולה

DEUTERONOMY 22:13-15

¹³ If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and then spurns her, ¹⁴ and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings an evil name upon her, saying, "I took this woman, and when I came near her, I did not find in her tokens of **virginity**," ¹⁵ then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the tokens of her **virginity** to the elders of the city in the gate;

דברים כב

¹³ כִּי יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבָא אֵלֶיהָ וּשְׁנָאָהּ: ¹⁴ וְשָׂם לָהּ עֲלִילֹת דְּבָרִים וְהוֹצֵא עָלֶיהָ שֵׁם רָע וְאָמַר אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת לָקַחְתִּי וְאָקְרַב אֵלֶיהָ וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לָהּ בְּתוּלִים: ¹⁵ וְלָקַח אָבִי הַנַּעַר וְאִמָּהּ וְהוֹצִיאוּ אֶת בְּתוּלֵי הַנַּעַר אֶל זִקְנֵי הָעִיר הַשְּׂעָרָה:

ISAIAH 62:5

For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your G-d rejoice over you.

ישעיה סב

⁵ כִּי יִבְעַל בְּחֹר בְּתוּלָה יִבְעֲלוּךָ בְּנֵיךָ וּמִשׁוֹשׁ חֲתָן עַל כַּלָּה יִשְׂשֵׁי עָלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

1 KINGS 1:2

Wherefore his servants said to him, "Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the king may get heat."

מלכים א א

² וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ עַבְדָּיו יִבְקֹשׁוּ לְאֹדְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ נַעֲרָה בְּתוּלָה וְעַמְדָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְתָהִי לוֹ סִכְנָת וְשִׁכְבָּה בְּחִיקוֹךָ וְחָם לְאֹדְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

JUDGES 11:37-38

³⁷ And she said unto her father, let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

³⁸ And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountain.

שופטים יא

^ל וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל אָבִיהָ יַעֲשֵׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמּוֹנֵי שָׁנִים חֲדָשִׁים וְאַלְכָה וְיִרְדָּתִי עַל הַהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶּה עַל בְּתוּלִי אֲנֹכִי וְרַעֲוֹתַי וְרַעֲוֹתַי:
^מ וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח אוֹתָהּ שְׁנֵי חֲדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרַעֲוֹתֶיהָ וַתִּבְכְּ עַל בְּתוּלֶיהָ עַל הַהָרִים:

Christian Translations of Isaiah 7:14

<p>Revised Standard Version Therefore the L-rd himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.</p>	<p>New English Bible Therefore the L-rd himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and will call him Immanuel.</p>
<p>Good News Bible Well then, the L-rd himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.'</p>	<p>The Bible: A New Translation An omen you shall have, and that from the Eternal himself. There is a young woman with child, who shall bear a son and call his name 'Immanuel' (G-d is with us)</p>
<p>The New Jerusalem Bible The L-rd will give you a sign in any case: It is this: the young woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel.</p>	<p>New Revised Standard Version Therefore the L-rd himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.</p>
<p>Revised English Bible Because you do, the L-rd of his own accord will give you a sign; it is this: A young woman is with child, and will give birth to a son and call him</p>	<p>New World Translation (Jehovah's Witness) Therefore Jehovah himself will give you men a sign: Look! The maiden herself will actually become pregnant, and she is giving birth to a son, and she will certainly call his name Immanuel.</p>
<p>The Jerusalem Bible: Readers Edition The L-rd himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel.</p>	<p>The Bible: An American Translation Therefore the L-rd himself will give you a sign: Behold! a young woman is with child, and is about to bear a son; and she will call him "G-d is with us."</p>

SEPTUAGINT

(ALMAH) עַלְמָה = (PARTHENOS) παρθενοφ

ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ.

GENESIS XXXIV. 1-23

³⁴Ἐξήλθεν δε δινα η θυγατηρ λειασ ην ετεκεν τω ι ακωβ καταμαθειν τας θυγατερας των εγχωριων.
²και ειδεν αυτην συχεμ ο υιος εμμωρ ο χορραιος ο αρχων της γησ και λαβων αυτην εκοιμηθη μετ' αυ της και εταπεινωσεν αυτην.
³και προσεσχεν τη ψυχη δινας της θυγατροσ ιακωβ

And Dina, the daughter of Lea, whom she bore to Jacob, went forth to observe the daughters of the inhabitants. ²And Sychem the son of Emmor the Evite, the ruler of the land, saw her and took her and lay with her and humbled her. ³And he was attached to the soul of Dina the daughter of Jacob, and he

β και ηγαπησεν την παρθενον και ελαλησεν κατα την διανοιαν της παρθενου αυτη.

⁴ειπεν δε συχεμ προσ εμμωρ τον πατερα αυτου λεγων λαβε μοι την παιδισκην ταυτην εισ γυναικα.

⁵ιακωβ δε ηκουσεν οτι εμianεν ο υιος εμμωρ διναν την θυγατερα αυτου οι δε υιοι αυτου ησαν μετα των κτηνων αυτου εν τω πεδιω παρεσιωπησεν δε ιακωβ εως του ελθειν αυτους.

⁶εξηληθεν δε εμμωρ ο πατηρ συχεμ προσ ιακωβ λαλησαι αυτω.

loved the damsel, and he spoke kindly to the damsel. ⁴Sychem spoke to Emmor his father, saying, Take for me this damsel to wife. ⁵And Jacob heard that the son of Emmor had defiled Dina his daughter (now his sons were with his cattle in the plain). And Jacob was silent until they came. ⁶And Emmor the father of Sychem went forth to Jacob, to speak to him.

TALMUD – MEGILLAH 9a-b

This was on account of the incident related in connection with King Ptolemy,¹⁵ as it has been taught: 'It is related of King Ptolemy that he brought together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two [separate] rooms, without telling them why he had brought them together, and he went in to each one of them and said to him, Translate¹⁶ for me the Torah of Moses your master.¹⁷ God then prompted each one of them and they all conceived the same idea and wrote for him, *God created in the beginning,*¹⁸ *I shall make man in image and likeness,*¹⁹ *And he finished on the sixth day, and rested on the seventh day,*²⁰ *Male and female he created him*²¹ [but they did not write 'created them'],²² *Come let me descend and confound their tongues,*²³ *And Sarah laughed among her relatives;*²⁴ *For in their anger they slew an ox and in their wrath they dugged up a stall;*²⁵ *And Moses took his wife and his children, and made them ride on a carrier of men;*²⁶ *And the abode of the children of Israel which they stayed in Egypt and in other lands was four hundred years,*²⁷ *And he sent the elect of the children of Israel;*²⁸ *And against the elect of the children of Israel he put not forth his hand;*²⁹ *I have taken not one valuable of theirs;*¹ *Which the Lord thy God distributed to give light to all the peoples;*² *And he went and served other gods which I commanded should not be served.*³ They also wrote for him 'the beast with small legs' and they did not write 'the hare',⁴ because the name of Ptolemy's wife was hare,⁵ lest he should say, The Jews have jibed at me and put the name of my wife in the Torah.

(15) It seems to be an historical fact that a Greek translation of the Pentateuch was made in the time of King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt (285-247), but many regard this as apocryphal; cf, The Letter of Aristeas.

(16) Lit., 'write'.

(17) Here follow a number of cases in which the translation of the Elders did not follow the Massoretic text. We do not find all these variants in our texts of the Septuagint.

(18) Instead of 'In the beginning God created'. The purpose of this change was apparently to prevent the idea of Two Powers being read into the text, i.e., 'In the beginning' and 'God'. V. Rashi and Tosaf. a.I.

(19) Gen. 1, 26, instead of 'Let us make', for the same reason.

(20) Ibid. II, 2, instead of 'and he finished on the seventh day', which might be taken to imply that some work was done on the seventh day.

(21) Ibid. V, 2.

(22) Which might be taken to mean that they were separate from the first.

(23) Ibid. XI, 7: 'me' instead of 'us'. V. n. 7.

(24) Ibid. XVIII, 12: instead of 'in herself', in order to make a distinction between Sarah and Abraham, who also laughed inwardly.

(25) Ibid. XLIX, 6: 'ox' instead of 'man', to save the name of Jacob's sons.

(26) Ex. IV, 20: carrier of men' instead of 'ass', to save the dignity of Moses.

(27) Ibid. XII, 40. The words 'and in other lands' are inserted because, according to the Biblical record, the Israelites were at the utmost 210 years in Egypt.

(28) Ibid. XXIV, 5: 'elect' instead of 'young men', which is regarded as not suitable to the context.

(29) Ibid. 11: 'elect' instead of 'nobles'.

(1) Num. XVI, 15: 'valuable' for 'ass'.

(2) Deut. IV, 19. The words 'to give light' are inserted, to guard against misunderstanding.

(3) Ibid. XVII, 3. The words 'should be served' are inserted, to avoid misunderstanding.

(4) In Lev. XI, 6.

(5) In fact, it was Ptolemy's father who was named 'hare' (**).

INTRODUCTION.

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION.

The earliest version of the Old Testament Scriptures which is extant, or of which we possess any certain knowledge, is the translation executed at Alexandria in the third century before the Christian era: this version has been so habitually known by the name of the SEPTUAGINT, that the attempt of some learned men in modern times to introduce the designation of the Alexandrian version (as more correct) has been far from successful.

The history of the origin of this translation was embellished with various fables at so early a period, that it has been a work of patient critical research in later times to bring in plain light the facts which may be regarded as well authenticated.

A writer, who calls himself Aristeas, says that when Ptolmy Philadelphus was engaged in the formation of the Alexandrian Library, he was advised by Demetrius Phalereus to procure a translation of the sacred books of the Jews. The king accordingly, as a preliminary, purchased the freedom of more than one hundred thousand Jewish captives, and he then sent a deputation, of which Aristeas himself was one, to Eleazar the high-priest to request a copy of the Jewish Law and *seventy-two* interpreters, six out of each tribe. To this the priest is represented to have agreed; and after the arrival of the translators and their magnificent reception by the king, they are said to have been conducted to an island by Demetrius, who wrote down the renderings on which they agreed by mutual conference; and thus the work is stated to have been completed in seventy-two days. The translators are then said to have received from the king most abundant rewards; and the Jews are stated to have asked permission to take copies of the version.

Other additions were subsequently made to this story: some said that each translator was shut into a separate cell, and that all by divine inspiration made their versions word for word alike; others said that there were two in each cell, accompanied by an amanuensis; but at all events miracle and direct inspiration were supposed to be connected with the translation: hence we cannot wonder that the authority attached to this version in the minds of those who believed these stories was almost unbounded.

The variety of the translators is proved by the unequal character of the version: some books show that the translators by no means competent to the task, while others, on the contrary exhibit on the whole a careful translation. The Pentateuch is considered to be part the best executed, while the book of Isaiah appears to be the very worst.

In the context of the eight century B.C., Isaiah was offering Judah's king, Ahaz, a sign of encouragement and perhaps even of punishment, should he not act on faith. Ahaz was concerned with pressure being put on him by Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel, so he wanted to appeal for help from Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria (II Kgs. 16:5-7). Isaiah directed Ahaz to trust in the Lord, not in a foreign king, and offered him a sign of G-d's help. A woman was to conceive and bear a son, whom she would name Immanuel, which means "G-d with us." While the child was still young, the crisis would end. Whether or not the woman was a virgin when she conceived had nothing to do with the sign to Ahaz. The sign was in the meaning of the boy's name and in how soon the problem would be over, as indicated by his young age. Ahaz did not heed Isaiah's words and appealed to the Assyrian king, plundering the temple and his own treasury to pay for his help (II Kgs. 16:7,8). Tiglath-pileser defeated Damascus and killed Rezin (II Kgs. 16:9). In 732 B.C. he captured and exiled northern Israel, and Pekah was assassinated (II Kgs. 15:29,30). God had already determined to solve Ahaz' problem, but Ahaz foolishly took matters into his own hands and paid dearly for it. Since Matthew's use of this passage was based on the Greek O.T., not the Hebrew, and since he was deriving a deeper meaning than the one at the historical level which applied to Isaiah's day, whether the Hebrew word in Isa. 7:14 should be translated, "young woman" or "virgin" has no real bearing on the issue of Jesus' virgin birth. Matthew settled the question by choosing to follow a translation which made His virgin birth explicit. See *bethulah* (1330) and '*almah*' (5959) in the Hebrew Lexical Aids section.

Thirdly, concerning the meaning of *parthenos*, its etymology is uncertain. At first, in Classical Greek literature, the word was used in the general sense of "girl" or "young woman." Long before the Septuagint was translated (second century B.C.?), this Gr. Word had no specific connotation of virginity. *Parthenos* was a young female individual who was in the process of maturing.

Parthenos was used of both a virgin and a non-virgin in the Septuagint and in earlier Classical Greek. Isa. 7:14 was discussing a mature young woman and was not focusing on sexual experience in the context. The translators of the Septuagint found nothing mysterious in the passage, and the *parthenos* was generally used for "girl" or "young woman" (Gen. 24: 16,43). If one maintains that *parthenos/almah* only means "virgin," he would have a definite problem: besides the fulfillment in Mt. 1:23, he would have to take the position that there was another virgin birth (conception) in the time of King Ahaz!

3933. **παρθενοξ** *parthēnōs*, *par-then'-os*; of unknown or.; a maiden; by impl. an unmarried *daughter*:--virgin.

"Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible"
Spiros Zodhiates (Evangelical)
AMG Publishers, 1990

The author of Matthew often attempts to prove that Jesus is the *Messiah by showing how the details of his life fulfill the Hebrew scriptures. In this case, Matthew presents a passage from Isaiah 7 in which the prophet is speaking to Ahaz, king of Judah. Ahaz faces attack from the forces of *Syria and Israel (734 BCE), and so he is contemplating an alliance with the king of *Assyria. God makes it clear to Ahaz that such an alliance should not take place. Isaiah declares that the Lord will provide a sign that will make known the Lord's will in spite of Ahaz's recalcitrance. A young woman who is pregnant will bear a son, and before that child is old enough to tell the difference between good and evil, the powers that threaten Judah will be defeated. Ahaz refuses to believe the sign and sends tribute to the Assyrian king who destroys *Damascus and kills the king of Syria (2 Kings 16.9). The other threatening force, Israel, is conquered by Assyria twelve years after the occasion of this sign at about the time that the child mentioned in the sign would have reached the age of maturity.

Isaiah's intent in discussing this child is clearly to set a time frame for the destruction of Israel. There is nothing miraculous about the mother or the conception process. The Hebrew word used, 'almá, means simply "young woman," without any implication of virginity. The Greek word *parthenos* used to translate 'almá can mean either a young woman or a virgin. Matthew used a Greek Bible, so he naturally reinterpreted Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy referring to the virgin birth of Jesus. For the evangelist, Isaiah's original meaning was superseded by the idenuhcauon ot Jesus as *Immanuel (Grk. *Emmanuel*).

“THE OXFORD COMPANION TO THE BIBLE”
Bruce Metzger, Michael Coogan, Editors;
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993, pp. 789-790

Ahaz says, "I don't want to ask for a sign."

God says, "Ask for a sign in the highest height or the deepest depth."

But Ahaz says, "I don't want to bother God, I don't want to put him to the test."

And Isaiah responds, "Are you even going to start irritating God now? Why don't you do what he tells you to do? Anyway, even if you won't ask for a sign, God's going to give you one. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call his name Immanuel." Notice the context in which this sign is given. It is in the context of King Ahaz being surrounded by his enemies and feeling that all is lost. Yet he is being told by God, "Don't worry; be happy; you're going to be in good shape. And I'll prove it to you: Here's the sign."

Matthew takes this particular story totally out of its context and applies it to the virgin birth and sees it as a prophetic utterance, as a prediction of what is going to happen. Those who believe that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, that Matthew is inspired and Isaiah is inspired, have no difficulty at all saying that if the Holy Spirit wants to inspire Matthew to see that meaning there, and the inspired Spirit brings it to Matthew, that's a good enough interpretation.

We have to recognize, however, that not everybody is going to be so amenable to Scripture. And those that we're trying to talk to, those who we're trying to impress with the validity of the Christian faith, are going to be somewhat skeptical. They may point out to us, for instance, that the Hebrew word translated "Virgin" in Isaiah chapter 7, is the Hebrew word *alma*. And the word *alma* does not necessarily mean a virgin. It can simply mean a young woman. That is why in some versions of the Bible you will simply read that "a young woman will bear a child and will give birth to a son, and his name will be Immanuel" *Immanuel* means "God with us." So they may say to us, as many people would say, the sign was simply this, that a young woman was going to have a baby and she would call his name Immanuel, and that would be a wonderful encouragement and reminder to the people that God is with us. So you may find yourself with people who do not accept what the Scriptures are saying here at face value. But they have a point, because it is perfectly true that *alma* does not necessarily mean "virgin."

“THE APOSTLES’ CREED” STUART BRISCOE,
HAROLD SHAW PUBLISHERS, 1994, pp. 70-71

תּוֹת - SIGN

GENESIS 9:11-13

¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. ¹² God said, "This is the **sign** of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a **sign** of the covenant between me and the earth.

EXODUS 3:11-12

¹¹ But Moses said to G-d, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the **sign** for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out

of Egypt, you shall worship G-d on this mountain."

JEREMIAH 44:29-30

²⁹ This shall be the **sign** to you, says the L-rd, that I am going to punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words against you will surely be carried out: ³⁰ Thus say the L-rd, "I am going to give Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, those who seek his life, just as I gave King Zedekiah of Judah into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, his enemy who sought his life."

1 SAMUEL 2:34

The fate of your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the **sign** to you - both of them shall die on the same day.

MARK 8:12

And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek after a **sign**? Verily I say unto you, there shall be no **sign** given unto this generation.

MATTHEW 12:39-40

³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, "An evil and adulterous generation seek after a **sign**; and there shall no **sign** be given to it but the **sign** of the prophet Jonah: ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

We observe also that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, without which no prophet or savior-god could be divine incarnation, was so common among ancient cults that it was impossible for any religious founder to achieve acceptance without it. It was, indeed, unknown in Brahmanism or Judaism; but these exercised little or no influence on the Gospel Jesus. In the mystery-cult, in Zoroastrianism, and in Buddhism, all saviors, past, present, and future, were incarnate gods, born of human virgins; this was an idea which came so easily and so naturally to primitive priests in order to establish their own authority that it sprang up independently in many places; Jesus was simply accorded the same honor by universal demand after his cult began making converts in the pagan world.

The Story of Christian Origins

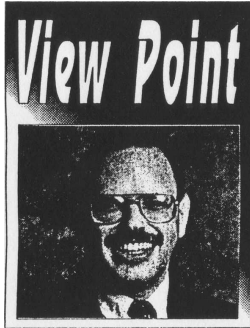
Martin A. Lawson

You write in your letter that some people were duped by the apostate's argument that Muhammad is alluded to in the verse: *The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself* [Deut. 18:15], while others remained unconvinced because of the phrase *from among your own people*. It is most astonishing that some folks should be duped by this, while others were almost persuaded, were it not for the phrase *from among your own people*. Under these circumstances it is incumbent upon you to concentrate and understand what I am about to say. Remember that it is not right to take a passage out of its context and argue from it. Before making any deduction, it is imperative to take into account the preceding and following contents in order to comprehend the meaning and fathom the writer's aim. If it were permissible for anyone to draw proof from passages out of context, someone would have the right to say that God has forbidden us in the Torah to obey any prophet, and interdicted belief in miracles, for he could cite the passage: *Do not heed the words of that prophet* [Deut.13:4]. He could also maintain that God commands us to worship idols, for He says: *There you will serve man-made gods* [Deut. 4:28]. Other illustrations could be multiplied *ad libitum*. But this is absolutely vicious. No text can possibly be cited as evidence before the aim of the author and its context are grasped. (Maimonides – Epistle to Yemen, 12th Century)

Let me repeat this point: there is no self-evident blueprint in the Hebrew Bible which can be said to unambiguously point to Jesus. Only *after* one has come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and more specifically the kind of Messiah that he is, does it all begin to make sense and hang together.

“Yehoshua ben David” by Walter Riggans, Olive Press, 1995, page 155

Some Bad News about the Good News



BY MICHAEL RYDELNIK

There is bad news for the Messianic movement. Some scholarly followers of Yeshua are taking Messiah out of the Hebrew Bible.

I was shocked when I first encountered it, but I'm convinced that an interpretive approach that negates Messianic prophecy is becoming prevalent among many scholars who believe in Yeshua. These scholars have gone to state universities, or world-renowned European institutions, or even excellent rabbinical seminaries. There, other fine scholars, who happen not to believe in messianic prophecy, have taught them. Then in the name of "scholarship," these Believers adopt views that find it hard to see Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. I suppose it isn't always possible to roll around in mud and not get dirty.

Here are some of the interpretations I have heard or read of traditional messianic passages by these "scholarly" Believers. Genesis 3:15, which speaks of the seed of the woman being bruised on His heels while at the same time crushing the head of the serpent, is merely about perpetual hatred between snakes and humanity, not Messiah and the Evil One. Genesis 49:10, which tells of the coming of Shiloh, is merely a prediction of

King David. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is about an order of prophets, without any messianic implications whatsoever. Isaiah's Servant Songs are about Cyrus the Great or the nation of Israel, not the Messiah of Israel. Psalms 2, 22, and 110 are all about King David, not the Son of David. Even Zechariah 12:10, which looks forward to the day when the Jewish people will look upon the Pierced One, refers not to looking upon Yeshua, but upon Zechariah, the prophet.

But how do they explain Yeshua's claim that the entire Tenach (Hebrew Bible) speaks of Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47)? Well, they say, Yeshua only meant that the Prophets wrote of Messiah as a type, or maybe even that Yeshua and his first followers used "creative exegesis" which they alone had the right to do.

I am convinced that by using sound interpretive principles, we can demonstrate that the authors of Scripture were speaking of the Messiah and that the only possible referent who could match their predictions is Yeshua of Nazareth. The moment we deny this, we undermine the linchpin of our faith. If Yeshua did not fulfill the messianic expectations of the Tenach, why should we believe in Him at all?

There's even more bad news for the Messianic movement. Some well-intentioned followers of Yeshua are finding Messiah in the Hebrew Bible where He truly is not. By using computers to number Biblical texts, some claim to have found Yeshua's name encoded at equally spaced intervals beneath the Hebrew text. According to this method, the Tenach is merely a huge, computerized word search game, in which analysts find "Yeshua"

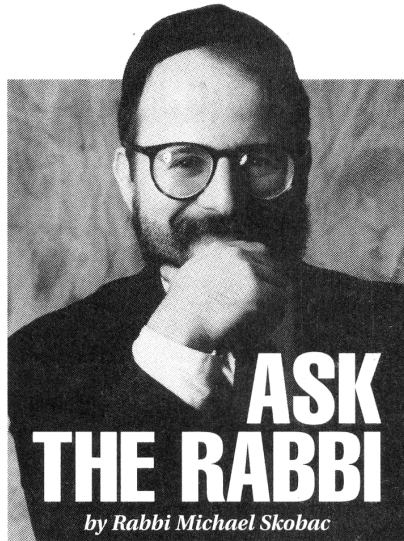
where He, the human authors, or the Holy Spirit *never* intended Him to be found.

There are many problems with this method of interpreting Scripture. First, it is possible to find almost anything we might want to find. All we have to do is try different numerical variations and it can come out in any number of ways. In fact, others have used the same method to prove Rabbinic Judaism as opposed to Messianic Judaism. Second, it presupposes the Masoretic text, which was only completed about 1,000 years after Messiah came. What about variant spellings or alternate readings from other, earlier manuscripts? Yes, the Scriptures are inspired but only in the original manuscripts! We cannot number the Masoretic Text and find hidden meanings.

Finally, God communicated his message in plain words, understandable to all. That is why He says, "Behold, from the beginning, I have not spoken in secret" (Isaiah 48:16). The ultimate danger in this method is that it destroys the credibility of our Messianic message. If we find Messiah in the Tenach where He truly is not, who will consider our message trustworthy?

In spite of all this, there is still good news for the Messianic movement. We need not remove messianic prophecies from the Hebrew Bible to establish our scholarly credentials nor do we need to add dubious evidence to prove the validity of our faith. Moses, David, and the Prophets actually foretold the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. If we read their writings, using sensible rules of interpretation, we cannot help but find Yeshua in the Scriptures. And that is great news!

From Jews for Judaism, Lifeline, p.9



After being involved in counter-missionary work for over twenty years, I've begun sensing a subtle problem with some of the educational programs that we present. Many of our classes on refuting missionary "proof texts" are often received with triumphant glee by committed Jews. Of course it's easy to snicker at easily demolished religious propaganda. When seeing countless examples of mistranslation, out-of-context quotations and circular reasoning, our students scratch their heads over how absurd they all seem. Many people have asked me in wonderment how anyone can accept such preposterous readings of the Bible? This is precisely the cause of my concern.

I suspect that some people do find it difficult to believe that seemingly intelligent and thoughtful Christians swallow the often logically tenuous teachings of

their faith. I sense that many Jewish people can't imagine how the scholarly elite of Christendom could fail to see the flimsiness of their own arguments. (It should be pointed out that this Biblical nearsightedness is generally prevalent only among evangelicals who approach the Hebrew Scriptures with an agenda. More liberal-leaning Christian scholarship usually is in line with traditional Jewish understanding of the Bible.) I think that many people simply cannot fathom the possibility that so many Christians can all be wrong. Ironically Judaism's very coherence may render it suspect. The Jewish position may seem too pat and simple in light of the vastness of Christian brainpower who don't get it.

We often fail to appreciate how intimidating it is to be out of "sync" with the norm. Professor S. Asch, in a famous experiment, asked groups of students to judge whether two lines were of equal or different length. The lines were of different size, however all the students but one had been instructed in advance to say that the lines were identical. Asch was interested in seeing what the lone innocent subject would say after hearing a room full of others give the wrong answer. Incredibly, 72% of the subjects ignored what they saw, and went along with the rest of the group! Despite the clarity of our beliefs, it's difficult being one of only 15 million Jews in a world of two billion Christians. Self-doubt may well set in.

So how can so many educated Christian believers entertain Biblical notions which seem so implausible? I'd like to suggest one approach which may shed some light on this issue. We know that in our study of Torah, there is a distinction made between "pshat" (the simple, plain meaning of a passage) and "drash" (a poetic, allegorical or figurative interpretation). It may be possible to assume that the early church fathers were engaging in a form of "Midrash" when approaching the Jewish scriptures to find references to Jesus. They were perfectly aware that the passages in question didn't really (on a 'pshat' level) refer to Jesus or Christian doctrine. However, once these traditional interpretations of the Bible became seared into the consciousness of Christians over the course of time, they became part of the Christian map of reality. Teachings which were once understood as "midrash" were ultimately elevated to the level of "pshat" after years of common usage. Although poetic interpretations of scripture could never be used to "prove" anything, once Christians began seeing passages like the alleged reference to a virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14 as literally true, they became polemical ammunition for the conversion of Jews. Once this subtle shift was made in understanding the Bible, Christians simply continued following the path which took them from allusion to illusion.