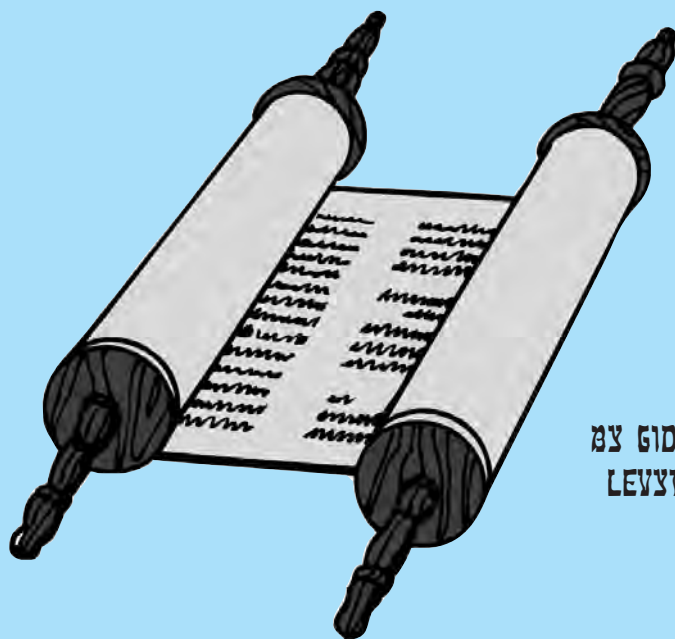


RESPONSE TO ANTI-MISSIONARIES



BY GIDEON
LEVY TAM

BY A JEWISH BELIEVER
IN THE LORD JESUS
— THE MESSIAH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: “What Do You Think About the Messiah?”	1
Claim #1: Is It True That Jews Lose Their Jewish Identity Once They Believe That Jesus Is The Messiah?	2
Claim #2: Is It True That The Jewish Bible Has No Prophetic References to Jesus?	6
Claim #3: Is it True That The Spiritual Salvation And A Personal Relationship With God Come Through Repentance, Prayer, Fasting and Doing What is Right? . .	15
Claim #4: Is It True That Miracles Do Not Prove The Validity of Christianity?	23
Claim #5: Is It True That The Christian Belief In The Tri-unity of God Is Incompatible With Judaism? . . .	26
Conclusions	37
The Messiah According to Judaism	38
Why Jesus Is The Jewish Messiah	40
About Christian “Proof Texts”	45
Has Isaiah 7:14 Been Mistranslated?	48
Does This Verse Refer to Jesus?	51
Appeal	54
About The Author	55

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"WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE MESSIAH?"

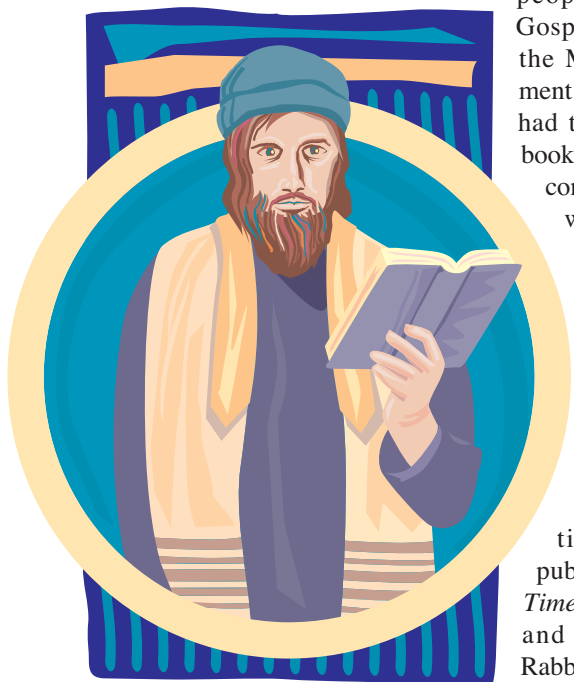
In the year 2000 a booklet, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*, 3rd edition, by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz was published in large quantities and circulated in the Jewish community in the city of Toronto by "Jews for Judaism." The purpose of this booklet was to warn the Jewish community against Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah, who are actively sharing with their

people the message of the Gospel about the Lord Jesus the Messiah and His atonement for our sins. I personally had the desire to review this booklet and respond to it in a constructive way, consistent with the Biblical teaching.

I have to say that the booklet in discussion is not **the** response of the entire Jewish community, but is just **a** voice among many and differs greatly from a more moderate "A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" published in *The New York Times* on September 10, 2000, and signed by 129 Jewish Rabbis.

As I put these words on paper, my desire and burden is to return to the principles taught in the Hebrew Scriptures and not to be preoccupied with the failures of either Gentiles or Jews over the years, whether they were believers in Jesus the Messiah or not.

As a Hebrew believer in Yeshua the Messiah, I must confess that I have experienced both love and care for my people from many Christians as well as attitudes which are insensitive to the Jewish mindset. In spite of many troubles throughout history inflicted on Jews



by people who claimed to be Christian, we should not be diverted from the issue at stake, which is the fact of the Messiahship of Yeshua and his work of salvation.

My intention in writing this booklet is not to attack my brethren according to the flesh, the Jewish people, whom I love. On the contrary, my wish and prayer to God is that they might find true salvation in the person of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who once asked the spiritual leaders of Israel: **“What do you think about the Christ (Messiah)?”** (Matthew 22:42). This question is the main purpose and theme of this reply to the authors of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*. As you read this booklet, I would like to ask you personally what **you** think of the Messiah. Do you know Him? My wish for you is that, as you read this booklet in connection with the Word of God, you might come to the appropriate conclusion.

CLAIM #1: IS IT TRUE THAT JEWS LOSE THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY ONCE THEY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH?

One of the statements the Anti-missionaries make in their booklet *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook* written by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz of “Jews for Judaism” is that a Jewish person who has chosen to believe in the Lord Jesus (Yeshua the Messiah) stops being Jewish. Is this true?

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

When dealing with this question, a linguistic problem should be addressed. Since the Jewish people are among the very few who, in the English language, represent not only an ethnic group but also a religion, certain distinctions need to be made.* The question is whether being a Jew means an ethnic affiliation or a religious one. As is probably obvious to our readers, it can be both. Rabbi Kravitz says that one’s beliefs

*Unlike English, Russian for example, makes a distinction between an ethnic Jew (*evrey*, i.e. “a Hebrew”) and a religious Jew, who is not necessarily an ethnic one (*iudei*).

“do influence your Jewish status and that a person who was born a Jew can at some point temporarily cease to be called a Jew” (p. 9).

According to him,

“a Jew who follows another religion is Jewish only to the point that he retains a spiritual obligation to repent and to return to Judaism. However, as long as his beliefs are idolatrous and foreign to Judaism, he cannot call himself a Jew. (Obviously, a non-practicing Jew is different from a Jew who has chosen to follow a foreign path.)” (p. 9).

Let us look at the question of Jewish birthright and ethnic identity of Jewish people.

1. A Jew is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is a Hebrew through Abraham (Gen. 14:13). He is an Israeli through his connection to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen.32:27-28). He is a Jew, being a descendant of Judah and the rest of the children of Jacob (Gen. 46:8-28).

2. Every person who is born as a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a Jew and nothing can ever change this fact, even if he/she chooses not to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Therefore it is correct to say that a Jew always remains an ethnic Jew. In our view it is impossible to deny a person’s ethnic identity, no matter what the argument is based on. The statement made by Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz that a secular Jew remains a Jew, whereas a believer in Jesus the Messiah stops being a Jew, is not logical. If we accept his view that faith in the God of Israel constitutes one’s Jewishness, it is inconsistent to declare that an atheist or someone who believes in a different god is still a Jew, and deny the same right to a believer in Yeshua. May we remind the reader and Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz that the passage in 1 Kings 18:21 deals with people who chose not to follow the God of Israel and worshipped a pagan deity instead. In spite of their decision, they still remained Jews (i.e. descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

Following Yeshua the Messiah is believing in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, since He is the Messiah, promised by the God of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz says that

“in their attempt to convert Jews, missionaries claim that one can remain Jewish while practicing Christianity. The use of terminology, such as ‘Messianic Jew,’ ‘Hebrew Christian,’ and ‘Jew for Jesus’ is but a deceptive attempt to represent converted Jews as Jewish. In fact, missionaries even go so far as to claim, that a Jew, who accepts Jesus (*Yeshua*, as they call him) is a completed Jew, implying of course, that all other Jews are incomplete” (p. 8).

In my opinion, the most honest way for a Jew who believes in Jesus (*Yeshua*) to express him or herself is as a Jew believing in the Messiah. The word “Christian” means a follower of Christ and the word “Christ” is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, i.e. “Messiah.” Therefore, when a Jew acknowledges the promised Messiah of Israel, what other name should he call himself, but a Messianic Jew, a Hebrew Christian or a Jew for Jesus? It is exactly the opposite of being deceptive; it is being honest and frank in light of the teaching of the Word of God. I must say, that the deception is on the side of those who claim to be teachers of the nation of Israel, and who ought to lead the people back to God’s Word and His Promises, but who deny the clear teaching of the Bible concerning the Messiah *Yeshua* and the work that He accomplished for us. By doing so, they contradict the promises given to our forefathers in the Scriptures.

The word “Jew” (or *Yehudi* in Hebrew) means a person who gives thanks or praise (Gen. 29:35). While everyone who was born a descendant of Abraham is a Jew outwardly, a Jew believing in the Promises of God and acknowledging the truth of His Word is also a Jew inwardly, one who thanks and praises the Lord. I believe that a Jew remains a Jew no matter what and that when a Jew or Gentile come to know *Yeshua* as the Savior of this world and the Promised Messiah, they stand together before God as one, both forgiven by and through the Messiah.

Rabbi Kravitz says:

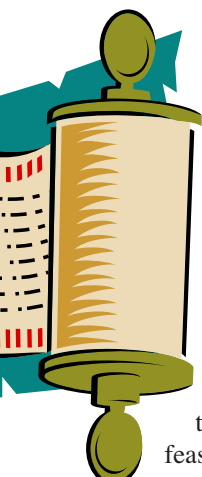
“The misrepresentation and deception employed in this attempt to disguise the seriousness of a Jew’s conversion to Christianity is similarly reflected in the widespread misuse of Jewish symbols and customs ...” (p. 9).

It is true that there are differences of opinion with respect to some



Jewish symbols and customs. Nevertheless, it is a privilege for us to use them, since they were given to Israel by God and described in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah and who love the people of Israel want to share with our Jewish people what God declared in His Word. So the symbols are used to help them see the truth of the Messiahship of Yeshua on their own terms.

For example, the lamp stand (the *Menorah*), which is one of the articles God told Moses to build in the Tabernacle, is also a symbol of the 7-fold Spirit of the Lord, that would rest upon the coming Messiah. According to Isaiah 11:1-2 this promised Redeemer would come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and be the branch growing out of Jesse's roots. This person would have the Spirit of the Lord upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11 has a direct reference to the promised Messiah, who can only be the Lord Yeshua.



In light of this and other passages, He would be the One who would rule in righteousness. The customs and holidays that God gave to the people of Israel in the Bible all point to the Messiah of Israel. For example, one of the most important feasts given to Israel is Passover (Pesach). When our people came out of Egypt, delivered in a miraculous way, God told them in Exodus 12:1-14 to take a lamb on the 10th day of the month of Nissan, keep it for 4 days and kill it on the 14th day of the month. They were to take the blood of the lamb and to strike it on the two upper doorposts of their houses. God said to Israel:

“Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).

This feast shows the importance of redemption by blood. The Lamb had to be killed and its blood had to be shed for our people to be delivered. Any household in Egypt that had no blood on its doorposts was punished by God. Blood has always represented life:

“For the life of the flesh *is* in the **blood**, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make **atonement** for your souls; for it *is* the **blood** that makes **atonement** for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).

In the New Covenant, Yohanan, the son of Zechariah, said when he saw Yeshua the Messiah:

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, 36).

Every time the Jewish people celebrate the feast of *Pesach* (Passover), it immediately ought to remind them of a lamb’s blood, shed to redeem our people of old in Egypt, but also to direct us to the Messiah Himself, who, according to the Prophet Isaiah 53:7 became “*the Lamb, which was brought to the slaughter*” for the sins of the nation of Israel and the rest of the world (read the whole chapter 53 of Isaiah).

There are many other symbols and customs we can speak about, and there are various views of what should and should not be used. The fact is, however, that these symbols are used not to deceive our people, but simply to unfold the truth concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Many people came to acknowledge that Jesus (Yeshua) is truly the Messiah not because of the symbols, but because their hearts were open to see from the Word of God that they as Jewish people, like all others, have sinned before God like all others and stood in need of forgiveness. They realized that Yeshua IS the promised Messiah, who loved them and came to this world to lay down His life and shed His blood to make an atonement for their souls. I hope and pray that it is not the symbols and customs that might draw you to come to Yeshua, but His Person, Beauty and the work He has accomplished out of love for Israel and the rest of the world.

We must also bear in mind that one day each person must stand before our God. The question that we will have to answer is not whether we are Jewish or not, but what we have done with the offer of salvation which God provided through the Messiah. Therefore I, a Jew who believes in the Messiah, am much more concerned about the eternal destiny of my soul than the temporary opinion of men, who say that I am no longer a Jew.

CLAIM #2: IS IT TRUE THAT THE JEWISH BIBLE HAS NO PROPHETIC REFERENCES TO JESUS?

Responding to the fact that the Jewish Bible has prophetic references to Jesus, Rabbi Kravitz points out that a text does not necessarily mean what appears to be its meaning at the initial reading (p. 10) and uses as an example a verse in Luke 14:26, which says:

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

1. In Luke 14:26 the Lord Yeshua the Messiah does not speak about the way of salvation but about the cost of being his follower. In order to be a disciple (*talmud*) of Jesus, one must be willing to bear the consequences, which often include giving up some of the most precious things in life, even life itself. We as Jewish believers in the Messiah today, just like the first century Hebrew Christians, have to admit that it is extremely difficult to be separated from our own families whom we love dearly. Over the last 2000 years this is exactly what happened: Jewish believers in Jesus (Yeshua) have found themselves separated from the ones they loved the most, namely: fathers, mothers, wives, children, brothers and sisters. In another passage in the New Testament, Yeshua said:

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘*set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*’; and ‘*a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.*’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:34-39).

A person following the Lord Jesus is to identify with his Master, who is even today rejected by people, as the Prophet Isaiah had written in chapter 53 verse 3:

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ...”

We must remember that rejection is nothing new for those who follow God. Historically, when our people came out of Egypt, they had

to journey in the wilderness for 40 years before they reached the Promised Land. We find them in Exodus, 32 impatient and frustrated. While Moses was up on the Mount Sinai receiving the 10 Commandments from the LORD, Israel made a golden calf and said:

“This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (Exodus 32:4).

Moses, coming down from the Mountain and seeing what his own people had done,

“cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:19).

He gave Israel a challenge and said:

“‘Whoever *is* on the LORD’s side – *come* to me!’ And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.”’ So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day” (Exodus 32:26-28).

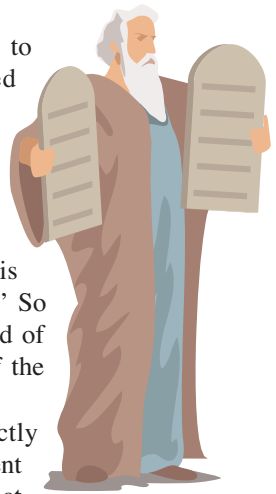
From reading this passage we understand exactly what Yeshua the Messiah said in the New Testament (Luke 14:26): that to follow God’s precepts would at times mean separation from our loved ones.

An additional passage needs to be mentioned. In Numbers 25:1-9 when the children of Israel committed adultery with the daughters of Moab and worshipped their gods, the Lord God of Israel through Moses commanded the judges of Israel:

“Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor” (Numbers 25:5).

In this passage we also find Phinehas (*Pinhas*), the grandson of Aaron the High Priest, taking a javelin and killing an Israelite man and a Moabite woman for their sin in order that the plague inflicted by God would stop.

Looking over these passages in Exodus 32, Numbers 25, Matthew 10 and Luke 14:26 we learn that hating of one’s family, mentioned by



Yeshua, does not mean hatred itself, which causes so many wars in this world, but opposition to sin, which separates us from God. The Lord teaches us to hate sin but to love the sinner. The God who told Moses to slay the unfaithful was the same God who told Israel to

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

Jesus, who said,

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26),

is the same One who, through the Apostle Paul, said to the believers:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Many other passages can be added to this. What we learn is that Yeshua wanted to communicate to us all the necessity of following Him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6), even though sometimes (not always) it means being separated from the very ones we love the most. Therefore, just like our people of old needed the grace and help of our God to be obedient to His Will, we who believe in Yeshua the Messiah also need His grace and help to follow after Him.

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz says that

“missionaries twist and mistranslate (verses of the Hebrew Bible) to suit their purposes” (p. 11, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*).

Rabbi Kravitz is correct when he says that every passage of the Hebrew Scriptures must be taken in connection with its context. I do agree that it is easy and tempting for a writer to take a certain text without considering the context.

Many passages of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures) in their context refer to someone who would come in order to accomplish the work of redemption. One such example is Psalm 22, which talks about the suffering and the exaltation of the Messiah. In the first 21 verses King David records his feelings and experiences he had in his own life. In verses 3-5 David looks back at God’s faithfulness in delivering his forefathers. Then he says that he became despised and mocked by others. Yet he still trusted in God by saying, “*From my*

mother's womb You have been my God."

In verses 12-18 David talks about the enemies that came against him (vv.12, 16). In verse 16 (17 in the Hebrew text) he says, "*they pierced my hands and my feet,*" which in the Hebrew Masoretic text is: *ka-ari yadai ve raglai*. Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz says that this passage of Scripture has been mistranslated, and

"when correctly translated reads 'they surrounded my hands and feet like a lion,' referring to King David being pursued by his enemies, who are often referred to as a lion" (p. 11).

As a native Hebrew speaker, I clearly see three divisions in Psalm 22:16 (v. 17 in Hebrew), marked by three statements: 1) "for dogs have compassed me" (*sevavuni*); 2) "the assembly of the wicked has enclosed me" (*hikifuni*); 3) "as a lion (*ka'ari*) my hands and my feet." What it does not say is precisely the point Rabbi Kravitz makes: "***They have surrounded my hands and feet like a lion.***" Literally it reads, "like a lion my hands and my feet." If we take the statement "as a lion my hands and my feet" out of context, it won't make much sense. If we take it in context, we can conclude that David metaphorically spoke of what would happen to his hands and feet as a result of a lion attack. We all know that when a lion attacks he pierces and tears his prey's flesh. It is interesting that David talks specifically about his hands and feet and not his whole being. It is also important to realize that when the Psalmist used animals such as "bulls" (v. 12), "dogs" (v. 16), and "lions" (v. 21), he described his enemies and not himself (i.e. he did not say that his hands and feet were like lions paws). Therefore, the words "pierced my hands and my feet" are much more suitable than "like a lion."

Rabbi Kravitz and others who reject this verse as applying to the crucifixion of Jesus (Yeshua) use the Hebrew Masoretic text. We must remember that the English translation was taken not from the Masoretic text, which was written in approximately 1000 A.D., but from the Greek translation of the Hebrew original (the Septuagint), written between the third and the second centuries B.C., some 1250 years earlier than the Masoretic text.

David began the Psalm with the cry, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" In Matthew 27:46 in the New Testament Yeshua the Messiah uttered the same words just before His death on the cross: "*Eli, Eli, lama shvaktani?*" which means: "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" The common way of crucifixion in those days

was to pierce the hands and feet of a person being crucified. In the same chapter, Matthew 27:35, we read that the Roman soldiers who *“crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.”* We find the same words in Psalm 22:18 (Psalm 22:19 in Hebrew): *“They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”*

According to the information, given to us in the Hebrew Scriptures we may conclude that nothing like this happened to King David himself, but that he, being a prophet, foretold the events that would happen to Yeshua, the coming Messiah of Israel.

We also might feel like David at times and lament that God has forsaken us. However, the truth is that God has never forsaken anyone as long as they have breath in their nostrils. The only person who could truthfully say, *“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”* was the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who was forsaken for our sins when He was hanging on the cross to make atonement for our souls. Because of what He has accomplished, anyone, who has accepted Him will never be forsaken.

2. Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz says that

“Missionaries often use the New Testament as proof that events or prophecies in their mistranslated passages have been fulfilled. However, to someone familiar with the Jewish Bible, it is obvious that the touted ‘inerrancy’ of the New Testament is questionable” (p. 11).

Rabbi Kravitz refers to three passages in the Old Testament which speak about the 70 people of the House of Jacob, who went to Egypt (Genesis 26:47; Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22) and compares them to the passage in Acts 7:14, where Stephen mentioned the number 75 just before he was stoned for his faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

A. We must remember that there are many seeming discrepancies found also in the Tanach (the Old Testament) as well as the New Testament. However, this does not mean we should conclude that the Bible is wrong. We need God’s wisdom and help to know how to deal with these discrepancies. We believe that both the Old Testament and the New Testament are divinely inspired and inerrant, and we can trust what they say. Let us look at a few of such passages in the Tanach.

For example, Jeremiah the Prophet said in chapter 25:1 that he had received the word of the Lord concerning all the people of Judah being

taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the **4th year of Jehoiakim**, while Daniel in chapter 1:1 says that Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon besieged Jerusalem in the **3rd year of Jehoiakim**, the King of Judah. Should we conclude that the Old Testament is full of errors because the timing in this instance is inconsistent?

Another verse we need to look at is in 2 Samuel 24:1, where we read:
 “Again the anger of **the LORD** was aroused against Israel, and **He** moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”

At the same time 1 Chronicles 21:1 says:

“Now **Satan** stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.”

Does the above mean that the Tanach is not divinely inspired and is simply wrong? Of course, not. Even here we need the grace of God to understand why there are some discrepancies between the texts. Therefore, we must be extremely careful when reading God’s Word and acknowledge that only God can help us through the power of the Holy Spirit to understand His Word. It was through the Prophet Zechariah that God said to our people of Israel:

“‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6b).

Also in the New Testament the Apostle Paul (*Shaul*) said to the believers in Corinth:

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

B. Regarding the passage in Hebrews 8:8-13, Rabbi Kravitz says:

“Hebrews 8:8-13 of the New Testament, when quoting from Jeremiah, states that G-d replaced His Covenant with the Jews with a ‘New Covenant,’ claiming that, because the Jews did not keep the ‘*Old Covenant*,’ G-d ‘*no longer cared for them.*’ However, the original Hebrew text in Jeremiah 31:32 of the Jewish Bible does not say that G-d did not care for them, but rather the He ‘*remained a husband to them.*’ Some Christians interpret their translation to mean that G-d broke His Covenant and rejected the Jewish people. This is completely inconsistent with the biblical stance that the commandments are forever (Psalm 119: 151-152) and that G-d promised to



never reject or break His Covenant with the Jews (Judges 2:1 and Leviticus 26:44-45)” (p. 12).

Here Rabbi Kravitz is doing precisely what he has warned us not to do; i.e. take a text out of context. When I, a Hebrew believer in the Lord Jesus our Messiah, read Hebrews 8, I can't help but notice the five Covenants that the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob entered into with the people of Israel:

1. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3);
2. Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:4-8);
3. The Land Covenant (Deut. 29:12; 30:1-10);
4. Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-16);
5. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-36).

Every Covenant, with the exception of one, was unconditional. The only conditional covenant was the Mosaic Covenant. The writer to the Hebrew believers in the Messiah in the New Testament had in mind to encourage the first century believers to appreciate the better Covenant, which is the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, containing better promises. The reason why we need a New Covenant, according to Jeremiah 31, is because we, the people of Israel, could not fulfill the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant. When the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote in chapter 8 and verse 8, “*Because finding fault with them,*” he meant that the fault was with Israel and not with the Mosaic Law, which “*is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*” (Romans 7:12-14), and because the God of Israel is Holy and Perfect.

However, Israel (or any other nation) is not holy, just, good and spiritual by nature. Therefore, they could not fulfill the requirements of the Mosaic Law. When we understand and accept this, we can see why God through the prophet Jeremiah (*Yermiahu*) promised a New Covenant.

Rabbi Kravitz states that Hebrews 8:8-13 says, “*God no longer cared for them*” (p. 12). To my great surprise, he does not read carefully what both the Prophet Jeremiah and the writer to the Hebrews say. Nowhere in these two passages do we read that God no longer cared for the Jewish people. Both the book of Jeremiah and the book of Hebrews clearly show the love and care God has for Israel and Judah. It is important to understand that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is



based upon an unconditional promise given to Israel and Judah. God clearly indicates in Jeremiah 31:32 that Israel and Judah broke the Mosaic Covenant:

“... My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.”

It is not God who broke this Covenant, but Israel and Judah, just like any other nation would, had they been under it, because we are all imperfect by nature. God in His love, grace and mercy has introduced an unconditional Covenant, of which He said,

“I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people ... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:33, 34).

This New Covenant is unconditional and does not depend upon the performance of Israel. It is entirely based upon the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua. It was He who sat with His followers in the city of Jerusalem at the feast of Pesach almost 2000 years ago, and who took the unleavened bread (*matzah*), broke it and shared it with His disciples, as we read in Matthew 26:26-28:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’”

The New Covenant that God made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah was made possible when Yeshua the Messiah shed His blood and gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. While this Covenant was made with the House of Israel and Judah, every person from among all nations of the world who believes that Yeshua is the Promised Messiah and Savior comes under the blessing of this Covenant. Meanwhile, the House of Israel and the House of Judah who have not yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah are still in the state of blindness, awaiting the day when they, as the Prophet Zechariah predicted,

“will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

May God hasten this day!

CLAIM #3: IS IT TRUE THAT SPIRITUAL SALVATION AND A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD COMES THROUGH REPENTANCE, PRAYER, FASTING AND DOING WHAT IS RIGHT?

Rabbi Kravitz says that

“missionaries claim that there is no salvation from sin or any possibility of a personal relationship with God without belief in Jesus. Specifically with regard to Jews, their argument is that Jews have always needed animal blood sacrifices to rid themselves of sin. Since sacrifices were abolished after the destruction of the Temple in Israel, they claim that today Jews can find salvation from sin only by believing in Jesus who “died on the cross and shed his blood as the final sacrifice” (p. 13, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

Rabbi Kravitz says that sacrifices were meant only for unintentional sins (p. 13), and that they were to motivate individuals to true repentance. He quotes various passages from the Old Testament (Hosea 14:6; Psalm 51) in an attempt to show that on the basis of repentance, prayer, fasting and good deeds one is able to return to God. To my surprise he did not quote even one of the numerous passages in the Tanach that clearly show that atonement for an individual’s soul was only possible through a blood sacrifice.

For example, in Exodus 12:13 God said to Israel, “*When I see the blood I will pass over you.*” In other words, if He did not see the blood He would not pass over our people who were to be redeemed out of Egypt. In Leviticus 17:11 we read that “*it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.*” Throughout the whole book of Leviticus, which is really a set of guidelines on how God was to be approached, we read of the necessity of blood sacrifices. Furthermore, it tells us that the sacrifice itself had to be perfect and acceptable unto God.

Leviticus 1:3 refers to the burnt offering (*olah*) and verse 5 says that the blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar. In Leviticus 2:1 it is the

meal offering (*mincha*) that was the only offering not involving the slaughter of animals. The next chapter speaks of the peace offering (*shlamim*). In verse 2 of chapter 3 Israel was told to sprinkle the blood upon the altar. Leviticus 4:3 tells about the sin offering (*chata-ah*). In verses 6 and 7 it is written that the Priest was to sprinkle the blood upon the horns of the altar. Leviticus 5:6,15 tells of the trespass offering (*ashmah*). Verse 9 says that the blood was to be sprinkled upon the side of the altar.

In all these sacrifices, with the exception of the meal offering animal blood was needed in order for our people of old to approach God. In addition to that, on the most solemn Jewish holiday, *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement), God clearly spoke to Moses and instructed him to tell his brother Aaron and his sons not to come at any time into the Holy Place, lest they die. God ordered Aaron to come with a sin offering and a burnt offering once a year and to sprinkle the blood upon the Mercy Seat, first for the atonement of himself and his family and then for the atonement of the whole nation of Israel.

Having read all these passages, how can one say that repentance, prayer and good deeds **alone** give us the ability to return to God? Is what God said to our people of old, "*It is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul*" (Leviticus 17:11), no longer valid? Has the human race improved itself to a state of perfection where the Righteous and Holy God can now receive us? If blood sacrifices were not necessary, why did God order them in the first place? From the time of the fall of Adam and Eve and until the coming of the Messiah Yeshua there were always commands for blood sacrifices. It was God who taught people that, when He Himself killed an animal to clothe Adam and Eve with garments of skin in Genesis 3:21: "*Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin. (kootnot or) and clothed them.*" All these blood sacrifices served to point to the final and ultimate sacrifice – Yeshua the Messiah Himself, because God is holy and demands 100% perfection. We, being sinners, could not attain this perfection on our own. Therefore God judged sin by taking the life of another, for life is in the blood.

I must ask myself and the readers a few questions. Have we always done what is right? Have we always repented of our sins? Have we always fasted and denied ourselves the necessary food to seek forgiveness? The answer to such questions is clearly "no." Neither you nor I have ever attained this high standard of holiness and perfection.

Therefore, the blood (of Yeshua the Messiah) is necessary to make atonement for the soul.

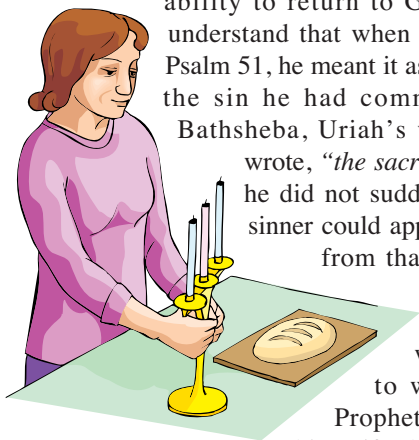
Rabbi Kravitz says that numerous passages of Scripture “*inform us that today our prayers take place of the sacrifices*” (p. 13). He quotes Psalm 51:17 which says:

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.”

He also quotes Hosea 6:6:

“For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

Based on these verses Rabbi Kravitz claims that the Torah teaches that through repentance, prayer and good deeds everyone has the ability to return to God directly. It is important to understand that when David, the King of Israel, wrote Psalm 51, he meant it as a prayer for cleansing because of the sin he had committed against God by taking Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife, for himself. When David wrote, “*the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,*” he did not suddenly decide to change the way a sinner could approach God. He did not mean that from that point on the sacrificial system stopped and repentance was now a sacrifice in itself. In fact, we find David going to the Temple to worship God after Nathan the Prophet had told him that it was David himself who had sinned (2 Samuel 12:20).



What went on in the Temple were the day-to-day sacrifices offered morning and evening on behalf of the children of Israel.

What we learn from Psalm 51:17 is that while the sacrifices were necessary, God was not pleased if people merely brought sacrifices and did not repent of their sins in their hearts.

In Hosea 6:6 God spoke to the nation of Israel and said:

“I desire mercy (*chesed*) and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than the burnt offerings.”

The emphasis in this chapter is on the fact that God had seen a horrible thing in the House of Israel:

“I have seen a horrible thing in the House of Israel: There is the harlotry of Ephraim, Israel is defiled” (Hosea 6:10).

What God is saying in Hosea 6:6 is that while Israelites were bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, they were not approaching God with a proper state of heart. How could God be pleased with Israel (or with any other nation, for that matter), if they approached Him in the state of defilement and were content with it? What God is saying to Israel through the Prophet Hosea is that He desired Israel to have mercy and the knowledge of God rather than merely bring Him sacrifices. In other words, repentance and sacrifices were not interchangeable; they were to go hand in hand.

Another prophet of Israel, Isaiah (*Yeshai'a*) said in chapter 1:11-17:

“‘To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’ Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams. And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.’”

What we learn here as well as in many other passages is not that the sacrificial system had stopped, but that Israel was to have the proper lifestyle and the state of heart **while** approaching God through the sacrifices.

In all this we must bear in mind that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins; it merely covered (*kiper* or *kapara*) those sins temporarily, as it says in the book of Hebrews 10:4: “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” The order of sacrifices which God gave to our people of old pointed to the one and the only sacrifice which would once and for all take away sins. This sacrifice was the blood of our beloved Messiah Yeshua (Jesus), who is God’s precious Son and who became a man, suffered, bled and died that through the offering of His own body, everyone believing in

Him would be sanctified once and for all, as it says in the Book of Hebrews 10:10:

“... By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

From all this we see that God had a plan to redeem the human race, which started already in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve had sinned. That plan was ultimately to bring people back to Himself through the blood of the Messiah, who was going to come. From the beginning of man's fall and until about 30-33 A.D. when the Messiah of Israel died, God had commanded His people to approach Him on the basis of animal sacrifices. Those sacrifices had to be without blemish to reflect the image of His very own Son.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews says in chapter 7 and verse 26 that the Lord Yeshua the Messiah is “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.*” He is the One, my dear readers, who became the supreme sacrifice, who loved His own people, Israel and the whole world and was willing to lay down His life and shed His precious blood, not only to atone (cover) our sins, but to completely cleanse us and put our sins away.

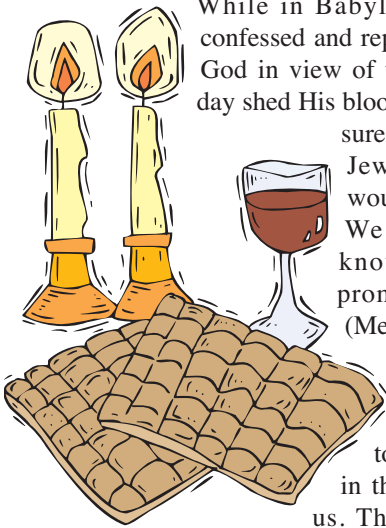
On page 13 of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* Rabbi Kravitz says that both Jews and non-Jews who repented and prayed to God in the time of Jonah and Esther had their sins forgiven without having had to bring sacrifices. Let us not forget that the people of Nineveh repented of their sins and fasted after Jonah had preached to them out of fear of being **physically** destroyed within forty days, but this had no relationship to their eternal standing before God. It still did not take too long till Nineveh was destroyed because of its sins. The Book of Esther has the same message. Its subject is not the eternal salvation of the Jewish nation but escape from the **physical** destruction that Haman had wanted to accomplish. Therefore God in a miraculous way preserved our very own people when they were in captivity. Furthermore, the people of Nineveh did not have to bring sacrifices since they were non-Jews and therefore had not been given the Law.

Our own people had sinned just like non-Jews, for they were in captivity not because of their faithfulness to God but because of idolatry. In 2 Chronicles 36:11-20 we read of King Zedekiah, who “... *did evil in the sight of his God ...*” and together with the leaders and people of Israel

“... transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.”

Therefore God sent the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar to take our people captive for 70 years in Babylon, the very center of idolatry. The House of God was burned, the wall of Jerusalem was ruined and the vessels of the House of God were carried away to Babylon, as the Prophet Jeremiah had prophesied in Jeremiah 25:9-12. The Jewish people could not bring sacrifices in Babylon, since God Himself caused the destruction of the Temple because of the sins of our people.

While in Babylon, every Jewish individual who confessed and repented had his or her sins forgiven by God in view of the coming Messiah who would one day shed His blood for the remission of sins. We can be sure that if the Temple still existed and the Jews in Babylon could get to it, they would still bring sacrifices to the Lord. We cannot say this today, because we know from the Tanach that God had promised the coming of the Mashiach (Messiah), who would offer Himself as a supreme sacrifice once and for all.



God today commands all people, Israel and the nations of the world, to repent, confess their sins and believe in the sacrifice that He has provided for us. This sacrifice is Yeshua the Messiah

Himself. By rejecting Him we do the very same thing that our people of old did when they tried approaching God on their terms. God cannot accept anyone, Jewish or not, who tries to come into God's presence on the basis of his own merit, because we "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Through our faith and acceptance of the sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah God gives us the perfect score – not 50 or 90 per cent, but 100 per cent. By believing in Yeshua we become new creatures, as the Hebrew Apostle *Sha-ul* (Paul) said in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Yeshua the Messiah, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

There are two more points that I would like to draw to your attention:

1. Rabbi Kravitz says that “*our personal relationship with G-d allows us to turn directly to Him at any time*” (p. 13, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*), which is correct. The question is whether or not we have that personal relationship with God? And if we don't, then how can we obtain it? Rabbi Kravitz quoted 2 verses, Malachi 3:1 and Ezekiel (*Yechezkel*) 18:27, in which God appeals to Israel to return to Him in order for Him to return to them. We must remember that for Israel to return to God they must come to Him on His own terms. Just a few chapters earlier, in the book of Malachi, God accused the priests of Israel of despising His Name. They answered Him: “*In what way have we despised Your name?*” (Malachi 1:6-8), to which God responded: “*You offer defiled food on My altar*” (1:7). He continued by saying, “*and when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil?*” (1:8). It is notable that God always went back to the sacrificial requirement. There was no provision for returning to God without a sacrifice. Israel was always exhorted to return to God on His terms.

In Malachi 3:1, just before we read of God's appeal to Israel, He Himself said, “*Behold I send My messenger and He will prepare the way before Me.*” The word “Me” here is a reference to the Lord Himself. Then He continues to say that the LORD, whom Israel was seeking, would “*suddenly come to His Temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight.*” (v.1). Here God gave our people a prophetic message concerning the coming of the Messiah. He was to come into His Temple and He, the Messiah, is that promised messenger (*malach*). How beautifully and clearly this verse teaches us concerning the first coming of Israel's Messiah (*Mashiach*), who was introduced to Israel by the first messenger in Malachi 3:1. This first messenger is John the Baptizer (*Yohanan ha Matbil*), of whom we read in the Gospel of Matthew 3:1-12, and Who prepared the way before the second messenger of Malachi 3:1, Who “*suddenly came to His Temple.*”

This second messenger, or the messenger of the Covenant is none else but the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, of whom we read in Matthew 21:12-13:

“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold

doves. And He said to them, **‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”**

What we learn from these verses is that the very LORD and God of Israel who spoke concerning the coming messenger is the very same one who came in the person of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. He was both divine and human, God and man in one, who came to this world for the purpose of becoming a sacrifice that we might have a relationship with God and be able to return unto Him. Let us never forget that because of His love for Israel and for all mankind, He was willing to lay down His life for us. My question to you, my reader, is: Do you have a relationship with God? The New Testament teaches us in John 1:12 that:

“as many as received Him (the Messiah), to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

2. Rabbi Kravitz says that

“the purpose of humanity is to believe in G-d and keep His commandments, as is stated in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14” (p. 13, *The Jewish Response To Missionaries*).

King Solomon was right when he summed up:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Keep in mind that when King Solomon wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, he was not addressing the eternal destiny of the human soul but rather directing his listeners in the way they were to live their lives in this world (Eccl. 1:3). Therefore, after stating that everything in this world is vanity of vanities (*hevel havalim*) he urges Israel and all people to fear God and to keep His commandments. God is going to judge not only our eternal destiny but also every deed committed on earth.

King Solomon definitely understood that keeping God’s commandments related to accepting and acknowledging the need of forgiveness through the blood sacrifice, which was a picture of Messiah. Since neither Solomon, nor you nor I were able to keep all God’s commandments fully, we needed someone, namely the Lord Jesus the Messiah, who would take the punishment for us.

Have you come to God on His terms, through the Messiah, or do you still try to approach Him in your own way? May God help us all.

CLAIM #4: IS IT TRUE THAT MIRACLES DO NOT PROVE THE VALIDITY OF CHRISTIANITY?

Rabbi Kravitz says in Claim 4 that

“some ‘Hebrew Christians’ argue that turning to Jesus changed their lives, and that as a direct result, they have even experienced miracles” (p.13, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

By quoting Deuteronomy 13:1-6 and Exodus 7:11 Rabbi Kravitz says that miracles which happen to some believers in the Messiah are not necessarily from God. Here I want to say that the warnings God gave us through Moses are valid and very important. The fact that people sometimes experience something extraordinary does not always mean it is from God.

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

Hebrew believers, as well as other believers in the Messiah, do differ in their views on miracles. Having said this, I believe that God, as Creator of the Universe, is able to intervene as He pleases and whenever He pleases in the lives of His people. We, as Jewish believers in the Messiah, take Deuteronomy 13:1-5 as a serious warning not to follow after so called prophets who try to lead us away from the biblical truth and to worship other gods:

“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”

Moses himself said in Deuteronomy 18:15:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”

The Prophet that Moses spoke about is none else then the Messiah Yeshua Himself. In the Gospel of John we read of the priests and Levites who came from the city of Jerusalem to meet John the Baptizer (*Yohanan ha Matbil*), and asked him, “*Are you that Prophet?*” assuming that he might be the Messiah (John 1:21). They understood that the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18 were a direct reference to the Messiah Himself. Also, in the New Testament in the Book of Acts chapter 3:22-23 Peter said about the Messiahship of Yeshua:

“For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘*The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*’”

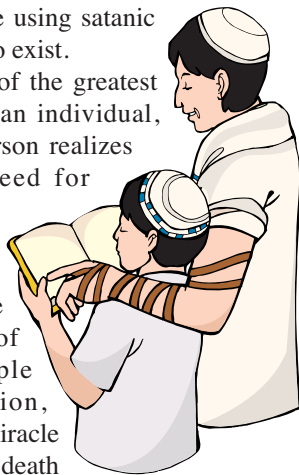
The beautiful truth, which we read in the New Testament concerning the life of the Lord Jesus, is that He sought to direct His followers to the Word of God and not away from it. Yeshua is so much different from the prophet we read about in Deuteronomy 13:1-6, who said “*Let us go after other gods.*” Yeshua said, “*Hear, Oh Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One*” (Mark 12:29). The false prophet of Deuteronomy 13:1-6 encouraged people to “*go after other gods,*” whereas the Lord Jesus the Messiah taught:

“‘*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

These verses show us the difference between the false prophet, against whom our people were warned, and the true Prophet, of whom Moses spoke, namely Yeshua our Mashiach.

Of course we would agree that not all miracles are from God. In light of what we read in Exodus 7, it is obvious that some miraculous signs come directly from the enemy of God, Satan himself. The sorcerers and magicians described in Exodus 7:11-13 are examples of such supernatural events. They repeated the miracles of Moses and Aaron using enchantments. They were able to turn their rods into snakes and rivers into blood just like Moses and Aaron. The difference is, however, was that they were using satanic powers, which our Sovereign God allows to exist.

I also would like to mention that one of the greatest miracles, which can be experienced by an individual, Jewish or non-Jewish, occurs when a person realizes their sinfulness and the desperate need for forgiveness from the only One who is able to cleanse them from sin. This only One is the sinless one, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world, Yeshua Himself. By repenting of their sins and believing in Him, people receive forgiveness and justification, redemption and eternal life. The greatest miracle is the assurance that one has passed from death unto life. All who are in Messiah Yeshua are a new creation:



“Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In addition to this, changes, such as restoration of relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, friends and so forth, happen in the day-to-day life of a believer. There is also contentment and thankfulness to the Lord for what He is doing in the lives of those who believe in Yeshua.

We do believe that faith in the person and work of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah does make a difference both in the eternal and the earthly destiny of those who follow Him.

CLAIM #5: IS IT TRUE THAT CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN THE TRI-UNITY OF GOD IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH JUDAISM?

Rabbi Kravitz says that

“the foundation of Christian theology is the bodily incarnation of G-d, that G-d exists as a Trinity, and that Jesus was a mediator between G-d and man. “Hebrew Christian” missionaries claim that this theology is totally compatible with Judaism.” (p. 14, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

In his view, “*Judaism maintains that certain beliefs may be permissible for non-Jews, but not for Jews*” (p. 15). One such belief, according to Rabbi Kravitz, is the theology of the Triune God. To support his view, Rabbi Kravitz quotes the central verse in the Hebrew Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:4:

“*Shma, Yisrael: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*” (“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”)

Rabbi Kravitz believes that “*the concept expressed in this verse not only refutes the plurality of God, but also asserts that God is the only true existence*” (p. 15).

THE MESSIANIC RESPONSE

As a Jewish believer in the Messiah, I must say that one of the greatest challenges I faced when I was exposed to teaching about Yeshua being the Messiah was this very issue. My questions were: 1) Could Jesus (Yeshua) truly be my and my nation’s Messiah?; 2) Is it possible that the God of Israel exists in more than one person?; 3) If Jesus (Yeshua) is truly the Messiah, is He merely a man, a sinner, just like me?; 4) Is it possible that God could take on a human form?

These questions forced me to begin to read the Hebrew Scriptures very carefully and look for answers. I must say that what I read about the God of our fathers (and what I had not noticed before) was a real revelation for me, even though I am an Israeli, born and raised in Jerusalem in the Hebrew language and culture. One of the facts that stood out to me was the verse in Deuteronomy 6:4. All my life I had been taught that we, the Jewish people, in contrast to other nations, had

the only one and true God. And yet I did not see this verse the way I see it now, that God exists in more than one person in the Godhead.

1. The word for “God” in this verse is *Eloheinu* which is plural and literally means “our Gods.” The word *Elohim*, of which *Eloheinu* is a form, has a plural ending *IM*. Each time this ending is used in Hebrew, it means more than one. (Eg. *yeladim* – children; or *bgadim* – clothes; *khaverim* – friends). Reading the Hebrew Scriptures I saw in many other passages that God in His wisdom had chosen to use the plural noun when describing Himself – *Elohim*. Genesis 1:1 says, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”

The author of this passage, *Moshe* (Moses), used the singular form of the verb “created” – *barah* (instead of the plural *bar-uh*) and the plural noun *Elohim* (literally “gods”). Why did he not use either the singular noun for God, which is *Elohah* or *El*, or the plural form of the verb created, which is *bar-uh*? The singular noun for God was used in Deuteronomy 32:15-17 and Habakkuk 3:3:

“God (*Elohah*) came from Te-man, and the Holy One from mount Par-an Se-lah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise” (Habakkuk 3:3).

Genesis 1:1 shows that, although there is only one God (*barah* – singular), yet this one God exists in more than one person (*Elohim* – plural).

Another interesting verse in the Hebrew Scripture is in Exodus 20:3. Here God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, the very first of which exhorted Israel not to have any other gods:

“*Lo yeheye lecha Elohim acherim al panai*” (“You shall have no other gods before Me”).

In this verse, when it comes to the false gods, the Hebrew adverb is consistent with the noun in number – both are plural: *Elohim* (“gods”) *Acherim* (pl. “other”). In another passage (Deuteronomy 13:2) our people were warned not to follow a false prophet, who would lead them after other gods. Here also both the noun and the adverb are plural (*Elohim*, *Acherim*).

The other aspect which needs to be addressed with respect to Deuteronomy 6:4 is that Moses (*Moshe*), being guided by the Holy Spirit of God used the Hebrew word for “one” – *echad*. He did not have to use this particular word for “one,” which means a compound unity. He could have used another Hebrew word – *yachid*, which means a

distinct, unique unit. The word *echad* is also used in Genesis 1:5:

“And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.”

A combination of morning and evening made up **one** (*echad*) day.

In Genesis 2:24 two separate human beings, male and female, become **one**:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become **one** (*echad*) flesh.”

In Ezra 2:64 all the people together became as **one** (*echad*):

“The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty.”

In Ezekiel 37:17 two sticks become **one** (*echad*):

“Then join them one to another for yourself into **one** stick, and they will become **one** in your hand.”

All these verses together show us that the word *echad* definitely speaks of a compound unity and not an absolute distinct unit (*yachid*).

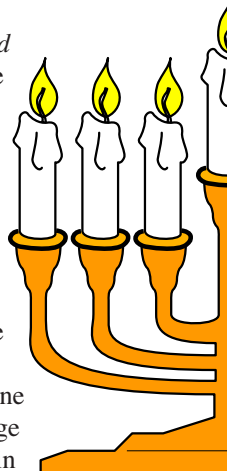
Putting all this together, it should be clear to any sincere reader that Israel has only One God, who reveals Himself as more than 1 person in the Godhead. This is not an opinion of men, Jews or non-Jews, but is the direct revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible. The God of Israel does not have “three different aspects,” as Rabbi Kravitz says on p.15, but consists of three distinct Persons while still remaining One God.

The fact that the Hebrew Scriptures teach us that God is one (*echad*) and consists of more than one person does not change the fact that God has no beginning and no end, as it says in Isaiah 44:6:

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”

The Tri-unity of God also does not change the fact that He transcends time and space, with which Rabbi Kravitz disagrees when he says that:

“Something that transcends both time and space cannot be described as consisting of three different aspects. The moment we attribute any such distinction to G-d’s essence, we negate His absolute oneness and unity” (p. 15).



Having said this, Rabbi Kravitz did not provide any intellectual basis for his view. There is no reason why a Triune God can not transcend time and space if He is the Almighty God. The God of Israel is never portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures as having three different aspects, but is revealed as one God consisting of three distinct personalities. To say that the God of Israel expresses Himself at one time in one aspect and at another time in another aspect, is unscriptural. The New Testament helps us to understand those three distinct personalities of the God of Israel, and identifies them as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We can also see those personalities presented in the Hebrew Scriptures. For example the Prophet Isaiah says in chapter 42 and verse 1:

“Behold! **My Servant** (The Son) whom **I** (The Father) uphold, my Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put **My Spirit** (The Holy Spirit) upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.”

In Isaiah 48:12-16 we read:

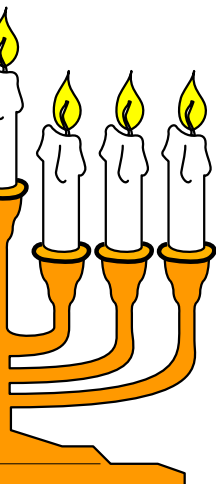
“Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together.

“All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; He shall do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper.

“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, **I was there** (the Son). And now the **Lord GOD** (the Father), and **His Spirit** (the Holy Spirit) Have sent Me.”

Another example of the Tri-unity of God is found in Isaiah 61:1, which says:

“**The Spirit** (The Holy Spirit) of the **Lord GOD** (The Father) is upon **Me** (The Son), because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”



This passage is also quoted in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Luke 4:16-21, when Yeshua went to a synagogue in the city of Nazareth on a *Shabbat* day:

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: *‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’* Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, *‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’*”

Another verse which testifies to the Tri-unity of God is Isaiah 63:14:

“Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by **the Spirit** (The Holy Spirit) **of the LORD** (The Son). This is how **you** (The Father) guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name” (NIV).

Genesis 1:26 also shows us the plurality of God when it says:

“Let **Us** make (*na-aseh*) man in **Our image** (*bezalmenu*) according to **Our likeness** (*kidmuteinu*); let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Here we see God speaking of Himself in plural. The words “Us” and “Our” mean the fellowship between the persons of the Godhead, rather than God’s conversation with angels as does the following reference.

In Genesis 3:22 it says:

“Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of **Us**, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.”

The last example we are going to quote regarding the Tri-unity of God is found in Genesis 11:7:

“Come, let **Us** go down, and there confuse their language, that

they may not understand one another's speech."

Isaiah 6:8 also says:

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?"

Here again we see the evidence of the plurality of God. In accordance with Deuteronomy 32:39 we do believe that there is no other God besides the God of Israel:

"Now see that I, *even I, am He*, and *there is no God besides Me*; I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: *Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.*"

This is the beauty of the God of our fathers, who created us in His very image. Everyone of us is one person, yet with three components: spirit (*ruach*), soul (*nephesh*) and body (*goof*):

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

God also created the world according to His pleasure with its three dimensions: height, width and depth. He placed people in this world and gave them time, i.e. past, present and future.

2. Rabbi Kravitz says that

"Jews are forbidden to envision that G-d has 'any likeness of anything.' Deuteronomy 4:15-19 and Deuteronomy 5:8-9 are only some of the many biblical references prohibiting Jews from believing that G-d dwells in bodily form, as claimed in the New Testament" (p.15, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

When Moses gave this warning to Israel, it was meant to be a caution for them not to assume that Israel's God had any likeness to any figure such as human beings, beasts, birds, creeping creatures, fish, sun, moon or stars. This warning was given for Israel not to assume that the true God was like the gods of the nations of the world (idols). We, as human beings, have an inclination to desire to have an object of worship, and the reason for that is that we have been made in the image and likeness of God. However, because we have sinned and fallen, we have our own idea of who God should be. Therefore we have created different objects of worship, against which we have the warning in Deuteronomy 4:15-19 and 5:8-9.

The above does not negate the fact that God is the only One who can provide a way for us to return to Him. The belief that God took upon Himself a human form to deal with the question of sin is a teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures. The promise of the incarnation was given to us already in Genesis 3:15, in the promise that the seed of the woman (the Messiah) would bruise the head of the Serpent (Satan). However, before He was able to bruise the head of the Serpent, he had to suffer. The Messiah suffered when He died for our sins almost 2000 years ago. Here we must remember that being the seed of a woman, He had to be human, and not an angel.

The Prophet Isaiah told us in chapter 7:14:

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah also spoke of that child in Chapter 9:6-7:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace *there will* be no end, upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom, to order it, and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

In both of these passages Isaiah informs us that the child would be not only human but would also be called The Mighty God (*El Gibor*). Isaiah continues to speak about this person, the Messiah, when he refers to Him in chapter 11:1-2:

“And there shall come forth a rod from of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

Here he not only says that the Messiah would be born into the house of David, but that He would also have the seven-fold fullness of the Holy Spirit of God.

Isaiah specifically speaks of the Messiah in chapters 52 and 53 when he talks about the Suffering Servant of the Lord and calls Him “*The arm of the LORD*” (53:1). The vast majority of our people of old did not recognize Him, because He came in a very humble way to a poor

Jewish family and He was despised and rejected by powerful people whose opinion really counted. In the same passage there is the final confession of Israel in the coming days when they shall say:

“Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4-6).

The Prophet Jeremiah speaks about the Messiah being God and man, showing His divine and human nature. In Jeremiah 23:5-6 he talks about the coming day, when the Lord will:

“... I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** (*Adonai Tzidkeinu*).”

The Prophet Micah in chapter 5 verse 2 (in Hebrew, 5:1) also emphasized the fact that the Messiah who would rule over Israel was to be from the city of Bethlehem:

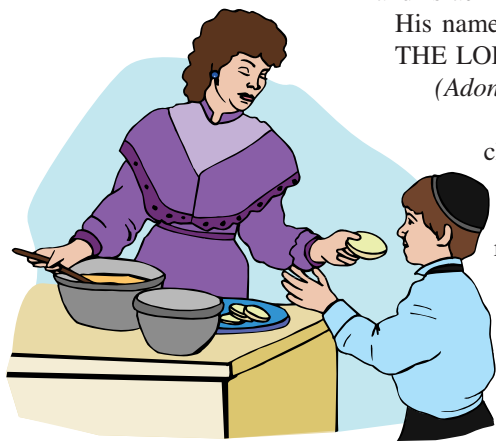
“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *though* you are little among the thousands of Judah,

yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth *are* from of old, from everlasting.”

This is His humanity. Micah also spoke about the Messiah’s divine nature and said that his existence was from eternity. Zechariah also wrote about the coming Messiah in chapter 13 verse 7:

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,” says the LORD of hosts.”

The fact that God Himself called the Messiah “my fellow” (in



Hebrew *amiti*) or “my associate,” which means His equal, shows the divine nature of the Messiah. God is also calling Him “my shepherd,” which speaks about His human nature as well. This shepherd would suffer and die a violent death at the hands of people.

All these verses and many more testify to the fact that God had to take on a human form in order that He (and He alone) could deal with the problem of sin in the human race.

Our Jewish people have had a hard time accepting this fact of God becoming a man almost 2000 years ago. John 10:22-42 tells us that when Yeshua was in the Temple in Jerusalem at the feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), he was told (v. 33): “*For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.*” Just like those people long ago, many today have a problem accepting the divine and human nature of the Messiah, though they were revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Often in the Hebrew Scriptures we find God appearing in the form of a man and being recognized as God by those who saw Him. One such example is in Genesis 16, when God appeared to Hagar as an angel of the Lord. In verse 13 she said to Him, “*You Are the God Who Sees.*” In chapter 18 we read of the Lord appearing to Abraham, and Abraham saw the Lord and two angels appearing as three men who stood by him (v. 2). Abraham (*Avra-ham*) recognized one of the men as being none else but the Lord Himself (v. 22):

“Then the men turned their away from there and went toward *Sod’om*, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.” (Read the whole chapter.)

In Genesis 32 Jacob (*Yakov*), who was left alone at night, wrestled with God (v.24). Jacob recognized that this man was God and called the place *Pni-el*, which means, “*for I have seen God face to face*” (32:30).

What we learn from these passages is:

A. According to the Hebrew Scripture, God appeared in the form of a man or an angel to different people in the past. These were pre-incarnate appearances of the Son of God, who was called “The Angel of the LORD” or “The Angel of God” (a single angel, to be distinguished from the rest of God’s angels).

B. God became a man – sinless and perfect – to deal with the problem of sin, which He accomplished as Israel’s Messiah and the Saviour of the world.

3. Rabbi Kravitz says that the Hebrew Scripture prohibits Jewish people from having a mediator and quotes Exodus 20:3: “*You shall have no other gods before me*” to support his view. All we have said above so far leads us to the conclusion that believing in the Lord Yeshua the Messiah is believing in the truth that God has provided Israel in the Scriptures. Surely, Exodus 20:3 cannot be applied to the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, since we have seen so far that He is truly the God of Israel and not another god. In the past Israel, our people, always needed a mediator between them and God. Aaron, the High Priest, was one of them. He was the only one who was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies according to Leviticus 16. Even Aaron could not approach God whenever and however he wanted. His own two sons died because they approached God in their own way (Leviticus 10:1-2).

Earlier in the Book of Exodus we read of another man, who had to mediate between Israel and God. His name was Moses, to whom the people of Israel said when God had given him the Ten Commandments:

“... You speak with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us; lest we die” (Exodus 20:19).

In addition to both of these men God gave to our people of old prophets, kings and priests who mediated between God and His people Israel. In the New Testament Yeshua said in the Gospel of John (*Yohanan*) 14:6:

“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.”

This means that if anyone wants to come to God and have their sins forgiven, they have to come to God on His terms, i.e. accepting God’s provision of salvation in the person and works of Yeshua the Messiah.

If a person, Jewish or not, chooses to come to the Lord on his own merits, without the cleansing blood of Yeshua the Messiah, the Holy and Just God will not receive him, according to the teaching of the Old and New Testaments. On the other hand, if a person approaches God on the basis of Yeshua’s sacrifice, he will be accepted and forgiven by God.

These beliefs in the Messiahship of Yeshua are not ancient pagan beliefs, as Rabbi Kravitz claims on p. 16, but are ancient biblical truths, passed on to our forefathers from generation to generation,

“... who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God,

and the promises; of whom *are* the fathers, and from whom, according to the flesh, Messiah *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen” (Romans 9:4-5).

The great men of the Hebrew Scriptures understood that in the fullness of time God would send to us the Messiah:

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).



These forefathers of Israel indeed laid down their lives, seeking Israel’s welfare in being restored to God. For instance, after Israel’s disobedience, when God desired to destroy them, Moses said this to the Lord out of love for his people:

“Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Exodus 32:32).

Rabbi *Sha-ul* (Apostle Paul) also cared for the spiritual well being of Israel in Romans 9:1-4:

“I tell the truth in Messiah, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”

From all we have said thus far, we learn that belief in the Lord Yeshua the Messiah is indeed based on the Word of God and therefore is true:

“For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Timothy 2:5).

CONCLUSIONS

On page 16 of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook* Rabbi Kravitz says:

“One thing upon which the entire Jewish community and several Christian denominations agree is that ‘Hebrew Christian’ movements are not a part of Judaism. To be a ‘Jew for Jesus’ is as absurd as being a ‘Christian for Buddha’ and as ridiculous as ‘kosher pork’; it is an obvious contradiction. To paraphrase Elijah, if you are a follower of Jesus, call yourself a Christian. If you are a Jew, practice Judaism. Don’t deceive yourself; you can’t be both.”

How sad it is to hear such remarks, which simply ignore the Biblical teaching God gave Israel! It is true that believing in Yeshua the Messiah is contrary to the teaching of Judaism, but only because the Judaism which Jewish people are taught today is not biblical, but rabbinical.

To be a “Jew for Jesus” (Yeshua) is definitely not part of the rabbinical Judaism of today, because rabbinical Judaism does not accept biblical Judaism. The latter, as we have seen earlier, clearly leads us to the recognition of the Messiahship of Yeshua. If Moses, Israel’s law giver, came today to be among our people, I am confident that he would be amazed at the blindness of those who claim to teach the Word of God to our people. Compared to the Judaism given to us in the Scripture, what we have today is a man-made religion that does not lead our people to the truth.

When Elijah said in 1 Kings 18:21:

“‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word,”

he challenged our people, Israel, with respect to the truth of God. He would likewise challenge us today: choose between biblical or rabbinical Judaism. I am reminded of what King Solomon said in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25:

“There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death.”

Therefore, we are not deceiving ourselves by calling ourselves Jews for Jesus. The very God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, gave the promise of the coming Messiah, which we, as Jews, have accepted. Those who deceive themselves are not the Jews who believe in

Yeshua, but the ones who are Jewish and are seeking to establish their own righteousness, of which God said in the Hebrew Scriptures through the Prophet Isaiah, that “*all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6).

No Christian (*Meshichi*, or follower of the Lord Yeshua) would ever be for Buddha, who is an idol, and no pork (*chazir*) could ever be recognized as kosher, since it was forbidden to Israel under the law. This is indeed an obvious contradiction. However, being a Jew for Jesus is fully in harmony with the written Word of God, the Hebrew Scriptures.

My recommendation to my readers is to search the Hebrew Scriptures (such as Isaiah 53; Psalm 22, etc.) and to see from God’s Word if what we have talked about so far is true. May we be like David, the King of Israel, who said in Psalm 119:97-100:

“O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You through Your commandments made me **wiser than mine enemies**: for they are ever with me. I have **more understanding than all my teachers**: for Your testimonies are my meditation. **I understand more than the ancients**, because I keep Your precepts.”

May the Lord also help us to search our hearts with regards to the need of redemption according to God’s Word.

THE MESSIAH ACCORDING TO JUDAISM

On pages 16 and 17 of the booklet *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: Counter-Missionary Handbook* Rabbi Kravitz states that Judaism has always rejected the belief in Yeshua as the Messiah. While it is true that the vast majority of the Jewish people have not acknowledged that Yeshua is the Messiah, it is also true that many throughout the history of our people have recognized Him as such. In fact, all first century Christians (Messianic believers, *Meshichiim*) were Jewish. The first local congregation (assembly) was Jewish and began nowhere else but in the city of Jerusalem, in the Land of Israel (Acts 2).

Rabbi Kravitz is correct when he says that the Hebrew word for “Messiah” is *Mashiach*, which translates into English as “anointed,” and that kings, priests and prophets were anointed (p. 17). Every time God selected a person for service, this person was anointed with oil specifically to accomplish a work for God. We read of David, who was

anointed with oil by Samuel to become the King of Israel in 1 Samuel 16:13. Elisha was anointed with oil by Elijah to be a prophet for the nation of Israel (1 Kings 19:16). Aaron was anointed with oil by Moses to be a priest over Israel in Exodus 29:7.

In addition to these great men, who had been anointed for a specific task, God had in mind one person, in whom all these three offices would be combined. He gave us information about this person throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. God called him Messiah in Daniel 9:26:

“And after sixty-two weeks Messiah (*Mashiach*) shall be cut off, **but not for Himself ...**”

This Messiah was to be cut off (to die) not for Himself, but for His people. He was an anointed prophet, who in His life time on earth, was rejected. After He died and rose again He became the anointed priest in heaven, who intercedes before God on behalf of those who believe on His name. (Psalm 110). In the future, when the Messiah (Yeshua) comes back, He will be anointed as King, who is going to reign over His people Israel and will rule in righteousness over the whole world.

This anointed one could only be the Lord Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah Himself. Rabbi Kravitz speaks of the criteria to be fulfilled by the Jewish Messiah. On page 17 he states that the Messiah must:

1. *be Jewish*: Yeshua was Jewish, who was born to a woman by the name of Miriam (Luke 1:27-31);

2. *be a member of the tribe of Judah*: Yeshua was a member of the tribe of Judah (Luke 3:23-38);

3. *gather the Jewish people from Exile*: According to the Scriptures Yeshua will gather the people of Israel at His Second Coming (Deuteronomy 30:1-5; Isaiah 11:11-12; 27:13; Jeremiah 32:36-44; Ezekiel 34:11-16; 36:22-30; Psalm 137:1-3; Matthew 24:31);

4. *rebuild the Jewish Temple*: Yeshua will rebuild the Temple (Ezekiel 40-48);

5. *bring world peace*: Yeshua will bring peace once Israel has recognized Him as Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11; 54:13); and

6. *influence the entire world to acknowledge and serve one G-d*: Yeshua will do that at His Second Coming (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 11:9).

We, as Jewish believers in the Messiah, unlike our Jewish brothers, who have not yet acknowledged the Messiahship of Yeshua, recognize a clear teaching of Scripture regarding the two comings of the Messiah.

The first time Messiah came to suffer and die in order to pay a penalty for Israel's as well as the world's sins. The second coming of the Messiah is the time when He will come in power and glory to reign over Israel and the rest of the world in accordance with God's promises.

How true are the verses in Ezekiel 37:24-28, which speak about the future of our people, Israel:

“David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David *shall be* their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

All these promises will surely come to pass, but let us never forget that for God to fulfill these promises, the Messiah had to suffer and die for the sins of Israel and the rest of the world in accordance with Isaiah 53.

The Jewish Apostle Simon Peter (*Shi-mon* Peter), speaking of the prophets who inquired about their salvation, said:

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11).

WHY JESUS IS THE JEWISH MESSIAH

On page 18 of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook* Rabbi Kravitz denies the Messiahship of



Yeshua based on the genealogies found in the Gospel of Matthew 1:1-17 and the Gospel of Luke 3:23-38. There are four Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; but only two of them, Matthew and Luke, contain the genealogy of Jesus. Each of the four Gospel writers looks at the person of Jesus the Messiah from a different angle. In Matthew, Jesus is the King of Israel; in Mark, He is the servant of the Lord, in Luke, He is the perfect man, and in John, He is the eternal Son of God. Only Matthew and Luke say anything about the early life of Yeshua. In Matthew we learn that Yeshua was not Joseph's biological son, but his stepson. If Yeshua was Joseph's biological son, He could not have been the Messiah, since Joseph was the descendant of the King Jeconiah, on whom was placed a curse for his disobedience to God, as we read in the book of Jeremiah chapter 22:24-30.

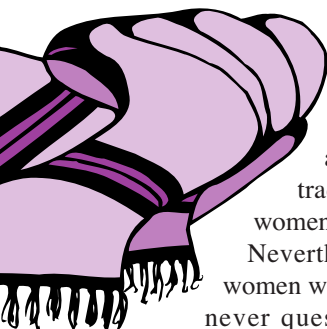
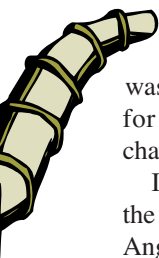
In the genealogy of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Miriam, the mother of Yeshua, is in the center of attention. It was to her that the Angel Gabriel said (Luke 1:31),

“And behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Yeshua.”

What purpose is served by the differing genealogical accounts of Matthew and Luke? In his account Matthew does not adhere to the biblical tradition of genealogies, and adds the names of five women, all but one of whom (Miriam) were Gentiles.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that these Gentile women were the mothers of Jewish men, whose Jewishness is never questioned, despite the Gentile pedigrees of their mothers. In our day, many say that in order for a person to be recognized as Jewish, he or she must be born of a Jewish mother; in Bible times, on the other hand, genealogies were always traced through the father. It is known that King David's great grandmother, Ruth, was a Gentile, yet her son was Jewish. It is also common knowledge that King Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, was a Gentile, yet he, too, was indisputably Jewish. And who would dare to question the pedigree of David and Solomon, among the best known and most widely recognized of all of the Kings of Israel?

Even Rabbi Kravitz cannot dispute this, since he himself argues that “The Jewish Scriptures clearly state that a person's genealogy



and tribal membership is transmitted **exclusively through one's physical father**" (p. 18, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

By using the present tense in his statement, Rabbi Kravitz states that the biblical principle has not changed to this day. To assert, on the one hand, that a modern person is recognized as Jewish only if his/her mother is Jewish, and on the other hand, to insist that Yeshua could not have been the Jewish Messiah because his genealogy could not be traced through a physical father is to apply a blatantly double standard.

Three of the Gentile women mentioned in Matthew's account of Yeshua's genealogy were guilty of some sexual sins. Bathsheba was guilty of adultery, Rahab was a prostitute, and Tamar was guilty of incest. The fourth one, Ruth, was a Moabite woman, of whose nation it was said in Deuteronomy 23:3:

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever."

By including non-Jews in the genealogy of Jesus, the revelation shows us that Yeshua, Israel's Messiah, would be born into this world to redeem both the nation of Israel, and anyone who would come to Him from among the nations of the world.

In his gospel Luke does not go outside of Biblical genealogies. He faithfully records all names according to the prevailing tradition and does not mention names of women. In Matthew's account we learn that God's covenant with His people began with Abraham, who begot Isaac, and Isaac begot Jacob (chapter 1:2). In verse 6 we learn that Jesse begot David, and David, the King of Israel, begot Solomon. As we continue, we find out in v.11 that Josiah begot Jeconiah, about whom we read in Jeremiah 22:30 that no one of his seed would ever sit on the throne of David:

"Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man *who* shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah.'"

Immediately after Matthew's genealogical account in 1:18-25 we are shown the supernatural way in which the Messiah would enter into this world, not through the line of Joseph, which would have disqualified Him from being the Messiah and the King of Israel, but through the virgin birth. As we read in Matthew 1:18, Miriam was

found with the child of the Holy Spirit before she and Joseph came together in a physical relationship. If I were the recorder of a genealogy like this, perhaps I would want to skip over the name of Jeconiah to avoid the problem. Yet God reveals it all to us, resolving the problem through a supernatural entrance into this world of the Messiah who was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20).

In the Gospel of Luke the line of Miriam rather than the line of Yoseph is recorded. In Luke 3:23 we read that Joseph was the son of Heli. However, Joseph actually was Heli's son-in-law, because in Matthew 1:16 we read that Jacob was the father of Joseph. So Heli in Luke 3:23 could not have been the father of Joseph, but the father of his wife, Miriam. Luke gives us the blood line of the Messiah through Miriam, his mother. He mentions her father in accordance with biblical genealogies, not mentioning the names of women. Yeshua could certainly claim to sit on David's throne through the blood line that is traced to David's family.

The difference between the two genealogical accounts found in the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew is that Luke emphasizes the blood line of the Messiah through David's son, Nathan (Luke 3:31) rather than through Solomon, in contrast to Matthew (1:6). If Yeshua had been a direct descendent of Solomon, He could not have had a legitimate claim on David's throne because of God's judgment upon Jeconiah. But since Yeshua was the son of Miriam, who was a descendant of David through Nathan, He was a member of the house of David, with a birth right to David's throne totally apart from Jeconiah's curse. Luke reminds his readers in chapter 1:30-33 that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Miriam and said:

“... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Yeshua. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Rabbi Kravitz says that Yeshua could not be sitting on David's throne, because He was not the descendant of David through Solomon, but through Nathan. (p. 19, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*). He quotes 1 Chronicles 22:10, apparently not realizing that the text speaks of another King of Israel,

whose kingdom and throne would be established forever. In this passage God takes us beyond King Solomon, whose reign ended in abject failure, to the Messiah Himself. Solomon's kingdom was taken away because of his disobedience, as it is recorded in 1 Kings 11, and specifically in verses 9-11 (compare Deuteronomy 17:14-20):

“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.’”

Therefore, when the Chronicler (chapter 22) predicts that God would build David's son's house forever, it should be understood that this clearly must go beyond Solomon, since as a matter of record Solomon's kingdom was not established forever, as the passage above indicates.

Further, we read about the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7, specifically in verses 10-17:

“Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.’ According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.”

Here we see that the descendant of David, whose throne would be established forever could not have been Solomon, but someone else, since Solomon's reign was temporal, and very short in comparison with eternity.

ABOUT CHRISTIAN “PROOF TEXTS”

In the booklet *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* Rabbi Kravitz states that Christians (i.e. believers in the Messiah) “*fabricate a number of ‘prophecies’ out of thin air*” (p. 20). In our view, all the above arguments prove that Jesus (Yeshua) is the Messiah of Israel, promised to us in the Hebrew Scriptures. If an individual does not want to accept certain facts, they will always try to find something to prove things wrong.

The first verse Rabbi Kravitz mentioned as having been mistranslated is found in Matthew 2:23, which says:

“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

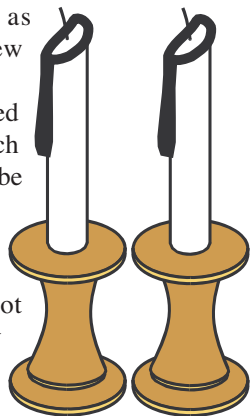
Rabbi Kravitz says that since the city of Nazareth did not exist during the period of the Jewish Bible, the verse in Matthew 2:23 is not true. Some writers of the New Testament directly quote a certain prophet mentioning his name and showing that the predicted events were fulfilled in Yeshua, for instance Matthew 1:22-23:

“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

Matthew 2:4-6 is another example of a fulfilled prophecy:

“And when he (Herod) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. And they said unto him: In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet.”

On the other hand, sometimes the writers of the New Testament do not quote any one prophet, but allude to the whole teaching of the



Hebrew prophets about Jesus the Messiah. Matthew, for instance, did not say “prophet” but “prophets.” He said in chapter 2:23: “*He shall be called a Nazarene.*” The word “Nazarene” comes from a Hebrew word *netzer*, which means a branch, as it says in Isaiah 11:1:

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

The prophets teach us that the Messiah was going to be despised and rejected (Psalm 22:6; Isaiah 53:3 etc). Just like a branch is a small part of a tree and not reckoned as the whole tree, so the Messiah was to be a ‘branch out of the stem of Jesse’. Interestingly enough, Nazareth was quite an insignificant town in Galilee, not even mentioned in the Old Testament. It was not regarded with a high respect like Jerusalem, for example, which was the dwelling of God. Even the first followers of Yeshua were amazed that the Messiah came out of Nazareth. Nathaniel even asked in the Gospel of John 1:45-46: “*Can anything good thing come out of Nazareth?*” It would be very silly for any of us to try to prove something about the Messiah, if we were to allude to something which had never existed. There would be no benefit for Matthew’s claim of the Messiahship of Yeshua if he fabricated a verse out of thin air. When our hearts desire to understand God’s Word, with the help of the Spirit of God we are able to understand what Matthew had in mind – namely that the Messiah was going to be a despised and rejected man, who was to grow up in a despised and obscure town. The purpose of His coming was to accomplish God’s will with respect to the redemption of Israel and all mankind.

Rabbi Kravitz says that

“an effective missionary will work with crude English retranslations of earlier Greek mistranslations, and will avoid looking at the original Hebrew” (p. 20, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook*).

This statement is not necessarily correct. There are believers in Yeshua the Messiah, such as myself, who are not only familiar with the Hebrew language, but it is their mother tongue, and who were born and raised in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Kravitz refers to Romans 11:26 which is a quotation of Isaiah 59:20.

Rejecting the fact that the Messiah came to take away the sin of Israel and of the world, Rabbi Kravitz is concerned about the verse in Isaiah 59:20: “*The Redeemer will come to Zion*” and which was quoted in Romans 11:26 as “*The Redeemer will come out of Zion.*” He

states that

“the Messiah’s role is not to take away our sins; rather, when we turn away from our sins, the Messiah will then come!” (p. 20, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*).

How could this ever happen, if in the same chapter of Isaiah (59) in verse 2 it says,

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear.”

The whole problem of the nation of Israel and the rest of the world is that we have a sinful nature, which can not improve on its own. We have a heart, which is “*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*” (Jeremiah 17:9). If the Messiah was to come only when we turned away from our sins, He would never come! We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. All of us have inherited this Adamic nature, of which God said in Genesis 6:5 that man’s imagination and the thoughts of his heart “*was only evil continually*” or “all day long” (*kol hayom*).

The Messiah will come **to** Zion, however, the ones that turn away from their transgressions in Jacob will confess that their iniquities separated them from God and will recognize that the Messiah was punished by suffering, dying and sacrificing Himself for them. Then Israel will become a restored nation. The Apostle Paul in Romans 11:26 not only said that the Redeemer would come **out** of Zion and not **to** Zion, but he also added He would “*turn away ungodliness from Jacob,*” which is not found in Isaiah 59:20.

The Apostle Paul, who knew the Hebrew language very well, did not misquote Isaiah 59:20, but emphasized that the Redeemer would come not only **to** Zion, but also **out** of Zion. If the Redeemer came to Zion only after Jacob (Israel) had turned away from their transgressions, He would not be a Redeemer and they would not need one.

Paul was saying that the Messiah came to the world out of the nation of Israel. This verse is connected with the verse in the Gospel of John 4:22, where Yeshua Himself said “*salvation is of the Jews.*” The Messiah was to come **out of** the nation of Israel in order to redeem Israel and other nations of the world, who in the future day would realize that He loved them and gave Himself for them. Until this time comes, He redeems individuals from among Israel and other nations of the world who confess their sins and accept His offer of salvation.

HAS ISAIAH 7:14 BEEN MISTRANSLATED?

On page 21 Rabbi Kravitz refutes the virgin birth of Yeshua and says that the passage of Isaiah 7:14 was mistranslated and taken out of context.

The question of the Messiah of Israel has been one the Jewish people have struggled with all through the ages. Who is he? Is he a person or an age? Is he going to come? When? Is it Jesus (Yeshua), as many believe Him to be?

According to the Hebrew Scriptures God promised our people (Israel) to send a Redeemer, who would deal with the problem of sin. Who is the one able to deal with sin? We know from Scripture that God is the one able to forgive sin (2 Chronicles 7:14).

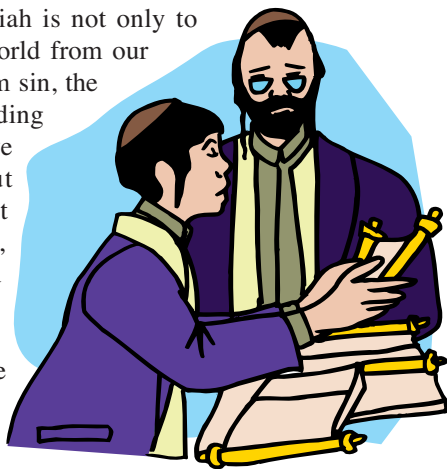
The reason we need the Messiah is not only to deliver Israel and the whole world from our problems, but to deliver us from sin, the

biggest problem of all. According to Gen 3:15, after Adam and Eve sinned, God promised to put enmity between the Serpent (Satan) and the woman, between the Serpent's seed and the woman's seed. The woman's seed would be bruised in the heel by the seed of the Serpent, and it would crush the Head of the Serpent. This is the first promise of the Messiah

in Scripture. The natural way of bringing a child into the world is through the seed of a man. Gen. 3:15 says that the One who is to come (Messiah) was to be born not through the seed of a man, because men and all their descendants have a sinful nature, but in a supernatural way, because the Messiah had to be sinless if He were to deal with the problem of sin.

It was Isaiah the Prophet who promised the people of Israel that the Son coming into this world would be born of a virgin. In Isaiah 7:14 we read:

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give You a sign. Behold, the virgin (in Hebrew *al-mah*) shall conceive and bear a Son and call His Name Emmanuel (‘God with us’).”



The historical setting of Isaiah 7:1-2 was such that the House of David and the King of Judah were threatened by the King of Syria, Rezin and the Northern King of Israel, Pekah, who wanted to take over Jerusalem. In response to this threat Ahaz and the whole House of David trembled with fear. In verses 3-9 Isaiah, the Prophet, was sent to Ahaz, the King of Judah together with his son Shear-Jashub. They were to give the King a message about the plan of destruction which the King of Syria and the King of Israel had for the House of David and Judah. In verse 7 God informed Ahaz through Isaiah that this plan would not come to pass. Ahaz trusted Assyria for protection rather than God (read 2 Kings 16, particularly verses 6 and 7). Although Ahaz was an ungodly man the Lord “*spoke again to Ahaz*” (v. 10) and gave him an opportunity to ask for a sign (*ott* in Hebrew) either “*in the depths or in the heights above*” (v. 11).

God’s offer was rejected immediately (v.12), when Ahaz, pretending to be a God fearing man, said, “*I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.*” God was displeased with Ahaz. In verses 13 and 14 Isaiah is no longer speaking to Ahaz alone, but to the whole House of David giving them a sign anyway:

“Then he said, ‘Hear now, O house of David! *Is it a small thing for you (the House of David) to weary men, but will you (the House of David) weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you (the House of David) a sign; Behold the virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*’”

Here Isaiah is addressing the entire House of David, taking it into the future, when

“the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (v. 14).

Therefore, the sign was not given to King Ahaz alone, but to the whole House of David as an assurance that it would not lose its identity until the birth of this promised virgin born son (the Messiah). He had to be born before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., in which genealogical records were destroyed also.

In verses 16-17 Isaiah is returning to King Ahaz to give him a sign this time through Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub. Isaiah spoke directly to Ahaz, no longer using the plural form of the pronoun “you,” but its singular form.

“For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that **you** (King Ahaz) dread will be forsaken by both of her kings. The LORD will bring king of Assyria upon **you** (Ahaz) and **your** people, and **your** father’s house – days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah” (Isaiah 7:16, 17).

The child, mentioned in these verses, was Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub. The kings who went against the House of David would be dethroned before this child was mature enough to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, the child of verse 16 is not the promised virgin born son of verse 14, but the same child, who was mentioned earlier, in verse 3 of chapter 7.

Rabbi Kravitz argues that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in the child described in chapter 8:4 (p. 22, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*). However, the promised child could not have been Isaiah’s son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, because he was born out of the physical relationship between Isaiah and the prophetess, whereas the promised Messiah was to be born of a virgin.

There are two signs in Isaiah 7: the first one was given to the House of David, who would not lose its identity until the Messiah was born through a virgin birth (v. 14); and the second sign (v. 15, 16) was given to Ahaz himself, who would not be free from the threats of the Kings of Israel and Syria before Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub would know enough to distinguish between good and evil.

Many, who oppose the fact that Isaiah 7:14 speaks about the Lord Jesus (Yeshua the Messiah), say that *al-mah* means “a young maiden” and not “a virgin,” and that the passage does not speak of the Messiah. They are making a mistake by neglecting the fact that no young woman under the Law could conceive and bear a child unless she was married. The punishment for such a life style was severe. In light of other passages the word *al-mah* clearly refers to a young unmarried woman. One of the clearest verses, which shows that *al-mah*, *na-arach* (“a young woman”) and *betulah* (“a virgin”) were spoken of one of the mothers of Israel, Rebecca (who was not married at the time), is found in Genesis 24:16, 42-43, 55-57.

If God meant that the woman in Isaiah 7:14 was a married woman, there was no reason to call it a sign (*ott* in Hebrew), because it is not unusual for a young married woman to bear a child. The word *al-mah* is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures seven times, and each time it

described a virgin of a marriageable age (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalm 68:25; Song of Songs 1:3; Proverbs 30:18-19; Isaiah 7:14).

If Isaiah spoke about a young unmarried woman, who bore a child out of wedlock, this would be a sign involving fornication. God could not use sin in His plan of giving us the Messiah, who, as we mentioned earlier had to be sinless in order to save us from our sins. Ancient Jewish writers saw this passage as a promise of the Messiah. In 200 B.C., long before the birth of Jesus the Messiah, 70 Jewish rabbis translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, which is known as the Septuagint, and chose the word *parthenos* in Isaiah 7:14, which exclusively means “a virgin.”

The name Emmanuel, which was to be given to this child, in Biblical times would certainly communicate a clear message. It consists of two words – *Emmanu* (which means “with us”) and *El* (which means “God”). Therefore, the child was not only to be born supernaturally, but he was “God with us.” This is the incarnation. God entered into this world as a man. The Apostle Paul (*Sha-ul*) wrote in his letter to the Galatians 4:4:

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”

DOES THIS VERSE REFER TO JESUS?

On page 22 of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries: A Counter-Missionary Handbook* Rabbi Kravitz refers to the second part of the verse in Hebrews 1:5, which is also a quotation of 2 Samuel 7:14:

“I will be His Father and he shall be My Son.”

The writer of the letter to Hebrews applied these words to Yeshua the Messiah, which in Rabbi Kravitz’s opinion is a mistake since in his view this statement was originally said about Solomon. We have to remember that the Hebrew Scripture contains many prophecies and symbols about the Messiah. Besides the prophecies and symbols, God gave us men who became a type of the Messiah to come, such as Moses, **the Prophet**, who said in Deuteronomy 18:15:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”

Aaron, **the Priest**, and David, **the King**, were also prototypes of Messiah, as were many others like them. They all, however, were but a picture of the original. A picture is just a reflection and never measures

up to the reality. The statement in 2 Samuel 7:14, although referring to Solomon at first, takes us further, beyond Solomon, to the Messiah Himself. Was Solomon's Kingdom established forever as the preceding verse declares it would be? Obviously not, for 1 Kings 11:43 states that Solomon "*rested with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father ...*"

The statement in 2 Samuel 7:14 speaks of someone else, whom the writer of the letter to the Hebrews understood to be the Lord Jesus the Messiah Himself, whose kingdom will be established forever, and who, being the Son of God through His divine nature, entered into humanity and became the Son of Man (*Ben Adam*).

As I read the Rabbi's remarks, I wonder why he emphasized only the second half of the verse and omitted the preceding statement, which is a quotation of Psalm 2:7, and a direct reference to the promised Messiah of Israel. It is the Messiah whom God is calling "My Son":

"For to which of the angels did He ever say: '*You are My Son, today I have begotten You*'?" (Hebrews 1:5).

Even the Jewish rabbis historically applied Psalm 2 to King Messiah. The statement '*You are my Son, Today I have begotten You*' needs to be understood in connection with the coming of the Messiah to this world.

In the New Testament, in the Gospel of John 3:16, we read:

"For God so loved the world that He gave **His only begotten Son** that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This verse emphasizes the uniqueness of the Son of God as the **only begotten** Son – there has never been nor ever will be any other. According to the Scripture, there are three persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

In Psalm 2:7, which we quoted above, the writer deals with the incarnation, i.e the entrance of God the Son into this world by becoming a man, and the resurrection of the man Yeshua the Messiah from among the dead. This can be understood clearly when reading Acts 13. The Apostle Paul (Sha-ul) shared with his Jewish brethren one Shabbat day in the synagogue in the city of Antioch in Pisidia. Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, he presented before his brethren the Messiah Himself. Acts 13:33 specifically says:

“God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has **raised** up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: *‘You are My Son, Today I have **begotten** You.’*”

The statement, “*Today I have begotten You*” emphasizes the resurrection of the Messiah (whom God called, “You are My Son”) from among the dead. According to the above, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah is, on the one hand, God’s Son by divine nature, and on the other, by incarnation and resurrection.

It is not correct to say that

“the Bible frequently refers to individuals as God’s “son” (p. 22, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*).

The statement “Son of God” in the Hebrew Scriptures always had a reference to Israel as a nation and not to individuals by themselves, for instance Exodus 4:22-23, Hosea 11:1, Jeremiah 31:9, etc. God said that He is a father to Israel (as a nation) and “Ephraim is my first-born” (Jeremiah 31:9).

Only after Yeshua the Messiah had completely finished the work of redemption, the name ‘sons and daughters of God’ was given to individual believers who have acknowledged Him as the Messiah, Lord and Saviour. As we read in the Gospel of John 1:12:

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

1 John 3:1 also says:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”



APPEAL

I would like to encourage the readers to consider the above information and to search the Scriptures for the truth. I am reminded of the words our Messiah Yeshua said to the leaders of Israel in the Gospel of John:

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

Likewise, after the Messiah rose from the dead, a couple of Jewish people were on the way from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus. Yeshua, seeing their sadness and anguish, approached them and asked why they were so sad. They replied by saying:

“... concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those *who were* with us went to the tomb and found *it* just as the women had said; but Him they did not see” (Luke 24:19-24).

Yeshua the Messiah reminded them that according to the Hebrew Scriptures the Messiah had to suffer, die, rise from the dead and enter into glory. He opened unto them the Scriptures and shared with them from the writings of Moses and the prophets the truth about Himself.

“Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’” (Luke 24:25-26).

We should do as Isaiah the Prophet said: “*Search from the book of the LORD, and read*” (Isaiah 34:16). One of the groups of Jewish people who acted upon this principle was in the synagogue in Berea. When the Apostle Paul (Sha-ul) shared with them the news of the death, burial and the resurrection of the Messiah, they studied the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true:

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The reason why it is so important for all of us to study the Word of God is that our salvation depends on Yeshua the Messiah. The Psalmist once told our people, Israel, not to trust in themselves or in their wealth, because

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever” (Psalm 49:7-8).

May the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob grant you to recognize the cost which our Messiah has paid as a penalty which we deserve for our sins, and that you might come to know Him.

“And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Yeshua the Messiah, whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gideon Levytam is a Jewish believer in Yeshua, who has devoted his life to sharing with his people the good news that Messiah has come. He was born and grew up in a Jewish family in Jerusalem, Israel. Much of Gideon’s early childhood was spent under the influence of his grandfather, who was a devout Jew and the head of the house. He often took young Gideon to the synagogue and taught him about the history and the faith of their forefathers, the Jewish people.

The Six Day War was one of the major events which was impressed upon Gideon’s memory as a young boy. He remembers running home from school with his sister Noga one day amid the noise of gunfire and sirens. After the War Gideon’s father took him to see the Old City, which was in the Jewish hands again, after a lapse of almost 2000 years.

During his high school years, Gideon spent some time in a kibbutz in Northern Israel where he was first exposed to the Gospel through his future wife, Irene, who had come to Israel as a volunteer from Canada. Shortly after this, Gideon was drafted into the army and was sent to the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War. Upon completion of his

military service, Gideon and Irene went to Canada, where they were married. Being around believers in Yeshua, Gideon came to resent the fact that all these Christians seemed to know more about his God and his Bible than he. He vowed that if there be anyone who should tell people about the one and true God, it should be he, a Jew. Gideon's search for the spiritual truth continued, until one day, after many struggles, he took out the Bible given to him by his mother-in-law and said to God, "Show me the truth; if this book holds the truth, then show it to me. If not, preserve me from this book."

Reading the New Testament in Hebrew, his native language, Gideon was amazed to find out that the writers of the New Testament were Jewish, that the events took place in the Land of Israel and were all about a Jew called "Yeshua." Other passages of Hebrew Scripture which spoke to Gideon were those that refer to God in the plural form (three or more), rather than the singular form (one - *El* or *Elohah*) (Genesis 1:1 - *Elohim*; Deuteronomy 6:4 - *Elohay-nue*). This convinced Gideon that though there is only one God in the world – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – this one God exists and consists of more than one Person in the Godhead. Isaiah 53 helped Gideon to see that Yeshua was the very God of Israel, the Creator of the Universe, and that God Himself took the form of a man and came to this world to save sinners. This realization brought Gideon to his knees before Yeshua and caused him to fall in love with Him. Gideon prayed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and confessed his need of forgiveness, being a sinner, and needing a Saviour to forgive his sins. He invited Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah of Israel, into his heart and asked Him to be the Lord of his life. Yeshua was no enemy for Gideon anymore, but the lover of his soul, the one who wept over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-44 and who longed to gather the Jewish people unto Himself like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings in Matthew 23:37-39.

A few months later and after a long inner struggle, Gideon took a serious step again, and was baptized, identifying himself with the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah, a custom, which was given in the Hebrew Scriptures all through the history of God's people. As he grew in faith through studying the Word of God and through the fellowship with other believers, God opened many opportunities for Gideon to share his faith with his people. It says in Romans 1:16:

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Messiah), for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

As time went on, Gideon became more and more involved in serving among his people, until he and Irene came to a point when they stepped out in faith, making themselves available for full time service. A God-gifted speaker, Gideon Levytam now seeks to follow Yeshua, the One who saved and called him, the One whom God exalted to be the Head of His Church (in the Greek, *ekklesia*, which means a called-out assembly of people from among the Jews and Gentiles, who believe on the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah). Responding to the divine call, Gideon has had the opportunity to visit different countries and in various ways present the Holy Scriptures to both Jews and Gentiles, persuading many that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. He and his wife, Irene, also head up “The Holy Scriptures and Israel” Bible Society of Canada, which offers Bibles to Jewish people.

Gideon says that he longs for the day when Israel will say, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*” (Matthew 23:39). His earnest desire is to see Yeshua glorified by both Jew and Gentile, because to know Him “*is eternal life*” (John 17:3).



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**A RESPONSE TO ANTI-MISSIONARIES
BY A JEWISH BELIEVER
IN THE LORD JESUS – THE MESSIAH**

Questions about Jewish identity, faith and the promised Messiah have been occupying people for thousands of years. This booklet, written in the form of an open discussion, offers the readers a look into what the Bible has to say about these issues.

Gideon Levytam is an Israeli who came to faith in the Messiah of Israel through a series of circumstances, and who has dedicated his life to sharing with his people, the Jews, the good news that the Messiah has already come.

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