

The Shepherd of Israel



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The Riddle of the Calendar

Civilized time is dated from the birth of a Jew who wrote no book, made no discovery, invented no philosophy and died the death of a criminal.

Yet throughout centuries the signature of this remarkable Jew has been signed on the hearts of millions.

Why?





A Fear of Not Knowing-- The Joy of Finding

By Rob Mirkin

One of the most descriptive characteristics of my youth related around a fear of not knowing the future or destiny of mankind.

I went through Conservative Judaism with a respect for the God of Israel Who preserved my Jewish people through diverse miracles. Yet although I could relate to this God in theory I did not know Him intimately.

High school for me was filled with deep philosophical and theological questions. Then I became very materialistic. I worked at a factory during the day and attended college at night. I tried to be socially accepted, but still felt a void in my life.

It was acceptable to take drugs and drink, yet this did not fill my void. My so-called friends with whom I got high did not have the answers either. After two semesters at a business college I came home. I was looking for truth and my fellow students did not have it.

My parents were very concerned for me. I would ride to work and listen to a radio show called *Be Still and Know That I Am God*. I felt God calling me.

I would go to my room and read the Old Testament — searching for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So intense was my search I would write to God on the walls. I was be-

coming aware of my sinful nature and the Holiness of God.

I called upon the Lord God of Israel to save me, for if I couldn't find a reason for my existence I didn't want to live any more.

My parents saw these writings on the wall to God and recommended I see a psychiatrist. I went, but he really couldn't meet my needs.

Then my parents suggested I talk to a rabbi. Yes, perhaps the rabbi *could* give me answers about the nature of God. I was very excited.

The night before I was to see the rabbi I was cruising on my motorcycle when I met a friend I had gone to high school with. He had been on the national honor society, was an excellent athlete and his father was a leading doctor. To me Brian was a symbol of success.

Yet Brian really wasn't happy from within. He, too, was looking for his own identity. I knew he had been in a state of perplexity and frustration for some time.

The Brian I saw that night glowed with love. Something had happened. He was no longer without answers to life. He told me what had happened but it wasn't the words which attracted me. It was his happy countenance.

For the first time in my life I had hope.

I decided to wait on my encounter with the rabbi and, to my amazement, I didn't have to go looking for Brian. It seemed he would always be where I was. His friends also had this visible, glowing countenance and I couldn't turn from their love. But they were Gentiles . . . and I was Jewish.

They said Jesus had changed their lives, but I felt if you weren't Jewish you were a Christian. All Gentiles were Christians. Even though these Gentiles seemed to be different from any Gentiles I had ever met.

They challenged me to go to church and I fearfully obliged to go. You can imagine the culture shock I went through as I entered that Southern Baptist Church. Then something shocking happened.

The pastor and his wife greeted me with open arms! When I told them I was Jewish they were filled with joy. They started expounding the Scriptures to me. They said I should be very thankful I was a Jew. What really took hold of me was their realization of the Jewishness of the Messiah they worshipped. I was really touched by this encounter.

I still could not grasp the concept of being Jewish and a Christian at the same time.

Brian offered a New Testament to me. I was literally afraid to touch it. An uncanny fear hovered over me.

*“For the first time I knew
the God of Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob personally. I was
genuinely happy.”*



Yet my curiosity got the best of me and I took the book.

I couldn't put it down! No man could speak the words that Jesus did except He be Divine. I could not grasp all of the theology and terminology of the New Testament, but did understand that this Jesus, Who claimed to be the Messiah, was a good man. He was so very Jewish to me.

Brian came over and brought an eight-track tape of a Christian's testimony with him. We listened and I was convinced if ever there was a Messiah, Jesus was He.

I prayed at my house to receive Jesus, the Messiah, but something held me back. Brian recommended we go to see a woman who had been a believer longer than he.

While Brian was driving I started to pray again. This time a real peace came upon me. It was the first time I had experienced anything like it.

I was so excited I thought I was going to ascend like Elijah! I felt I was going to be raptured right up into the Heavens and was afraid to take my seat belt off!

For the first time in my life I knew the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob personally. For the first time in my life I knew my sins had been forgiven.

The next morning I looked into the mirror and was genuinely happy. I think it was the first time in my life I had ever smiled in the morning.

Several months went by and my parents watched me like a hawk. They saw I was visibly changed for the good. I no longer did the malicious things I had been known to do. I proceeded to lead my younger sister to Jesus and this caused greater family turmoil. Now there were two "fanatics" who believed in Jesus!

My parents could not get over the change in my life, yet didn't understand this Christ Whom they thought

was for the Gentiles. I told my parents you could still be Jewish and believe in Jesus. That through knowing the Messiah Jesus you become a fulfilled Jew.

After about two years, through much prayer and discussion, my parents also became believers in Jesus as their Messiah. They saw Jesus was truly the Messiah the prophets spoke of.

Jesus told Rabbi Nicodemus that the only way he could come to God was to be 'born again.' One must acknowledge that Jesus the Messiah's sacrifice is sufficient and man can have access to God through the Mediator, Messiah Jesus.

You can know the power and fulfillment of having forgiveness.

I challenge anyone to look in the Scriptures and study passages like Isaiah 53. See if Jesus is the Messiah.

When you see He is, just allow Him to come into your life and His peace will be yours.

WHO IS A JEW?

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

By going to the Jewish Scriptures, which are the source of Jewishness, we have an objective standard. Once this is done the definition of Jewishness becomes easy.

The Biblical basis of defining Jewishness lies in the Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12:1-3:

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great. And be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

In relation to Abraham, it is further described in two other passages:

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered (Gen. 13:15-16).

And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be (Gen. 15:4-5).

What is Jewishness?

Later the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed through Isaac, then Jacob. In the Abrahamic Covenant, a simple definition of Jewishness can be found in repeated statements that a nation will come through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jewishness would then be defined as nationality. But, unlike the view of many Zionists, this nationality is not confined to the State of Israel alone. It includes all the Jewish people no matter where they are. It is a nationality based on descendancy, not on history, not on Zionism.

Biblically speaking, the Jewish people are a nation. Today we are a scattered nation, but we are, nevertheless, a nation because we are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Whether Orthodox, Reform, atheist or Communist, a Jew remains a Jew. If a Jew chooses to believe that Jesus is his Messiah, he remains a Jew. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can change the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What then is a Gentile? By the Scriptural standard, a Gentile is simply anyone who is not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A Gentile is anyone not born a Jew. The implication is that no matter what a Gentile does, he can never become a non-Gentile.

Who is A Christian?

It should become apparent that "Gentile" and "Christian" are not synonymous terms. Many non-

Christians call themselves Christians and the issue of who is a Christian has become as confused as the issue of who is a Jew.

To determine who is a Christian one must go to the New Testament, the source of what Christianity is all about.

The New Testament divides the world into three groups of people: Jews, Gentiles, and Christians (1 Cor. 10:32). Everyone is either born a Jew or a Gentile, but no one is ever born a Christian. A Christian is a person, either a Jew or a Gentile, who has made a personal decision to become a Christian, a follower of Christ (Messiah).

The New Testament teaches that a Christian is a Jew or a Gentile who has come to realize that man is born in a state of sin and for this reason he is separated from God. As a result, to come to know God in a personal way, the inquirer must recognize that a penalty for sin must first be paid.

Yet a sinner, an individual Jew or Gentile, cannot by himself pay the price or penalty for sin. For this purpose the Messiah, whom many Jews and Gentiles know to be Jesus, came.

At Messiah's death He became the substitute for sin and so paid the penalty for sin.

The Scriptures teach both in the Old and New Testaments that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin:

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 maketh atonement by reason of the life (Old Testament—Lev. 17:11).

And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission (New Testament—Heb. 9:22).

The act that determines whether or not a person is a Christian is his willingness to place his faith, or belief, in Jesus as the substitute for sin.

Who is a Hebrew Christian?

So who is a Hebrew Christian? If a Jew is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and a Christian is one who has personally on his own volition accepted Jesus as his Messiah, then a Hebrew Christian is a Jew who believes that Jesus Christ is his Messiah.

In terms of faith, Hebrew Christians align themselves with other believers in Christ whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Nationally they identify themselves with the Jewish people.

A Hebrew Christian, then, must acknowledge himself to be both a Jew and a Christian. A Hebrew Christian is proud of his Jewish heritage and of his faith in his Messiah.

From the evidence, writings and experiences of Jews who have believed in Jesus since Rabbi Saul, better known as the apostle Paul, up to the very present day, it is evident that their belief in Jesus has made them more Jewish, not less.