

# YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

*(Isaiah 43:10)*

**A TRADITIONAL JEWISH RESPONSE  
TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES**

**Yisroel C. Blumenthal**

This book is dedicated in memory of  
Kreindel bas Reb Yitzchok Yosef A"H  
and  
Bluma bas Reb David Menachem A"H

לעילוי נשמות  
קריינדל בת רב יצחק יוסף  
בלומה בת רב דוד מנחם  
עליהם השלום

Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.

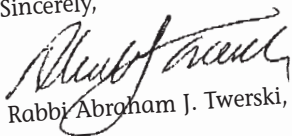
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כ"ב

Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal's *You Are My Witnesses* is a lucid summation of the cogent arguments and authentic translations of the Scriptures that were started by Torah Scholars throughout history to refute the claims of missionaries who sought to seduce Jews to renounce their Judaism.

Given the strenuous efforts being made by missionaries to attract Jews, who are essentially ignorant of Torah, Rabbi Blumenthal's dissertation is extremely important, and he is to be commended for his scholarly work.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD

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## A TRADITIONAL JEWISH RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

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**Jews for  
Judaism.**

Keeping Jews Jewish



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All comments and questions relating to this publication are welcome.  
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# INTRODUCTION

## A STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE

On the Sabbath of August 4 in the year 1263, the synagogue of Barcelona was host to a royal guest. James I, king of Aragon, had come to address his Jewish subjects. The king attempted to persuade the congregants to convert to Christianity. When the king finished his speech, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (RaMBaN, Nachmanides) stepped forward to give expression to the feelings of his co-religionists. After a preliminary demonstration of respect for the crown, the Rabbi addressed the king with the following words, "I am amazed. The words said in our presence to convince us that the Nazarene is the Messiah were said by the Nazarene, himself, when he brought this same message to our ancestors and tried to persuade them. They refuted him to his face with a perfect and strong rejection despite the fact that it was he who spoke, who knew and could argue his claim that he is divine, in accordance to your opinion, better than you can today. Now, if our ancestors who saw him and knew him did not heed him, how then can we believe and heed the voice of the king whose only knowledge of the matter stems merely from the hearsay of distant reporters who had no personal contact with him."

The simple words of Nachmanides reflect the clarity of vision, the calmness of spirit and the solid conviction of the Jew's rejection of Christianity. Throughout the ages, the Jew faced hardship, persecution and sometimes even death as a result of this rejection. But the Jew was not moved. The Jew went about doing whatever he had to do, patiently negotiating the various obstacles the hostile Christian world threw into his path. But it never occurred to him to join that world. Being a Jew was as essential as life itself, and even more than that. When being a Jew meant death, the Jew went to die accompanied by his wife, his little children and a simple love for his God. But to embrace Christianity? Never.

It happened, however, in certain phases of Jewish history that many Jews seem to have lost this resistance to Christianity. We live in one of those periods today. Hundreds if not thousands of Jews have joined the Hebrew Christian movement. This wave of apostasy, as well as those which preceded it, comes on the heels of another wave. A Jewish conversion to Christianity, whether it takes place on the individual level or on the communal level, follows a breakdown of the Jewish educational system. Most converts to Christianity had little connection to their heritage before they converted. A Jew who is truly connected to a living Judaism would rather die than convert to Christianity.

Why? What is it that the Jew knows about Christianity that inspires him to reject it? How can the Jew be so confident to prefer death over conversion?

The traditional Jew may know very little about Christianity. But the little that he knows is far more than enough. The Jew knows that Christianity rejects the fundamental beliefs of Judaism. The Jew knows that Christianity calls a man, god. All the philosophical explanations offered to justify Christian theology are wasted on the Jew. These simple facts cannot change. The law of Moses is not Christianity, and the God of Abraham is not a trinity. His faith in the God of Abraham and Moses inspired the Jew with the confidence to reject Christianity.

A Jew who lives as his ancestors did before him experiences the law of Moses in his daily life. Love and awareness of the God of Abraham fills the Jew's heart and soul. Perhaps he cannot articulate how he knows the law of Moses to be immutable, but he knows it nevertheless. Some Jews who walk with God may find it difficult to point out the faults in the various arguments presented by the missionaries who attempt to justify their worship of Jesus. Nevertheless, these Jews know that worship of a human being is idolatry. But in our generation, when so many Jews are disconnected from the simple faith of their ancestors, it has become necessary to articulate and to explain the Jewish rejection of Christianity.

In the following pages, you will find an articulation of the traditional Jewish viewpoint. These words are not written to replace a genuine connection with authentic Judaism, but rather to encourage it. As a Jew, you may have wondered what went through the minds of our ancestors when they went to die for the "crime" of rejecting Jesus. It is possible that your interest in this subject was sparked by the increased efforts of missionaries in recent years. You have found that their campaign to "save your soul" has reached alarming proportions. This may have served as an inspiration for you to learn more about the traditional Jewish response to missionary claims. In any case, we hope that you will find in this work a starting point for research in this field.

Some of those who read this booklet may be Christians. As a Christian, you may have wondered why it is that the Jewish people have such a resistance to Christianity. Why is it that most Jewish people do not even bother to read the Christian scriptures? Do these Jews think that just because they were born into the religion, that their religion must be right? How are these people so confident that they are right? These and similar questions may have been troubling you. The purpose of this booklet is to answer these questions. We hope that you find this work helpful in understanding the traditional Jewish mind-set.

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If you are a Jew who has embraced Christian beliefs, then please read this work as an appeal to your innate sense of honesty. Do not take me at my word. Check things out for yourself. Please acquaint yourself with the richness of your heritage. Find out what it means to be a Jew. Find out what it means to be chosen as God's witness to the world. Taste, and see that God is good, fortunate is the man who takes shelter in Him. (Psalm 34:9)

## **FOCUS**

### **A DEFINITION OF THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES THAT SEPARATE THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF SYSTEMS**

Judaism and Christianity are both belief systems. Each has its own way of looking at the world. These two systems are fundamentally different from each other. Only one of these systems can be correct. Judaism and Christianity are mutually exclusive.

The foundations of Judaism are the events of the exodus and the revelation at Sinai. These established the relationship that the Jewish people have with God. These events also established the credibility of Moses as God's prophet. The Jewish people worship the God who revealed Himself to them at Sinai. The Jewish people follow the teachings of Moses, the prophet of God. The Jews of all generations accept this belief system based on the testimony of their parents. A Jew is born into a nation, which worships the God of Sinai and lives by the teachings of Moses. It is through the testimony of his nation that the Jew learns the belief system, which is Judaism.

Christianity has a dual foundation. First, Christianity believes in the prophets of Jewish scripture. Second, Christianity is founded on the life and teachings of Jesus. The Jewish prophets are the ones who proclaimed that the Messiah is to come, and Jesus supposedly came and fulfilled that prophecy. The miracles that the Christian scriptures claim were performed by Jesus supposedly establish the credibility of Jesus and his message. The person of Jesus is worshipped by Christians as a god and the teachings of Jesus form the belief system of Christianity. Christians of all generations accept this belief system based on the testimony of the Christian scriptures.

Judaism and Christianity clash on several fundamental points. From the Jewish perspective, the important differences between the two belief systems relate to the nature of God and to the teachings of Moses.

#### **1) Who Is God?**

Judaism worships the Almighty God. Jews believe that God is not a physical being, nor can God be represented by a physical being. God is not

constrained by time or space. God is all-powerful and all knowing. God is one. The Jewish belief about the oneness of God is described by the term “absolute unity”. This means that any plural number cannot be used in describing the essence of God. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the God who spoke to His people at Sinai. The focus of Judaism is on God. The life of the Jew is devoted to this God.

Christianity worships Jesus. Christianity believes that god is one, at the same time that he is three. The Christian god consists of the Father (who roughly parallels the Jewish God), Jesus, and the Holy Ghost. These three are considered by the Christian to be coequal members of the godhead. The focus of Christianity is on Jesus. The life of the Christian is devoted to Jesus.

## **2) What Are The Teachings Of Moses?**

Judaism believes that the law of Moses is a living law. It is a law which can and should be followed by a nation – a nation which includes all types of people. The law of Moses is applicable in all generations and in all situations. The entire revelation of God at Sinai includes more than that which is written in the five books of Moses. The five books of Moses only contain the general structure of the law. Moses also received from God and transmitted the definitions of these laws. These teachings of Moses, which clarify the law, were not recorded in the five books, but rather these were retained in the collective memory of the nation. As a static body of law the teachings of Moses require living people to apply them to practical life. Moses taught the nation the methods they are to use in order to render the law applicable to every situation. When a Jew does not know how to apply the law to a particular situation, he consults with the teachers who are familiar with the methods of application which were taught by Moses. The Jew finds practical guidance for daily life within the law of Moses.

Christianity does not recognize any teachings of Moses, which are not recorded in the five books. Christianity rejects the Jewish testimony regarding those teachings that Moses received from God and were not recorded in the five books. Christianity believes that many of the scriptural teachings of Moses are no longer relevant. Christianity does not see in the law of Moses a guide to practical living. (Today some Messianic congregations have begun recognizing the binding nature of the law of Moses. These people are also beginning to realize the importance of the defining teachings of Moses. However, this is not the traditional Christian position.)

From the Christian perspective, the important differences between the Jewish and Christian belief systems concern notions about atonement and the Messiah.



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### **3) How Does One Achieve Atonement For Sin?**

Judaism accepts that the only method for expiation of sin is repentance. If one sincerely regrets his sins, confesses his guilt before God and redirects his life towards God, then God forgives the sin. There are many actions through which one can express the attitude of repentance. Prayer, charity and bringing offerings to God's altar are legitimate expressions of a repentant heart. In some situations, God commands us to bring an offering to give expression to our repentance. But it is the sincerity of the repentance which ultimately achieves the reconciliation with God.

Christianity believes that the only method for atonement of sin is through blood sacrifice. The only blood sacrifice which Christianity recognizes is the sacrifice of Jesus. Through worship of Jesus, Christians hope to connect with the blood that expiates their sins.

### **4) What Is The Role Of The Messiah?**

Judaism believes that the Messiah will be a human king. In the time of the Messiah, there will be universal peace. The temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The Jewish people will return to the land of Israel. During the reign of the Messiah, everyone on earth will be united in their worship of the God of Israel. The Messiah will lead all of mankind in service of God.

Christianity believes that the Messiah is a human god. Christianity believes that the chief role of the Messiah is to die. Through the death of the Messiah, the world is redeemed of its sins. According to Christian theology, the Messiah will come a second time. When the Messiah returns, then all those who worshipped him will be rewarded, while those who rejected him will be punished.

These are the basic differences between the two belief systems. Judaism and Christianity differ on their understanding of the essence of God, the teachings of Moses, atonement and the role of the Messiah. Judaism and Christianity have different beliefs concerning these basic matters. Only one set of beliefs can be true. Christian missionaries spend much energy in an effort to convince Jews that the Christian belief system is the correct one. All the arguments of the missionaries are wasted on a knowledgeable Jew.

In order for the Jew to be convinced that his belief system is correct, he must be sure that the testimony of his nation is true. If the Jewish nation is bearing true witness, then any belief system, which runs counter to its testimony, must be false. If the Jewish people are telling the truth when they testify that God revealed Himself as an absolute unity, then any belief system which denies the absolute unity of God must be false. If the Jewish people are telling the truth when they testify that Moses taught them the details, definitions and practical applications of the Torah's laws, then any

belief system which denies this fact must be false. It is not necessary for the Jew to examine the testimony of other belief systems to know that Judaism is true.

For the Christian to be convinced that his belief system is true, it is not enough to be sure that the Christian scriptures are reporting actual events. In order for the Christian to know that his belief system is correct, he must also determine that the Jewish nation is bearing false witness. If the testimony of the Jewish nation were true, then even if Jesus performed all the miracles which the Christian scriptures attribute to him, he would have no credibility. If indeed God revealed Himself at Sinai as an absolute unity, then anyone who advocates worship of a trinity is advocating idolatry. No miracle, no matter how spectacular, can serve as justification to worship an idol. In order to be a committed Christian, one must be convinced that the Jewish people are bearing false testimony.

## **TESTIMONY**

### **WHY JEWS BELIEVE AS THEY DO**

The history of each of the world religions consists of two periods. The first period is the formative period. This is the time when the belief system was established. The formative era is when the founders of the belief system came to believe in that particular system. Generally, this consists of a sequence of events which convinced the founders of the religion of the truth of the faith that they were about to adopt. Then comes the era of transmission. This is the time period which separates the foundation of the belief system and the present. Each belief system must provide some way of transporting its message safely and accurately through the ages. People who subscribe to any particular belief system must be confident that the founders of their belief system were correct in their beliefs. If there is no way to determine that the founders of the religion were not mistaken, then it is naive to accept their belief system. One must also be sure that the contents of the belief system did not get distorted through the passage of time. If the method of transmission is not foolproof, then again, it is naive to accept the belief system. If there is no way to ascertain the integrity of the transmission, then there is no way of knowing that the belief system being presented is the same system which was adopted by the founders of the faith.

The entire belief system of Judaism is founded upon two pieces of information. The first piece of information is the simple fact that God is an absolute unity. The second piece of information is the fact that Moses is the prophet of God. Both of these pieces of information came to the Jewish people directly from God. At Sinai, God revealed Himself to the Jewish people. It is through this national prophecy that the Jewish people came to

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know that God is absolutely one. At Sinai, God spoke to Moses while the entire nation listened in. This is how God demonstrated to His people that Moses is His prophet. For forty years, Moses led the Jewish nation. During these forty years, the nation lived in seclusion. They ate bread that rained down from heaven, and they drank water, which poured out from a rock. And during this time, Moses taught them the law, which God had revealed, to him. When Moses died, he left behind him a complete body of law. Nothing can be added to the teaching of Moses, nor can anything be detracted from it. With the death of Moses, the formative era of Judaism came to a close.

After Moses, Judaism had many prophets and many teachers. But the prophets and teachers did not come to introduce a new law. The role of the prophets who followed Moses was to encourage the people to uphold the laws that God revealed to Moses. The prophets were appointed by God to reprove the nation when they went astray from the law of Moses, and to guide the people in bringing their lives back in line with the law of Moses. The prophets also took the basic themes presented by Moses, such as the suffering of the Jewish nation and their ultimate redemption, and illustrated how these concepts would be played out. But never do the prophets add or detract from the law of Moses.

The role of the teachers of the Jewish nation that followed Moses is to guide the people in the practical application of the law of Moses. Using methods of deduction that were transmitted by God to Moses, the teachers of Israel draw precise instructions which render the law of Moses applicable to every situation. But the teachers did not introduce a new law. The prophets and the teachers did not participate in the formation of the Jewish belief system. These men could not be involved in the formation of Judaism. Moses remains the only man authorized by God to deliver His holy law to the people.

Judaism recognizes this limited authority of the prophets and the teachers only because Moses taught that these men should be granted this measure of authority. It is the law of Moses which defines the terms “prophet” and “teacher”. And it is the law of Moses which delineates the roles of the prophets and the teachers. According to these guidelines, the Jewish people recognized many great teachers and prophets. But these men did not affect the formation of the belief system. The formation of the Jewish belief system was completed by Moses. At the time of Moses’ death the Jewish nation already possessed a complete system of belief and practice.

Judaism’s era of transmission began when Moses left his people encamped on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. God chose to transmit His message through the living legacy of the Jewish nation. By the time Moses died, the entire belief system of Judaism was firmly planted in the hearts and minds of

the Jewish nation. This belief system was the focal point of their daily lives. The second generation was born into a nation that worshiped the God of Sinai and lived with the teachings of Moses. It is through the living practice and belief of an entire nation that we receive the word of God.

The written word is also utilized in the transmission of the Jewish belief system. The core of God's revelation to Moses was recorded by Moses in the five books. The words of some of the prophets were also written down. Together, the five books of Moses and the books of the prophets make up the Jewish scriptures. The books of the Mishna and the Talmud also play a role in the process of transmitting the teachings of Judaism through the ages. The Mishna and the Talmud record many of the decisions made by the teachers of Israel pertaining to the application of the law. These books also contain many of the teachings revealed to Moses, which were not recorded by Moses in his five books. The books of scripture, the Mishna, and the Talmud, enabled the nation to retain a vast amount of knowledge. But the role of all of these books is secondary to the testimony of the living people. It is only the testimony of the living people which informs us that these books are authentic and authoritative. The fact that these books were in the possession of a living nation preserved the accuracy of the texts. And it is only through the living legacy of the nation that we can arrive at a true understanding of the spirit of these books. The written word, no matter how explicit, can always be misinterpreted.

The Jew can be confident that the testimony of his nation is true. Both the formation of the belief system and the transmission of the system were national experiences. In order to assume that the Jewish belief system is false, one must accept that an entire nation is unanimously lying. A Jew is born into a nation of witnesses. A child who is born into a Jewish community in which the educational system is still intact enters a world of living Judaism. The Jewish educational system is not limited to the scholastic experience. The Jewish home is the keystone of the Jewish educational system. Long before the Jewish child can read, he has come to know the Creator of the world. Through the simple faith of his parents, the child begins to develop a real relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The living example of his parents will teach the child what the Sabbath means to a Jew. Passover, Pentecost (Shavuot) and Tabernacles (Succoth) are all living realities in the Jewish home. Through the observance of these holidays, the Jewish child learns of the exodus, the revelation at Sinai and the journeying of the Jewish nation in the wilderness for forty years. (These were the formative events of the Jewish belief system.)

As the child grows older, he is introduced to the holy books of Judaism. The child learns the position that each of these books occupies in the minds and hearts of his people. The meaning and the spirit of these books come

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alive for the child through the example of his parents and teachers. The child comes to realize that this world of Judaism is the same all over the globe. Wherever Jews faithful to the teachings of their ancestors can be found, the belief system is the same. Jews all over the world teach their children to worship the Creator of the world who is absolutely one. Wherever Judaism is alive, the Sabbath is the same, as well as dietary laws and the laws regulating marital life. Whenever the Jew has a question concerning the law of Moses, he will consult with the teachers of the law. All over the world, the teachers of Israel use the same methods of deduction to provide answers to the questions posed to them.

The Jewish people teach their children that this is how their parents taught them to live, and their parents learned it from their parents extending all the way in a chain back to Moses. There is no Jew alive today, nor is there any record of a Jew, claiming to possess a different tradition which goes back to Moses. All the Jews in history who deviated from the unanimous practices of the nation admitted that they did not receive their deviant teachings from the previous generation. There is only one belief system which comes with the claim that it goes back to Moses. This is the Judaism into which the Jewish child is born. He knows that his people are not lying, and he will pass on to his children the same testimony that he received from his parents.

Throughout history many people rejected or ignored the national testimony of the Jewish people. The Jew faced the rejection of these people with equanimity. The Jew saw that no one else possessed a belief system which claims to have been established by God on a national scale. No other belief system began its journey through time on a national level. Every other belief system places its trust in the testimony of individuals. Individuals can lie. Individuals can be mistaken. A nation cannot unanimously lie. A nation cannot be unanimously mistaken concerning concrete events which were collectively experienced. As long as no rival belief system is claiming a national revelation, the Jew can be confident that Judaism is true. As long as Moses remains the only prophet whom had the truth of his mission attested to by God in the presence of an entire nation, the Jew can be confident that his teachings still stand.

If the Jew faces other belief systems with equanimity, then he faces Christianity with sheer amazement. Other belief systems may reject the Jewish testimony outright. But Christianity is different. Although Christianity rejects the testimony of the Jewish people, they still accept the Jewish scriptures. The Jewish scriptures are one of the pillars of the Christian faith. The Christian claim to the messiah-ship of Jesus is founded upon the presumption that he fulfilled prophecies of the Jewish scriptures. If the Christians would recognize that Jesus did not fulfill these prophecies, they

would then have to admit that he is not the Messiah. All the alleged miracles of Jesus would be irrelevant if his message would be seen as running contrary to Jewish scripture. It is only because Christians believe that Jesus' mission conforms to the vision of the Jewish prophets that they accept him as the Messiah.

Who were the prophets of Jewish scripture whose words the Christian belief system considers so powerful? How do we know that they really existed? And how do we know that the books of scripture were, indeed, authored by them? How can we know that these people were not frauds? In the history of mankind few terms were misused as often as the title "prophet". What criteria were used to establish the authenticity of the scriptural prophets? And who was charged to make this determination?

The only way that the world knows of the existence of the Jewish prophets is through the testimony of the Jewish people. The Jewish nation bears witness that these men existed and that the books of scripture were written by them. The Jewish nation testifies that these men were able to demonstrate that they were really sent by God. The criteria used to determine the authenticity of the prophets were the teachings of Moses as applied by the teachers of the Jewish nation. If these teachers had not acknowledged that the prophets of scripture were authentic, we would not have their books today. The testimony of the Jewish nation is the means through which the message of the prophets travels through time.

But Christianity places no trust in the testimony of the Jewish people. Christianity maintains that the Jewish people are lying about the fundamental concepts of their belief system. Christianity is founded upon the notion that the Jewish people are bearing false witness concerning the revelation at Sinai. All of Christendom admits that this was an event which took place in the presence of the entire Jewish nation. Christianity acknowledges that this revelation made it clear to the Jewish people that either God is, or isn't, an absolute unity. The Jewish people testify that God revealed Himself as an absolute unity. Yet Christianity asserts that the Jews are unanimously lying, every last one of them. Christianity believes that the Jewish people falsely attribute to Moses a massive body of law which he never taught. So how can Christianity be sure that this nation of liars is not attributing the books of scripture to prophets who never wrote them? Christianity accuses the Jewish nation of maintaining loyalty to a fraudulent belief system. So then how can Christianity rely on this very same nation to sort out the genuine prophets from the frauds?

The Jew accepts the words of the Jewish scripture based upon the testimony of the Jewish people. But upon which foundation does the Christian base his acceptance of Jewish scripture?

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Christianity uses the words of the Jewish prophets to lay the groundwork of their belief system. At the same time, Christianity has total confidence that the Jewish nation is bearing false witness. This is hypocrisy. Either the witness is lying or he is telling the truth. It cannot be both.

## **SCRIPTURE**

### **THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH RESPONSE TO THE MISSIONARY “PROOF-TEXTS”**

In the formative years of Christianity, the Church came to the realization that in order to establish its own credibility, it must first discredit Judaism. There were many methods the Church used to achieve this objective. These included spreading lies about the Jews, teaching that the Jews are spiritually blind, children of the devil, as well as general vilification of the chosen nation. The only attempt the Church made to appeal to the human intellect was their exploitation of the Jewish scriptures. The Church attempted to present the Jewish scriptures as a document that supports the Christian belief system, while at the same time contradicting the Jewish belief system. The Church would have us believe that the authors of Jewish scripture, namely Moses and the prophets, all subscribed to the Christian belief system. In order to substantiate this preposterous theory, the Church spent millions of man-hours combing the length and breadth of the Jewish scriptures. They were looking for verses which could be read as supportive to the Christian belief system. From the thousands of verses in Jewish scripture, the Church found a handful of passages which could be manipulated to read as supportive of the Christian belief system and as standing in contradiction to Judaism. The Church then presented these verses together with their Christian explanation and made the claim that the authors of these verses were Christian by belief. The Church argued that the Jewish people are not loyal to their own holy books. Based on the Christian interpretation of these verses, known as “proof-texts” the Church advances the theory that the Jewish belief system stands in direct contradiction to the sacred books venerated by the Jewish people themselves. According to the Christian claim, the authors of these books subscribed to the Christian belief system, while their disciples confused their message and created Judaism. The Church thus claims that the Jews failed in the transmission of the very foundations of their religion.

If, indeed, the Church has succeeded in demonstrating that the Jewish belief system possesses inherent contradictions, then the Jewish scriptures should be discarded. We must bear in mind that it is only through the testimony of the Jewish people that we have scripture. It was the religious leader-

ship of the Jewish people who determined the authenticity of the scriptural prophets. If the Jewish method of transmission managed to distort the very essence of their religion, then it is foolhardy to accept their scriptural canon.

The truth of the matter is that the Jewish nation has been studying scripture since it was put down in writing. Every word and every nuance of the text is precious to the Jew. Jews have been reading these “proof-texts” centuries before Christianity was born. Each one of those verses has a classical Jewish interpretation which clearly explains how these verses conform to the Jewish belief system. The Church maintains that the Jewish interpretation is wrong. The Church asserts that it is only an anti-Christian bias which blinds the Jews from seeing the true meaning of these verses. The problem with this assertion is that many Christian scholars have come to agree with the Jewish interpretation of these verses. These people were certainly not blinded by an anti-Christian bias, yet they accept the Jewish understanding of these verses as the most accurate interpretation. It seems, perhaps, that the Church is operating with a bias – a pro-Christian bias which causes them to read these verses as proof to the veracity of the Christian belief system.

Much of the missionary effort to attract Jews to Christianity is focused on these proof-texts. These are the verses in the Jewish scripture which Christians see as supportive of their belief system. These verses relate to the areas of difference between the Jewish and Christian belief systems. The verses, which the missionaries use as proof-texts are not the only verses which speak about these subjects. Jewish scripture gives a lot of coverage to each of these subjects, and the proof-texts form only a small segment of the overall picture which scripture presents. Scripture gives us a clear picture concerning each of these subjects. The general message of scripture conforms to the Jewish belief system. The few missionary proof-text verses are generally vague and ambiguous. If the Christian interpretation of these verses were honest, then we would be facing an inherent contradiction within scripture itself. If one would not know the Jewish interpretation for a given proof-text, the honest thing to do is to say, “I don’t know what it means”, rather than assume that the verse stands in contradiction to the general message of scripture.

Judaism and Christianity differ in their attitudes towards the essence of God, the teachings of Moses, atonement and the Messiah. What is the clarity that scripture gives us on these subjects? What is the overall message of scripture? In this brief study, we will not examine the missionary proof-texts. It will suffice for us to see that the Jewish belief system is firmly rooted in the words of the prophets.



## 1) *The Essence Of God*

The Jewish scriptures testify that God revealed Himself to the entire body of the Jewish nation. The entire nation heard God's voice proclaim, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall not have any other gods beside Me." (Exodus 20:2) This is how God demonstrated to His people whom they are to worship. At the same time, God was teaching the people whom they are not to worship. Worship of anyone other than the God who brought the nation out of Egypt is idolatry. The Jewish scriptures testify that the Sinaitic revelation was an all-inclusive demonstration. After the revelation at Sinai, there can be no room for doubt. Concerning this revelation Moses tells the Jewish people "To you it was demonstrated in order that you know that the Lord is the God, there is none beside Him." (Deuteronomy 4:35) The people who were privileged to witness this great revelation were commanded, "You should make it known to your children and to your children's children." (Deuteronomy 4:9) When God commands the nation to kill people who are involved with idolatry, He makes reference to this revelation. In those cases where the death penalty is to be implemented, God identifies the idol by the simple terms, "that which I have not commanded" or "those which you do not know." (Deuteronomy 13:3, 7, 14; 17:3) It is clear that God expects the Jewish people to identify the idol by process of elimination. If this is not what you were commanded to worship, then it is another god. The Jewish people testify that God revealed himself at Sinai as an absolute unity. Worship of anyone else, is by definition, idolatry.

No one ever claimed that Jesus was revealed to the Jewish people at Sinai. The first worshipers of Jesus did not claim that with their worship they were following a tradition which goes back to Sinai. According to the definition of scripture, worship of Jesus is idolatry.

The Jewish people were granted a revelation in order that they should know whom to worship. This was not the only method of instruction that God provided to guide us on this matter. It is clear from Jewish scripture that God expects the human conscience to be able to distinguish between worship of God and idolatry. Time and time again, the prophets appeal to human logic, and sometimes even to humor in order to demonstrate the evil of idolatry. Jeremiah exclaims, "Tell them, gods that did not create heaven and earth should go lost from this earth and from beneath these heavens." (Jeremiah 10:11) Jeremiah is pointing out the absurdity which is inherent in worship of anyone other than the Creator. A god who operates in an arena which he did not create is no god. Similarly, Isaiah points out the foolishness of placing faith in a human being. "Cease ye of man that has breath in his nostrils for of what worth is he." (Isaiah 2:22) Isaiah is demonstrating the futility of worshipping a man. If he is dependent on a constant supply of oxygen for his own well-being, then how is he going to help you?

Worship of a human being is abhorrent to the human conscience. Yet this is what Christianity advocates. Whichever way you wrap it, Christianity is pointing to a man and saying, "That is god". Scripture is clear that when it comes to idolatry, you should not ignore the cry of your conscience. By this definition as well, scripture identifies worship of Jesus as idolatry.

## **2) *The Teachings Of Moses***

Judaism testifies that Moses relayed an entire body of law that defines the scriptural commandments. Judaism also testifies that the law of Moses authorizes qualified sages to make decisions in order to implement scriptural law. These decisions are binding upon the entire nation. Christianity rejects this testimony. Christianity asserts that Moses taught no more than what he wrote in the five books. And he certainly didn't authorize anyone to make decisions concerning the application of God's law.

Upon examining scripture, one discovers that the Christian rejection of the Jewish position is illogical. If we read scripture with the Christian position in mind, we will find that the teachings of Moses are practically meaningless. Take the scriptural holidays as an example. God directs His people to celebrate the holiday of Passover. Anyone who eats leaven during this holiday is liable to the divine punishment of having his soul cut off. This holiday is to take place from the fourteenth day to the twenty-first day of the first month. Scripture does not tell us when this first month is to begin. In fact, scripture says nothing about the construction of a calendar. If we assume that Moses was told nothing more than what he wrote in the five books, then we are facing a serious problem. How are we expected to know when Passover is going to begin? It is obvious that God told Moses how to construct a calendar, which would determine when God's holidays are to be celebrated. Indeed, the Jewish people testify that Moses taught them how to construct a calendar which would determine the times of the scriptural holidays. Throughout history, this is the calendar that the Jews have been following. The Jews observed the holidays according to the teachings of Moses which were not recorded in the five books.

There are many groups today who subscribe to the Christian belief system, but at the same time they attempt to observe the scriptural holidays. These people observe Passover on the same days that the Jewish nation celebrates Passover. This is hypocrisy. If, indeed, these people believe that Moses was taught nothing which he did not record in the five books, they should construct their own scriptural calendar. And if they admit that there were some teachings of Moses which were not recorded in scripture, then they should ask themselves the following questions. How did God expect us to learn of these unwritten teachings of Moses? What means did God use to transport this information to us? If God considered the testimony of the

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nation a reliable means of transporting a complicated calendar, then how can these people be so confident that the testimony of this same nation is not reliable concerning simple matters, such as the absolute unity of God?

Scripture is equally clear concerning the authority of the teachers of Israel to render decisions concerning God's law. In Deuteronomy, chapter 17, Moses directs the people to consult with the courts. The decision of the court is to be heeded. One who blatantly ignores the court decision should be put to death. Similarly, we find in II Chronicles, chapter 19, how the righteous King Jehoshaphat fulfilled this directive of Moses. The chapter describes how Jehoshaphat established courts in the land of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem. The king refers to two leaders to whom the judges can turn with their questions. One leader was to direct the courts concerning God's law, while the other leader's role was to decide matters which pertain to the king. It is quite clear that the scriptures expected these judges to make decisions concerning the application of God's law.

In Deuteronomy, chapters 13 and 17, Moses directs the entire nation to participate in the execution of people involved with idolatry. It is obvious that the guilt of these lawbreakers is to be determined by a court of qualified judges. Yet the entire nation is commanded to implement the decision of these men. It is clear that not only does God authorize men to make decisions concerning the implementation of His holy law, but God also instructs the Jewish people to abide by these decisions.

### **3) Atonement**

The Jewish belief system maintains that it is only repentance, turning back to God, that can achieve atonement for sin. The worship of Jesus can do nothing to help expiate sin. Christianity, on the other hand, maintains that it is only worship of Jesus which achieves atonement for sin. Repentance can do nothing to achieve atonement for sin. (Some prominent Christian scholars admit that repentance plays an important role in the process of expiating sin. They believe that it is repentance together with the blood of Jesus which gains God's forgiveness. But this opinion is not accepted by the vast majority of Evangelical Christians.)

The Jewish position is firmly rooted in scripture. The book of Jonah describes how the wicked people of Nineveh were threatened with destruction. The inhabitants of that city repented and, as a result, God rescinded the decree of destruction. (Jonah 3:6-10) The prophet Ezekiel tells the people, "and the wicked, should he repent from all his sins that he has done and he will keep all my statutes and do justice and righteousness, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his iniquity shall not be remembered against him, in the righteousness that he has done he shall live." (Ezekiel 18, 33) These are not isolated passages in scripture. The concept of repentance is one of the predominant themes in scripture.

The Christian cannot point to any one verse in scripture which will tell you that repentance does not bring about the expiation of sin. Nor can the Christian find any one verse which states that worship of the messiah can achieve atonement. The Christian attempts to assemble several scriptural themes which, when pieced together, point to the Christian system of atonement. This type of argument has an obvious weakness. Since there is no explicit scriptural quotation to support the Christian position, it must rely on speculative analysis to draw accurate conclusions from a complicated conglomeration of scriptural themes. There is simply too much room for error. When we pit this argument against the straightforward statements which support the Jewish position, we are pitting questionable human reason against the explicit word of God.

When one examines the scriptural themes which the Christians quote to support their position, it becomes clear that not only do these themes fail to lend support to the Christian argument, but also these themes actually testify against the Christian position.

The Christians point to the scriptural theme of the sinful nature of man. If man is so sinful, then how can his repentance count for anything before God? Indeed, scripture declares, "How can one born of a woman be righteous?" (Job 15:14) This sits well with the Jewish belief system. Judaism believes that, indeed, every created being must be imperfect before God. But it is the Christian belief system which stands in contradiction to this basic scriptural teaching. The entire Christian belief system is founded upon the notion that someone born of a woman was totally righteous.

The Christian scriptures (Romans 4) quote the verse in Genesis 15, where God credited Abraham's faith to him for righteousness. The Christian argument is that only faith can count before God as righteousness – not action. But in whom did Abraham place his faith? It certainly was not Jesus. It is the Jew's faith in the words of the God of Abraham which leads him to believe all that God has taught. It is the God of Abraham who said, "Return to me and I shall return to you" (Malachi 3:7), and the Jewish nation takes God on His word.

Christians point to the scriptural concept of blood sacrifice. The law of Moses spends so much time describing the various offerings. Does this not demonstrate clearly how blood sacrifice is central to the atonement process? But what is a blood sacrifice? A blood sacrifice was an offering brought by a sinner to God's altar as an expression of his repentant heart. Some of the sacrifices were national offerings. These offerings were paid for through a fund which was replenished every year by a collection taken from each individual Jew. These offerings were brought in the Temple which was built by the Jewish people. The national offerings were an expression of the entire nation's sincere desire to be reconciled with God. But according to the

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Christian belief system, no action on man's part could bring about atonement for sin. The blood offerings of scripture testify that man's action can, and do, achieve atonement for sin.

#### **4) Messiah**

This is how Moses describes the Messianic era, "And it shall be that all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have set down before you, and you will bring it to your heart amongst all the nations that the Lord your God has driven you. And you shall return unto the Lord your God and you shall hearken to His voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul. And the Lord your God will return your captivity and He will have compassion upon you, and he will return and gather you from all the nations that the Lord your God has scattered you there. If your outcasts be at the ends of the heaven, from there will the Lord your God gather you and from there will He fetch you. And the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your ancestors inherited, and you shall inherit it, and He will do you good and He will multiply you more than your ancestors. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul for the sake of your life. And the Lord your God shall place all these curses upon your enemies and upon those that hate you who have persecuted you. And you will return and hearken to the voice of the Lord and you shall do all His commandments that I command you today. And the Lord your God will make you plenteous in all the work of your hands, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your land, for good, for the Lord will turn to rejoice over you for good just as he rejoiced over your ancestors. When you hearken to the voice of the Lord your God to keep His commandments and statutes which are written in this book of teaching, when you return to the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul." (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

The prophets of scripture elaborated upon the basic messianic theme presented by Moses. The prophets describe, in great detail, the ingathering of the Jewish exile, the rebuilding of the land of Israel, the temple in Jerusalem, peace on earth and universal knowledge of God. The prophets provided a clear and unambiguous picture of the age of the Messiah. The fact that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled tells us that the Messiah has not arrived. But these prophecies tell us more than that. These prophecies testify that when the Messiah does arrive, he will not be a Christian. What would a Christian Messiah do in a world in which obedience to God is expressed through observance of the law of Moses? Who would the Christian Messiah teach in a world that looks to the Aaronic priests for guidance in their observance of God's law? (Ezekiel 44:23) For whom would the Christian Messiah be providing atonement in a world which sees the blood offerings

of Moses being offered in the Jerusalem temple as they were in days of old? (Malachi 3:4) Not only do the Jewish prophets tell us nothing about the Christian Messiah, but they also leave no room for him in their vision of the future.

In the face of the explicit message of the Jewish scriptures, missionaries quote these same prophets to lend support for their version of the role of the Messiah. It will suffice for us to point out that every one of the Christian proof-texts is a subject of debate even amongst Christian scholars. There is no way one can honestly invoke these difficult and ambiguous passages to support a position which stands in contradiction to the entire messianic theme presented by the prophets.

All in all, the message of scripture is quite clear. One who reads the Jewish scriptures from cover to cover will certainly encounter many vague and ambiguous passages. At the same time, he will find overall clarity concerning the most basic subjects. Scripture leaves the reader with no doubt that the Jewish people are the witnesses to whom God chose to reveal His glory. Scripture leaves the reader with no doubt that the law of Moses is a living law which applies to every generation. Scripture is abundantly clear that sincere repentance achieves God's forgiveness for sin. And finally the picture the Jewish prophets painted of the Messianic age is a complete portrait which leaves no room for a dying god who is supposed to be an all-atoning sacrifice.

The traditional Jew was never moved by the Christian argument. When the Jew rejected Christianity, it was with confidence and with clarity. The Jew's rejection of Christianity is founded upon the testimony of an entire nation – a nation whom God Himself chose as His witnesses. The clarity of the Jewish rejection is reflected in the words of the Jewish prophets. This is what empowered our nation to overcome all obstacles and preserve the message which was handed to them at Sinai. The message is still intact. Come and learn.

**NOTE:** The Jew never saw a need to examine the testimony of Christianity in order to expose its emptiness. A clear understanding of the Jewish testimony is all that is required for the Jew to be confident in his rejection of Christianity. The following section is included because it illustrates how an accusation that a belief system has failed in the transmission of its message can be substantiated.

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# THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIANITY

## SUBJECTING CHRISTIANITY TO THE SAME FORM OF CRITICISM THAT IT APPLIES TO JUDAISM

The formative era of the Christian belief system was the time that Jesus revealed his teachings to his disciples. The disciples believed that Jesus fulfilled certain prophecies of the Jewish scriptures, and that Jesus performed miracles. These actions established his credibility in the eyes of his followers. Once his credibility was established, his disciples accepted his teachings. The entire Christian belief system should be contained within the teachings of Jesus.

Judaism rejects the Christian belief system at its foundation. According to the Jewish belief system, the disciples of Jesus were mistaken. Christianity claims that Jesus taught that he is god. The disciples should never have accepted this claim. Both the national testimony of the Jewish people and the human conscience equate worship of a human being with idolatry. All the miracles that the disciples believed Jesus performed and all the prophecies that the disciples thought Jesus fulfilled cannot justify idolatry. Judaism does not recognize the authority of the founders of Christianity to have established the type of belief system which is credited to them.

The formative era of the Jewish belief system was the time that the Jewish nation was in the desert, on its way from Egypt to the land of Israel. The national revelation at Sinai and the teachings of Moses form the basis of the Jewish belief system. Christianity recognizes the authority of the founders of Judaism. Christianity acknowledges that whatever God revealed to the Jewish nation and that whatever Moses taught is absolutely true. Christianity does not reject Judaism at its foundation. Christianity rejects Judaism because it questions the integrity of the transmission of the Jewish belief system. Christianity accuses Judaism of distorting the original teachings of their founders. Christianity makes this accusation despite the fact that:

- 1) It was God Himself who established the method through which the Jewish belief system should be transmitted to all generations.
- 2) From its inception, the Jewish belief system was in the hands of an entire nation.
- 3) There is only one belief system which claims a direct line of tradition which goes back to Moses.
- 4) The Christian accusation is self-contradictory. Christianity accepts the Jewish scriptures, while rejecting the testimony of the Jewish nation, which is the only basis for accepting the veracity of the Jewish scriptures.
- 5) The scriptural evidence presented to substantiate this accusation is nonexistent.

- 6) There is no historical evidence to substantiate the accusation. There is no point in Jewish history which Christians can point to and say, "Here is where the Jewish method of transmission went wrong."

In spite of all this, Christianity places its full faith in this accusation. If this accusation is false, and the Jewish nation truly managed to preserve the original message of their founders, then Christianity has a foundation of no substance. Christianity admits to this. Still, they are fully confident that Judaism is a distortion of the teachings of its original founders.

We will now turn our focus upon the Christian method of transmission. Which method does Christianity rely on to transmit its message throughout the ages? How does Christianity attempt to preserve the original teachings of Jesus? The Evangelical Christian will answer these questions by pointing to the books of the Christian scriptures. According to Evangelical Christianity, these books should have accurately preserved the message of the founders of Christianity. We will note that:

- 1) Jesus, the god of Christianity, did not write any of these books. Neither did he specify that any of these books be written. In fact, Jesus did not authorize anyone to teach in his name except for his immediate disciples. Jesus expected to return in the lifetime of his immediate disciples, so he saw no need to establish a chain of tradition.
- 2) The entire Christian tradition is founded solely upon the testimony of individuals, rather than an entire nation.
- 3) There were many groups in the early years of Christianity, each claiming a direct tradition going back to the disciples of Jesus. Each of these groups had a distinctly different belief system. Some of these groups had their own version of the Christian scriptures. Most of these divergent gospels did not survive the centuries of Church censorship.

In spite of all this, Evangelical Christianity places its full faith in these books of Christian scripture. Evangelical Christianity is totally confident that these books represent the original teachings of Jesus.

An unbiased reading of the Christian scriptures will reveal that this confidence is misplaced. Not only do the Christian scriptures reveal that Jesus did not teach Evangelical Christianity, but these books also provide the historical evidence necessary to substantiate the accusation that the Church distorted the original teachings of Jesus.

In order to level this critique against Christianity, it is not necessary to grant that the Christian scriptures are anything more than the words of men. We recognize that the Christian scriptures were written in the later half of the first century of the Common Era. These books were written by men who believed a certain way and we expect these books to reflect their beliefs.



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We do not read these books in order to discover direct words of truth. We can only hope to gain an understanding of how the writers of these books viewed the world. And more importantly, we will discover how these writers wanted the world to view them.

The authors of the Christian scriptures describe the development of the early church in the following manner. Jesus was a Jewish man who lived in the land of Israel. When he was about thirty years old, he began to travel throughout the country. For about three years, Jesus traveled and taught. By the time Jesus died, he had created a small following. All of his followers were Jews. Prominent among Jesus' followers were his twelve disciples. These disciples formed a community centered in Jerusalem. The community of Jesus' followers was lead by James, a brother of Jesus. This community is referred to as the "Jerusalem Church." In the years following Jesus' death, the Jerusalem Church grew in size. At one point, the authors of the Christian scriptures claim that they numbered several thousand. But the members of this church were all Jews.

Christianity reached the non-Jewish world through the person of Paul. He traveled the length and breadth of the Mediterranean region, teaching the gentile world about Jesus. Paul founded many churches throughout the Roman Empire. The churches which Paul established were predominantly gentile.

The Christian scriptures end their narrative at this point. They leave the reader at the historical point where there are two churches – the Jewish church of James and the gentile church of Paul.

History tells us that the Jewish church of James did not survive as a separate entity. By the time Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, there were almost no Jewish Christians left. The few Jewish Christians who remained were persecuted as heretics by the gentile church. Christianity as it exists today was transmitted through the body of the Pauline gentile church. The books of Christian scripture were products of the gentile church. They may have included in these books material which came from the Jewish Christians. But the gentile church was the editor of this material. It was the gentile church who determined the contents of the Christian scriptures and who transmitted these texts to future generations.

In order to be convinced that the gentile church is truly transmitting the original message of Jesus, one must determine that Paul's teachings conformed to the teachings of Jesus. The gentile church only learned of Jesus through the teachings of Paul. If Paul's teachings were not synonymous with the teachings of Jesus, then the gentile church does not possess the original message of Jesus.

To determine Paul's connection to Jesus, we will turn to the testimony of Christian scripture. It is clear that the editors of these books were strongly

motivated to present Paul as one who is faithfully transmitting the original message of Jesus. Yet even these biased writers were not able to do so.

The Christian scriptures describe the basis of Paul's mission in the following manner. Paul never met Jesus in real life. Neither did Paul learn of Jesus' teachings through the disciples of Jesus. Paul emphatically states (in Galatians, chapters 1, 2) that no living person was involved in transmitting Jesus' message to him. Paul only learned of the teachings of Jesus through a series of visions. In these visions, Jesus appeared to him and imparted his teachings. Paul's entire message was the product of these visions.

The only way we can verify the truth of Paul's claim is by determining the reaction of Jesus' disciples to Paul's message. These men who lived with Jesus and heard him teach could compare the teachings that they heard to the prophecy of Paul. How did the Jewish followers of James react to Paul's claim to prophecy?

Paul makes the claim (Galatians 2:9) that the leaders of the Jerusalem Church acknowledged that he was appointed (by Jesus) as a messenger to the gentiles. But was Paul telling the truth? James and the Jerusalem Church never acknowledged the validity of Paul's visions. It is the Christian scriptures themselves that contradict Paul's claim.

The book of Acts, chapter 15, describes how the leadership of the Jerusalem Church disregarded Paul's claim to prophecy. Paul had come to Jerusalem. He had been preaching to the gentiles that they were not required to follow the law of Moses. Some members of the Jerusalem Church disagreed with Paul. They felt that in order for a gentile to join their movement, he should be required to observe the law of Moses. This question was brought before the leadership of the Jerusalem Church. The elders of the church discussed the question and James handed down his decision. His judgment was that the gentiles were not obligated to observe the entirety of the law of Moses as a prerequisite to joining the Christian community. However, he stipulated that the gentiles were obligated to observe certain dietary laws and to avoid immorality.

If Paul was telling the truth when he claimed that the leadership of the Jerusalem Church acknowledged him as a true prophet, then this story makes no sense. Here we have Paul who claims to have been personally appointed by the dead Jesus as his emissary to the gentile world. Whatever Paul taught was supposedly revealed to him in these prophetic visions. One of the central teachings of Paul was that the gentile world is not bound by the law of Moses. Yet, when the leaders of the Jerusalem Church are in doubt as to what Jesus would have said concerning the gentiles, they discuss the question and look to James for guidance. If there was any truth to Paul's claim that these leaders acknowledged the truth of his prophecy, then they

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should have simply asked him, "What did Jesus tell you?" The fact that they considered the question and the method that they used to resolve the question, clearly tells us that these men did not believe that Jesus had ever spoken to Paul. The author of the book of Acts, his bias notwithstanding, could not hide this simple fact.

The difference between the gentile church founded by Paul and the Jerusalem Church founded by Jesus was not limited to the question of the authenticity of Paul's prophecy. These two institutions espoused two totally different philosophies. The central teaching of Pauline Christianity is that faith in the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus is the only valid method through which atonement for sin can be achieved. The entire philosophy of Paul revolves around this one teaching. Evangelical Christianity is founded upon this basic teaching of Paul. If you were to ask an Evangelical Christian to sum up his belief system in one sentence, he would respond with this point. Faith in Jesus is the only redemption from sin. In fact, the entire concept of the messiah-ship of Jesus is basically limited to this one point. Jesus is the messiah of Evangelical Christians only because they believe that his death provided atonement for sin.

But the Jerusalem Church, which was established by Jesus and guided by his disciples, did not believe in this teaching of Paul. They did not believe that faith in Jesus could effectively atone for their sins. This is demonstrated by the testimony of the Christian scriptures. The book of Acts, chapter 21, reports that the normal activities of the members of the Jerusalem Church included the offering of animals in the Temple for the explicit purpose of the expiation of sin. The book of Acts describes how four members of the Jerusalem Church had taken a Nazirite vow. This means that they had voluntarily brought themselves into a situation where they would be required, by the law of Moses, to bring an animal as a sin offering. It is clear that these people saw in the temple offerings a valid method for the expiation of sin. If they believed as Paul did, that Jesus died for their sins, once and for all, then there would be no point in bringing a sin offering in the temple. The fact that the Jerusalem Church still participated in the temple offerings after Jesus had died tells us that they did not see in Jesus' death an all-atoning sacrifice. These people were not Evangelical Christians.

The Christian scriptures provide both the theological and historical justification to the accusation that Christianity has failed in the transmission of its own message. The Christian scriptures tell us that the disciples of Jesus never believed the fundamental teachings of Evangelical Christianity. The people who lived with Jesus and heard him preach did not believe that, with the death of Jesus, the world is redeemed of its sins. The Christian scriptures also tell us at which historical point the break in the transmission occurred. These books tell us that Paul, the father of modern Christianity, had no

connection to Jesus. Christianity is an edifice erected upon the testimony of one man. All of Christianity stands upon Paul's word that Jesus appeared to him. The only people who were qualified to verify Paul's claim contradicted him to his face. This emerges from the pages of the very books which Christianity regards as the true witnesses to its claims.

## **SUMMARY**

### **A BRIEF SYNOPSIS**

Judaism and Christianity are two different belief systems. Each one of these belief systems categorically rejects the fundamental teachings of the other.

Christian missionaries attempt to persuade Jews to abandon Judaism in favor of Christianity. In their efforts at achieving this objective, the missionaries try to present logical arguments, which would justify a conversion from Judaism to Christianity. The typical missionary sales pitch has the missionary pointing to a verse in the Jewish scriptures, which seems to be supporting the Christian belief system. Essentially, the missionary argument is that the original teachers of Judaism, the authors of Jewish scripture, were Christians by belief. If Jews today are not Christians, it is only because they have distorted the message of their original teachers. This is the thrust of the missionary argument.

The Jew cannot accept this argument for several reasons:

- 1) It was God Himself who established the original Jewish belief system. The missionary admits as much. It is clear that God expected the message of Judaism to be available to all generations. The means through which God transmitted His message is the national testimony of the Jewish people. If God deemed the living testimony of this nation to be a reliable method of transmitting His message, the Jew will not differ.
- 2) The missionary argument assumes that an entire nation unanimously corrupted the essence of their belief system. In order for the missionary argument to be true, one must accept one of the following scenarios. Either a national conspiracy is involved, or a nation unanimously made the same series of mistakes. Both of these are statistical improbabilities.
- 3) The missionary argument is self-contradictory. If the Jewish nation managed to corrupt the very essence of their belief system, then there is no reason to accept the sanctity of Jewish scripture. It is only through the testimony of the Jewish nation that we know these books to be sacred. If the national testimony of the Jews cannot be trusted,

then there is no way of knowing that there is any authenticity to the books of Jewish scripture.

- 4) The authors of Jewish scripture were quite clear about their beliefs. And they were not Christians.

As a general rule, the Jew felt no need to counter every missionary argument. However, it often happened that the Church would force the Jew to respond to each of the missionary arguments. Many books contain a record of the Jewish responses to the various missionary arguments. Any Jewish library will include some of these books. In addition, many of the prominent Jewish commentators of scripture will explain why Jews do not accept the missionary interpretation of a given verse. These include, but are not limited to, the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, and Abarbenel. It is not difficult to find Jewish responses to the individual missionary arguments. Furthermore, many Christian scholars have come to recognize the fallacies of the missionary exploitations of Jewish scripture.

There is yet another factor which should be taken into consideration when we examine the missionary argument. There is an old Jewish saying which advises, "Before you point to the splinter between the eyes of your friend, remove the beam from between your own eyes". If the missionary demands that the Jew search the Jewish scriptures for evidence that the original teachers of Judaism were not Jews by belief, then the missionary should first search the Christian scriptures. If missionaries had the honesty to undertake this search, they would discover sufficient evidence to substantiate the reality that Jesus, James and Peter were not Christians. In place of the futile attempt to assail the solid foundations of Judaism, the missionary should examine the breaches in his own house.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**YISROEL CHAIM BLUMENTHAL**

**R**abbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal is a highly respected educator and author. He has studied at the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel, and in Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood where he received smicha (rabbinic ordination) in 1997. For several years, he was the Rosh Kollel (Dean) of the Yardley Kollel where he directed various community study programs. Presently, while continuing his studies at Beth Medrash Govoha, he continues to direct the Yardley Kollel Outreach Program that attracts adults at all levels of Torah observance. Rabbi Blumenthal has been involved in counter-missionary activity for over 10 years. He maintains on-going contact with people influenced by missionaries, as well as with the missionaries themselves. Rabbi Blumenthal is a cherished consultant and advisor to Jews for Judaism.

# JEWS FOR JUDAISM

## The Response to an Urgent Need

Today, there are 75 million Evangelical Christians in North America. Many believe that the Jewish people must be converted to Christianity before Jesus will return. They spend \$300 million annually to support over 1,000 missionary groups that evangelize Jews of all backgrounds and ages. These missionaries claim that our people are not complete as Jews unless they accept Jesus as the Messiah. Worldwide, they've established hundreds of Hebrew-Christian "synagogues" to attract and convert Jews.

In recent years, over 275,000 vulnerable Jews have converted through these missionaries' deceptive tactics. Christian ministers masquerade as "Messianic rabbis" wearing yarmulkes (skullcaps) and talleisim (prayer shawls) preaching the Gospel at "Shabbat" and "High Holiday" services. They deceptively use Jewish symbols, religious artifacts and traditional Jewish music to lure and confuse potential converts. Missionaries misquote, mistranslate and misinterpret Jewish scriptures and rabbinical texts in order to "prove" that Jesus was the Messiah.

In response, Jews for Judaism was established in 1985 to counter this growing threat to our survival. Our two primary goals are preventive education and winning back those Jews who have been influenced by missionaries. To achieve these goals, Jews for Judaism provides counseling to "Hebrew Christians," monitors missionary activity, offers lectures and presents intensive counter-missionary courses. As well, Jews for Judaism distributes counter-missionary literature, CD's and tapes, free of charge, in English, Russian, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Spanish and French.

Jews for Judaism unites the Jewish community in a common cause and is endorsed by a wide spectrum of Jewish agencies, rabbis and educators. If you would like to receive our free literature, arrange a speaker for your group or request a personal consultation, please contact one of our Jews for Judaism branches listed below. We'd be happy to help you.

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Keeping Jews Jewish



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