

# FULL REVOLUTION:

The counter-counter  
Messianics respond to  
Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

A publication by the  
Rosh Pina Project  
<http://roshpinaproject.wordpress.com>

## Are you gonna go my way?

Jews for Judaism describes itself as ‘the only worldwide countermissionary resource and outreach network.’ Its published guide to respond to the claims of Messianic Jews and Christians is available to download free from this website:

[http://www.be-true.org/resources/pdf/Jewish\\_Response\\_to\\_Missionaries.pdf](http://www.be-true.org/resources/pdf/Jewish_Response_to_Missionaries.pdf)

Jews For Judaism’s director Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz has written *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* which is a popular book with over 200,000 copies in print. Kravitz’s expressed aim is to arm Jewish students and the wider Jewish community with information to counter the claims of Christian missionaries.

But does *The Jewish Response To Missionaries* do this effectively and accurately, or rely on negative stereotyping of Messianic Jews?

There are many Messianic Jews who feel that counter-Messianic groups are playing on the fears of the Jewish community in order to unfairly scapegoat and slander a large number of Jews.

This report will attempt to set out the concerns Messianic Jews have with Jews for Judaism’s portrayal of our religion. When quoting from *The Jewish Response To Missionaries*, added emphasis is ours throughout.

## Setting the tone

The foreword to Rabbi Kravitz's book sets a hostile tone for the reader. The foreword is written by Dr Tamal Frankel, a lecturer in religious studies at the University of California. She warns of the 'threat of manipulative and deceptive missionary practises', accusing missionaries of 'dangerous and confusing tactics', and arguing that 'evangelical missionaries who target Jews' 'spread confusion among our young people', and thus 'should be the object of our concern'.

By the end of the foreword, you know you are reading a polemic rather than a detached, clinical assessment of missionaries who proselytise chiefly amongst Jews. Frankel's emotionally-loaded language is seemingly designed to elicit an emotional response from the reader.

Tamal Frankel also writes that Christians are discovering that their religion has 'anti-Jewish sentiments at its core'. Frankel merely asserts this without providing any evidence. As we shall see, unsubstantiated assertions feature prominently in Kravitz's book.

For a self-professed expert in Judaism, Frankel adopts a curiously non-Jewish approach to other Jews who disagree with her interpretation of the Tanakh. She writes:

*'As many scholars have demonstrated, Christian groups from the beginning re-interpreted the Hebrew Bible in order to*

*support their claims that Christianity superseded Judaism. But **this is not the Jewish perspective** and not even the claim of all Christians.'*

Whilst most Messianic Jews reject the replacement theology that Frankel is alluding to, why does Frankel consider an alternative perspective espoused by many Jews as 'not the Jewish perspective'?

Since when has there been a united Jewish position on anything?

Can it not be said that for every two Jews there are three opinions?

Why is Frankel not willing to accept that the voice of Messianic Jews who believe in Yeshua is another Jewish voice espousing another Jewish perspective?

According to which standards does Frankel judge perspectives as being Jewish or not?

## Bad Medicine

Jews for Judaism claims to provide the response to an urgent need, specifically to form a counter-balance to Christian missionaries and information for Jews who ‘fall prey to the missionary efforts’.

Like any good entrepreneur keen to sell his product, Rabbi Kravitz must convince his readers that there is a need for what he is offering. Kravitz writes:

*‘Contrary to popular perception, it is not only emotionally unstable Jews who fall prey to the missionaries’ efforts; in fact, **all Jews are susceptible.**’*

Having provided a diagnosis, Kravitz fortunately also has the medicine available. And whilst Kravitz on one hand attempts to draw in ‘susceptible’ Jews to his counter-missionary bosom, he pushes Messianic Jews away with the other, ascribing to them the very worst of motives:

*‘They **deliberately misquote, mistranslate and misinterpret** Jewish scriptures and rabbinical texts in an attempt to “prove” that Jesus was both the Jewish Messiah and G-d. Their **delegitimization of Judaism**, in concert with their **misleading exploitation** of Jewish symbol, religious artifacts [sic] and even traditional music, serve to confuse the potential convert, making him or her more vulnerable.’*

Yet what makes Rabbi Kravitz such an expert on the motives of missionaries? Why do Christian missionaries ‘deliberately misquote, mistranslate and misinterpret’, rather than doing so out of genuine conviction?

Yet at least Christian missionaries have the integrity to pitch their message to all Jews, everywhere. Messianic Jews, apparently, focus on the easy targets:

*‘There are over 100 “Messianic congregations” in Israel, and over 38 in the former Soviet Union. These groups prey almost exclusively upon uneducated, unaffiliated and alienated Jews.’*

The implication is that if a Messianic Jew approaches you, he has nothing but contempt for your intellect, and is seeking to take advantage of your status within Judaism.

This argument appears designed to appeal to the vanity of the reader, who would say to himself having read Kravitz before being approached by Messianics: ‘How dare those Messianic Jews treat me as stupid?’ ‘Why do they assume that I am alienated from the community?’

Fortunately, of course, there’s Jews for Judaism to help the heretics, ‘counseling “Hebrew Christians,” monitoring missionary activity and offering a speakers’ bureau and intensive counter-missionary courses.’

## Identity theft?

One of the themes central to Rabbi Kravitz's book is the idea that Messianic Jews are essentially impostors, liars and false Jews, and their lie about their identity is supported by their missionaries. Kravitz writes:

*'In their attempt to convert Jews, missionaries claim that one can remain Jewish while practising 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.'*

So if a hybrid Jewish-Christian identity is a lie, why would thousands of people choose to live that such a 'lie', in spite of the consequences it would have for them? And if Messianic Jewish identity were a sham, why would Messianic Jews want to live in Messianic Jewish homes?

(See this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sEBAldf4L0>)

Messianic Jews seek to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who told his disciples (Matthew 6:6), **'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'**

Why then, if spirituality is so private and intimate for Messianic Jews, would they knowingly construct their entire identities around

a lie? These are basic questions which Kravitz fails to even consider.

Kravitz also claims that by calling themselves ‘completed Jews’, Messianic Jews are implying that other Jews are incomplete. Yet Messianic Jews do not claim that Jews are incomplete because Jews are Jews, but because Jews are humans. Messianic Jews believe that all humans are incomplete without Jesus, including Jews. So why does Kravitz seek to portray this theology as anti-Semitic?

Kravitz also accuses Messianic Jews of ‘misrepresentation and deception’ for using Jewish-sounding terminology, such as ‘believer’ rather than ‘Christian’, ‘Messiah’ instead of ‘Christ’, ‘tree’ instead of ‘cross’ and ‘New Covenant’ instead of ‘New Testament’. But why does Kravitz take issue with different English expressions of terms originally found in Hebrew and Greek? Why does Kravitz think he can tell Messianic Jews which words they can and cannot use, and why does he think they are behaving in a deceiving manner rather than being genuinely convinced that they are using appropriate terminology?

Furthermore, Kravitz casts doubt on the Jewish identity of Jews who believe that Jesus is the Messiah:

*‘However, as long as his beliefs are idolatrous and foreign to Judaism, he cannot call himself a Jew.’*

Ironically, this sentence from Kravitz is itself foreign to Judaism, as the Talmud confirms that even a 'sinful' Jew is still a 'Jew' (Sanhedrin 44a). (It should be pointed out that Kravitz offers no convincing explanation as to why Messianic Jews are sinners or apostates in this case anyway). In the following video, you can hear the late Rabbi Moses Mendel Schneersohn confirm that a Jew remains a Jew forever:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Scaai33qtFE>

So when it comes to Judaism, why does Kravitz think he knows otherwise? As a self-professed Jew for Judaism, should not Kravitz be aware of this aspect of Judaic teaching?

To top it off, Kravitz mishandles a section of the Torah involving Elijah, re-writing it into his debate over missionaries. Kravitz writes:

*'In the Book of Kings, Elijah the prophet is sent to rebuke those Jews who were worshipping a foreign god called Baal. In I Kings 18:20, Elijah says to them, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is G-d, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him." In other words, you are either a Jew or a worshiper of Baal; you can't be both. The story concludes with the Jews renouncing their idolatrous ways and returning to Judaism.'*

Yet the story in 1 Kings 18 is about whether the children of Israel will choose to follow God, not whether they will still be the children of Israel if they don't. Kravitz thus turns a moral question into an

identity question, and gets it horribly wrong. According to Elijah himself, they are still the children of Israel.

Elijah even tells God in 1 Kings 19:10:

*“I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”*

The implication here is that although some of the children of Israel did turn to Baal, they did not stop being of Israel. Ironically we also read this verse in Romans 11 (verse 3) of the New Testament, where Paul is reminding Gentile Christians that God has a plan for the Jewish nation, as after all, God reserved 7,000 Jews who did not bow to Baal (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4).

However, as long as Messianic Jews can be slandered and defamed through a radical interpretation of 1 Kings 18, counter-missionaries will continue to treat Elijah more as a professor of cultural studies than as a prophet of God.

## Bentzion Kravitz:

### The Lion-Tamer

Having dealt with questions of Jewish identity concerning Messianic Jews, Kravitz turns his attention to some of the claims made by Messianic Jews about the Tanakh and the identity of Moshiach. Kravitz analyses a verse from Psalm 22:

*‘For example, Psalm 22:17 from the Hebrew Bible, 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 (as in Psalms 7 and 17). Yet, when read out of context and mistranslated as “They **pierced** my hands and feet,” as appears in Christian versions (Psalm 22:16), the passage intentionally conjures up thoughts of Jesus.’*

Even if Psalm 22:16 should be translated as “like a lion [they are at] my hands and my feet”, the meaning of the verse remains the same because of the context in which it is set. Evil ones and dogs have surrounded a helpless victim and, like a lion, are at his hands and feet.

What would a lion do to your hands and feet? Lick them? Would the nails in Jesus’ hands and feet not have felt like a lion tearing into him? Or are we dealing with a tamed lion? So even if we don’t

use the word 'pierced', the passage could equally be talking about Jesus.

The textual witnesses line up historically like this:

- The earliest is the LXX, which has "they pierced"
- The next witness is Qumran, which has "they pierced"
- The next witness is Aquila's first edition, which is best explained as a transposition of letters from "they pierced"
- The next witness is the Peshitta, which has "they pierced"
- The next witnesses are A2/S/J, which have "they tied", which can be seen as a 'reasonable' mis-understanding from "they pierced"
- We don't get "like a lion" for centuries after these witnesses, and even then there are MT variants representing "they pierced"
- Later Jewish writers (e.g., Rashi) follow the Masoretic Text, but one or two midrashic writers understand this as a verb, instead of "like a lion."

Despite the complex nature of this debate, for Kravitz, any use of 'pierced' is an example of how 'missionaries twist and mistranslate to suit their purposes.' Such language makes it obvious that Kravitz is writing a polemic, and not a very good one at that.

# Hey, we had a deal!

Kravitz writes that:

*'Some Christians interpret their translation (in Jeremiah 31:31) to mean that G-d broke His covenant and rejected the Jewish people.'*

Yet Messianic Jews tend not to interpret the New Testament as replacement theology. Messianic Jews tend to believe that Jesus' return to Jerusalem will see a spiritual restoration of Israel, as Jews all over the world put their trust in Jesus as Messiah. This they believe will see the full realisation of the new covenant expressed in Jeremiah; a new covenant only made possible through the atoning sacrifice of Yeshua for our sins.

Romans 11:1-2 reminds Christians and Messianic Jews that God has not cast away his people, whom he foreknew. Romans 11:26 reminds all Christians, including Messianic Jews, that 'all Israel will be saved'. God cannot and would never reject the Jewish nation, due to the unbreakable promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

# Stop me if you think you' ve heard this one before

Kravitz announces that *'Missionaries claim that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of G-d.'* (Romans 2:23) [sic] [actual verse: Romans 3:23]

This however is not a missionary claim. Consider these verses from the Tanakh:

*"There is none righteous, no, not one;  
There is none who understands;  
There is none who seeks after God.  
They have all turned aside;  
They have together become unprofitable;  
There is none who does good, no, not one."* [Psalm 14:1-3]

Does this make the writer of Psalm 14 a missionary too then?

## Also...

- Kravitz also writes that *'Isaiah 42:6 teaches that it is the role of Judaism and the Jewish nation to show the world this path [to G-d] by serving as a "light to the nations."*' The word 'Judaism' is not mentioned, and the passage refers to an individual who is most likely the Messiah.
- Kravitz objects to the Messianic Jewish belief in the complex nature and unity of the godhead, yet does not seemingly object to kabbalistic beliefs that whilst God is One, he has ten chambers or *sephiroth*. Neither does Kravitz tackle the Torah verse in which Jacob clearly wrestles with God himself (Genesis 32:22-32), and for this he is named Israel, or 'fighter with God', whilst the place Jacob is at is named Peniel as Jacob has 'seen God face-to-face and lived.'
- Kravitz asserts that Christian beliefs in a mediator between man and God are based on ancient Paganism. If so, then why does Job say:

*"Even now my witness is in heaven;  
my advocate is on high.*

*My intercessor is my friend <sup>[a]</sup>  
as my eyes pour out tears to God;  
on behalf of a man he pleads with God  
as a man pleads for his friend."* [Job 16:19-21]

Or does Kravitz see Job too as an ancient Pagan?

## Lost In Translation?

Rabbi Kravitz asserts that:

*'In an accurate translation of the Jewish Scriptures, the word "Moshiach" is never translated as "Messiah," but as "anointed." Some forms of the Hebrew word "Moshiach – jhan" is used over 150 times in the Jewish Bible. **Christians consistently translate this word as anointed, except in the ninth chapter of Daniel.** In this chapter missionaries deviate from this and other correct translations in an attempt to prove that the Messiah came before the destruction of the Second Temple.'*

Is this true? Of course not – Christians **do** translate Daniel 9:26 as 'Anointed One'. Here's the New International Version [Daniel 9:25-27]:

*Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree <sup>[f]</sup> to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, <sup>[g]</sup> the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.*

So the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing? Can Kravitz understand why Messianic Jews think this refers to Jesus' death in 33 CE/A.D., given that this is 477 years after (69 'weeks')

or  $69 \times 7 = 483$  Jewish years, or 477 solar years) the reconstruction of the Temple was completed under Nehemiah in 444 BC(E)?

## Breaking the curse

Why does Rabbi Kravitz inform readers about the curse of Jeconiah, in Jeremiah 22:30, that his descendants would never again rule in Judah, without informing readers that God relented on the curse on Jeconiah's descendants to Zerubbabel, as we can see in Haggai 2:23?

See here for more:

<http://www.messianicart.com/chazak/yeshua/jeconiah.htm>

## The Suffering Servant

Rabbi Kravitz states:

*“Missionaries misleadingly assert that the entire chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah refers to Jesus as the “Suffering Servant” of G-d who dies for the sins of the world. Someone could easily be fooled to believe this argument if Isaiah is read out of context and without a proper translation.*

*However, it is obvious to anyone reading this text correctly, that Isaiah is telling us how the nations of the world will react*

*when they witness the future messianic redemption of the Jewish people.”*

If it's so obvious, then why doesn't Rabbi Kravitz allow the text to speak for itself?

To conclude this report, the Rosh Pina Project reproduces the text of Isaiah 53 in English from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

We ask the reader to judge for himself whether Messianic Jews really are being deceptive when they claim that this passage speaks of Yeshua of Nazareth.

# ISAIAH 53

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed what he has heard from us?<sup>[a]</sup>  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected<sup>[b]</sup> by men;  
a man of sorrows,<sup>[c]</sup> and acquainted with<sup>[d]</sup> grief,<sup>[e]</sup>  
and as one from whom men hide their faces<sup>[f]</sup>  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his stripes we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.

<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?

<sup>9</sup>And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;<sup>[g]</sup>  
when his soul makes<sup>[h]</sup> an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup>Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see<sup>[i]</sup> and be  
satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,<sup>[j]</sup>  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,<sup>[k]</sup>  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;

yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Isaiah 53:1](#) Or Who has believed what we have heard?
- b. [Isaiah 53:3](#) Or forsaken
- c. [Isaiah 53:3](#) Or pains; also verse 4
- d. [Isaiah 53:3](#) Or and knowing
- e. [Isaiah 53:3](#) Or sickness; also verse 4
- f. [Isaiah 53:3](#) Or as one who hides his face from us
- g. [Isaiah 53:10](#) Or he has made him sick
- h. [Isaiah 53:10](#) Or when you make his soul
- i. [Isaiah 53:11](#) Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll he shall see light
- j. [Isaiah 53:12](#) Or with the great
- k. [Isaiah 53:12](#) Or with the numerous

**END**