
Task Force on Missionaries & Cults



**a project of the
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“Hebrew-Christianity” and the Jewish Community

- A respected board member of a synagogue in Upstate New York is asked to step down from his position.
- Two members in top leadership positions at a venerable national Jewish organization in San Antonio are likewise “shown to the door”.
- A young woman is denied acceptance to a popular national Jewish outreach program.
- After two years of living in a Jewish community in Colorado, an observant young couple are “unmasked” and asked to leave.

The common thread running through each of the above? Each of the individuals involved believed that faith in Jesus, or “Yeshua”, afforded them the status of a “completed Jew”.

The number of instances of what we refer to as “infiltration” – “Hebrew-Christians” joining synagogues, Jewish community centers and other Jewish organizations and institutions – is on the rise. While the Jewish community need not fear “Hebrew-Christians” lurking behind every bimah, it does need to understand the motives behind this phenomenon, and make certain that its institutions have proper safeguards in place, should a “Hebrew-Christian”, or “Messianic Jew” as they prefer to be called, come knocking.

Motives

One motive is, of course, proselytizing. While billboards, ads and flyers will continue to have their place within the “Hebrew-Christian” arsenal, “witnessing” which takes place between friends, neighbors or colleagues is exponentially more effective than the “cold-call” type of proselytizing which takes place when the missionary and the “unsaved” are strangers. A case in point:

An Israeli Dance instructor in Florida recently contacted our office regarding a most

disconcerting situation: fully one half of her class on a particular week-night was comprised of “Hebrew-Christians”. While she correctly insisted that proselytizing not take place during her classes, she was justifiably concerned regarding her students who would be hearing about “Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah” over coffee and cake after class.

Infiltration, by its very nature, is low-key. It does, however, have its high-profile side. Whether successful or unsuccessful, infiltrations have been widely publicized by the “Hebrew-Christian” movement for its own propaganda purposes. Consider, for example, the case of Malverne Jacobs:

When he died in 1999, Malverne Jacobs was considered an ‘elder statesman’ of the “Hebrew-Christian” community in Canada. Soon after the established Jewish cemetery in Toronto refused to bury Mr. Jacobs, his son, also a “Hebrew-Christian”, spoke to the press: “This is a violation of the freedom of rights (sic). My father was born a Jew, he lived as a Jew and he will die as a Jew.”

Spokespeople from the Canadian “Hebrew-Christian” establishment recognized the situation as a golden opportunity to spread their propaganda. Granting numerous interviews to all media outlets which would lend an ear, their message was broadcast throughout Canada: We are “just as Jewish” as Jews who don’t believe in the “Jewish Messiah”, we are being persecuted by the close-minded Jewish establishment, and we demand to be accepted as a part of the Jewish community!

The Orthodox Va’ad Harabonim and the Toronto Board of Rabbis, (which represents the Conservative and Reform movements), ruled that Malverne Jacobs chose to live as a Christian, and would therefore not be accorded the privilege of a Jewish burial. Despite this official Jewish response, articles sympathetic to the “Hebrew-Christian” movement’s charge of discrimination did appear in Canada’s local and national press.

Two other recent straight-forward attempts to be recognized as a legitimate stream of the Jewish community include:

- a Connecticut “Messianic Synagogue’s” unsuccessful attempt to have their “Chanukat HaBayit” and other programs listed in the local Anglo-Jewish newspaper;
- a Minnesota “messianic rabbi’s” successful push to deliver the invocation at that state’s official “Day of Prayer” ceremony at the Minnesota State Capitol.

The Battle of the Books

As “Messianic” publishing houses increasingly churn-out books with titles such as *The Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha* and *Gateways to Torah: Joining the Ancient Conversation on the Weekly Portion*, you can be assured that a significant number of booksellers (both online and in-store) will incorrectly classify them under the category “Judaica”. Our office has corresponded with a number of booksellers regarding this matter, and has been successful in having several “Messianic” books removed from “Judaica” sections and reclassified under the generic heading “Religion”.

A similar problem is encountered in the classification of “Hebrew-Christian” congregations in phone directories

across the country. “Hebrew-Christian” congregations are often misleadingly listed under the heading “Synagogue”. Sometimes they are identified as “Messianic”, other times they are not. Either way, they don’t belong there.

Each religious faith group is entitled to the basic right of self-definition. By raising our voices (politely but firmly) with the goal of resolving problems of incorrectly classified “Hebrew-Christian” books and congregations, we are, in effect, exercising this right. To assist you in presenting your case to bookstore managers or Yellow Page publishers, please see our accompanying *Sample Letter to Publishers*. Please do not hesitate to consult with us on any given situation you may be encounter.

Summary

We have provided a brief survey of the variety of methods by which the “Hebrew-Christian” community is both attempting to infiltrate the Jewish community, and attempting to blur the boundaries and distinctions between our respective religious communities. We urge Jewish communal leaders to be alert to this issue, to take “preventative measures” to help protect their institutions and communities. The Task Force on Missionaries and Cults has a wealth of experience in each of these areas, and is available to assist you in whatever manner we can.

Keeping in mind the old adage – an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – our office, in conjunction with the legal counsel of our parent organization, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, publishes *Legal Guidelines* to help guard against infiltration of all types of Jewish organizations. While legal options differ from state to state, these guidelines have proven helpful in numerous instances. Our *legal counsel* is also available to help guide you with any infiltration problem your organization may be encountering.

Regarding the “battle of the books”, our office encourages the respectful challenging of these incorrect categorizations. A cordial letter which explains the differences between our two faith communities and emphasizes the unified stance of all streams of Judaism has been known to be effective. To assist you with this matter, our office has drafted a *Sample Letter to Publishers*.

And lastly, do not hesitate to contact our office to discuss any of the above matters.