

BLIND

One Man's
Journey of Thought

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Thought

Alan Caplin

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1st Edition, November 2014

Revised Edition, April 2021

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Author: Alan Caplin

Title: Blind

Subject: A Review of The Torah, Tanakh, and Talmud

Genre: Religion

All scripture references from New International Version © 2021

Printed in The United States of America.

First Printing: November 2014

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From the Author

Christmas lights and spectacular decorations everywhere! Santa Claus! Elves! Reindeer! Christmas trees! I mean, even Frosty the Snowman, Father Time, and Jack Frost were in on the holiday action.

So, what does a young Jewish boy do when he sees all this cool stuff and he doesn't celebrate Christmas?

Well, he asks his Jewish mother one of the most important questions he will ever ask ... "What is the difference between Jewish people and Christians?"

My mom had the most **AMAZING** non-religious answer, "Jews believe the Messiah is still coming, and Christians believe that the Messiah has already come."

Wow! She nailed it!

Yet, over many teen and adult years my insides wanted a better answer. As a young man I began to think with sheer reckless abandon. I needed an answer. I needed to know. My insides desired the truth and I dared to ask the hard questions.

At 47 years old, I now write down this 25 year journey of my own thinking - and oh man what a journey it has been!

Is He? Isn't He? My insides now have an honest answer.

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The Bar Mitzvah

July 12th, 1980 - one week before my bar mitzvah in front of 150 guests - my dad at that point completely out of his mind and grasping at straws asked me in 100% desperation, "Alan, so do you want the money or not?" What a motivating question, I mean what bright eyed 13 year old boy wouldn't want the money! Looking back, I do understand his frustration and horribly pale complexion. The man had spent a ton of money with bar mitzvah lessons, had important people flying in to New York from across the country, and had a boat load of "non-refundable" money down on caterers, bands, cakes, flowers, and all the other usual party planning stuff.

Yet, with one final week before the big day - I hadn't as yet bothered to learn one single lick of Hebrew. But, with my dad's passion filled speech about money and turning a fair profit - I was motivated enough to learn how to both read and speak Hebrew in less than a week - and was successfully bar-mitzvahed. Whew! Crisis averted!

In retrospect, it was a good thing I was bar-mitzvahed, and I say that because the cash intake from the party had paid for my future bride's very expensive engagement ring 12 years later. My wife and I have been married now for over 19 years (mostly happy ones) - so the cramming on the Hebrew certainly seems to have been a pretty good overall investment. But, as a Jew, I have to wonder what had been the actual point in the bar-mitzvah? Why did we go to all the trouble and expense in the first place? Honestly, I have

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completely forgotten every single lick of Hebrew I ever learned and, like most good Jewish boys do, I never saw the inside of a temple again unless it was on either of the High Holy Days.

Let's face it, my dad's passionate speech had **nothing** to do with the sheer spiritual integrity of the event itself - there was no mention of how it was important to G-d, or how it had deep symbolic meaning, or how it comes with great Jewish pride, honor, and responsibility, or even how it was an important thing in a young Jewish person's life to announce that they were going to dedicate their impending adulthood as a Jew in direct service to G-d. Shoot, in that moment of horrid desperation I wish he had at least made up something **ridiculous** and told me that G-d would strike me down as dead as a pool cue if I didn't learn my Torah portion immediately and get to the synagogue in time. Hey, don't laugh, there are Hebrew scriptures he could have pulled out and stretched a bit to support **that** argument!

Now as I rant and rave about the deep spiritual, cultural, and societal meanings of bar and bat mitzvahs, please understand a few simple things about my own Reformed Judaic background. First, and I kid you not, my parents felt learning about being Jewish was so highly important that both my younger brother and I were sent on Sundays to Hebrew school in a taxi cab for a 30 minute ride well across town. This concept makes great sense to me. After mom and dad had gone out on Saturday evening with their

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neighborhood friends, getting up in the morning to honor G-d was a very inconvenient thing to do ... but being that it was a **necessary** pre-requisite for the bar mitzvah at age 13 ... the job of getting us there **had** to be done. I suppose it doesn't matter how you get there, as long as you get there! Yet again ... something with this logic is seriously wrong here.

Also interesting to note, until my early twenties I didn't even believe in G-d in the first place (and we will get to that issue down the road). Yet, I clearly remember on the High Holy Days sitting outside temple wearing a walkman listening to both baseball and football games on the radio. When asked **why** I was outside, I recall proudly stating, "G-d isn't real so I'm not going to sit inside - and if by chance He is real - then He is out here too. If you need me, you know where I am." As you can tell, Sunday school was doing wonders for me spiritually.

Frankly, I had no use for this G-d, and as far as I was concerned He certainly had no use for me. All G-d was doing was punishing me by taking me away from my heart filled New York Giants football worship sessions with Phil Simms and Lawrence Taylor. Yes, and with that beautiful tongue I was bar-mitzvahed ... hey, but it paid well.

Unfortunately, the majority of bar mitzvahs are nowadays far less about G-d and more about the glitz and social buzz of the event. I remember one dear family member who **many, many** years ago must have spent easily over \$40,000 on a decked out, no holds barred themed bar mitzvah for

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her son. That very same child today as an adult, proudly states he doesn't believe in G-d one bit.

So, what was the bar mitzvah for? The intent of the bar mitzvah is to publicly announce one's Jewish adulthood with G-d and the desire to put His commands at the very center of our Judaic life (the Hebrew word "mitzvah" literally **MEANS** commands). But, for many of our Jewish kids these "spectacular" themed bar and bat mitzvahs are about beating the local competition for style, buzz, and glam points ... and G-d has been completely removed from the occasion.

The point of this writing isn't to change the way we do (or don't do) bar and bat mitzvahs ... the point is to assess this fundamental issue: **as Jews what or who do we believe in?** To me, the way we treat bar mitzvahs is a strong symbol or symptom of the core issue we are dealing with. Much of the people in our Jewish community have erroneously confused being "Jewish" with an individual "identity" instead of being a core spirituality.

We as Jews basically break down into two distinct groups: **ethnic** Jews and **spiritual** (religious) Jews. Being a culture of its very own that is highly unique to the rest of the world – we have our own language, foods, customs, traditions, holidays, rites of passage, and inherent ways of being – which makes us an **ethnic** group. And far too many Jews stop right there - they accept the customs, traditions, and

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major holidays at face value - but they deny the spiritual side of being Jewish.

I'd challenge that if you took the time to sit down and have a "heart to heart" conversation with your Jewish neighbors, co-workers, business associates, family, and even your facebook friends - you will almost certainly find that only a very small percentage of our Jewish people perceive themselves as being "observant Jews" ... and of those that do identify themselves in that way ... very few of those people even attend their synagogue regularly. The majority of Jewish people (even those who had been bar or bat mitzvahed) will go as far as to claim that they are either agnostic or atheistic. Point being, it blows my mind that people who don't even believe in G-d can have an expensive party to celebrate their belief in G-d ... it makes no sense! Does anyone else see how this is a little bit hypocritical?

Of course, many Jewish people that I discuss this point with will make the implausible argument that the bar or bat mitzvah is a "tradition" and a "symbolic rite of passage" into adulthood as a Jew. They will continue on to say that the occasion has no real association with our underlying belief in G-d or to our personal connection with Him. In effect, it is just a symbolic event we as Jews do to honor our heritage.

Point taken, but with all that Torah reading about a holy G-d, being done in G-d's holy name, cloaked in G-d's holy prayer shawls and yarmalukes, moderated by G-d's holy representative (the rabbi), and being performed in G-d's holy house ... and some Jews even take it a step further by

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being bar mitzvahed in The Holy Land of Israel ... all of that should make it less about being a mere symbolic gesture and more about making a clear declaration of one's belief in The L-rd. Anything less, is again extremely hypocritical. If you take our G-d out of the bar mitzvah (or in Hebrew translated as "son of the commandment") ... then, why not just take everyone out to Six Flags for a good time and then shout from the top of Rolling Thunder that we are Jewish?

In our Torah (that pesky thing I read for turning a quick profit at my bar mitzvah) the book of **Deuteronomy 8:1-19** talks about our walk with Him and how once we have reached the Promised Land we must be careful not to forget Him (or as individuals and an entire nation we will face His judgment and our eventual destruction). You see, The L-rd warned us that once we have "eaten and been satisfied" we would completely forget G-d as well as His commands, laws, and decrees.

Remember, due to direct disobedience of His expectations after leaving the bondage of Egypt, G-d purposefully kept the Israelites for 40 long hard years of training in the desert to humble them, teach them, nurture them, provide for them, and to test their hearts to see if they would keep His commands once they had received the promised blessings of abundance. Well, I'd have to argue that if we can afford the cost of lavish parties ... as a group, we do have abundance ... and we are failing that critical test of our hearts.

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Believe it or not, the Jewish people were created - and placed literally in the center of the globe in order to be His "public relations" ambassadors to the surrounding Gentiles. Back in the day, each and every pagan culture had to travel directly **through** Israel in order to trade their goods to the other parts of the world - and He wanted everyone passing through **His** town to see **His** people worshipping the one true G-d of Israel. Yes, we were built as a people to worship.

We were designed as a people individually and corporately to be G-d's chosen instrument of love, affection, and intimate worship to Him. By the manufacturer design specs, as Jews, there is a G-d shaped "worship hole" in all of us that is meant for intimate worship to The L-rd our G-d. Therefore, since worship is built into our own "DNA" we as Jews must worship "something" by designed default. Bluntly, some of us worship the after party, and not the G-d of The Torah reading.

Sun Worship

Week of December 19th, 2010 My wife, son, and I packed our bags and went on a Caribbean cruise with 27 other members of our extended family - and tagging along with us were 3,000 complete strangers. Being highly claustrophobic, unable to swim, not a big fan of germs, and a person that is prone to motion sickness - yes, I am a blast at parties - I can tell you that right from the start this holiday cruise was not my idea of fun in the sun. But, it was a free trip with the entire mishpucha ... and who can argue with free?

Mother Nature was keenly aware of my excitement, and made sure that we had a week of record cold, high wind, and port closings. The ship rocked and rolled - a bunch of us in the family got sea sick - so for fresh air we sat many times on the deck huddled together in blankets begging for a Holiday Inn. At one point in our glorious week of winter fun, we watched from our deck for 45 minutes as a Holland America cruise ship tried to dock herself in high winds - but she gave up and sped off for the next destination.

As the Holland America Amsterdam sped away from our port in futility, it was at that very second I had my long awaited "ah-ha" moment. I looked around the deck of the ship, and I saw tons of people sitting on lounge chairs wearing jackets, blankets, and hats worshipping the sun ... and at **any** cost. I mean, it was **FREEZING** cold with winds that were blowing chairs right across the deck ... and people

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were going to get their "paid in advance" vacation rays no matter what personal parts they were freezing off. Some of these desperate people were even out there working on their tan lines in extremely skimpy bikinis. Come on, really now? A sun tan is **that** important?

That is when I realized that we all worship **something** in life ... and it is **always** with a real tangible cost. For instance, some people worship their careers, others worship their social status and country club memberships, some worship their checking accounts, many worship vast personal success, and others worship Sunday football games on TV or their golf outings. All of these "things" are wonderful and highly acceptable situations, endeavors, or goals to enjoy ... but at what expense?

Honestly, if we are constantly chasing a need, agenda, purpose, or even a dream, we often miss the most important "stuff" that is right under our noses. For example, let's say someone were spending 85 plus hours a week building a highly successful career, portfolio, and checking account ... and never getting to spend sincere quality time with his or her family ... is that an acceptable cost?

All I know is, our G-d spelled out for us the real and tangible costs of worshipping anything else ahead of Him when He gave Moses the original top 10 list long before David Letterman ever put one of those together. I have to figure G-d knew a thing or two when He carved out in the stone the very **first** of His 10 commandments:

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Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Notice “gods” is a lower case “g” ... what did G-d mean by that? Of course there are no other gods (little g) ahead of Him since He is **THE** one and only true G-d. What He is saying here is that **everything** in life – except for Him – **IS** a lower case “g” in His eyes. Anything we put ahead of Him is a little rotten pagan god running around sticking its snooty and belligerent nose right up at the Creator of the Universe.

Again, if we put our work, career, income, Sunday afternoon football games, families, social status, friends, vacations, or anything else **ahead** of Him and the direct value that we place on Him as our G-d, we have miserably failed at keeping the very **first** commandment. Remember, we were chosen by Him and designed to worship and honor Him ... anything less than that is a broken commitment to His explicit Law as given to Moses ... and in turn becomes sin.

Of course, G-d continues on in commandment **number 2** (paraphrased): the Israelites, should make **no graven images or idols for worship.** So, here we are again ... back at the point that anything we put directly ahead of Him is an idol in His eyes. Too many of us bow down to our wants/stuff, 5 and 10 year investment or growth plans, and personal agendas instead of bowing down to The One who created everything in the first place.

In His own words throughout the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, He says repeatedly that He is a jealous G-d ... and jealous of **anything** that gets our ultimate focus, love, affection, and attention ahead of Him. Idols are a big no-no and a clear violation of commandment number 2. Anything

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less than strict adherence to this second commandment is falling deeply short of G-d's expectations - and in fact - is sinful as outlined in the Torah.

In essence, it gets back to the people I spoke of on the cruise ship worshipping the sun at the expense of freezing off their personal body parts. Yes, they got a nice tan to show off to their friends back home ... but they paid a price to obtain it. If we are honoring everything else in life ahead of G-d ... I dare to imagine the price tag to be placed on that decision. The L-rd states in the Torah that the cost of such behavior is to be our ultimate destruction. As given to us in **Deuteronomy 8:19** He states, "If you ever forget The L-rd your G-d and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed."

I don't know about you ... but that gets my attention. Frankly, I'd hate to be the 13 year old kid drawing that selected Torah reading.

Sin Worship

"I'm Jewish, I don't have any sin. Sin has nothing to do with me. I haven't murdered anyone." In case you couldn't tell by this point, I'm badly prone to deep "over the edge" type thinking (yes, my shrink loves me), and I remember having these exact rambling thoughts in my head for a countless number of years. Then, wanting to know more about my festering Jewish guilt, I went back to my Hebrew scriptures to find some answers and direction.

Honestly, I really wish I had paid a little more attention to what I had been reading during my expensive bar mitzvah preparation lessons! Reason being, when I spent some devoted time as an adult reading The Torah again, the reality of it hit me like a ton of bricks. Large portions of our revered Mosaic writings are **CLEARLY** and **DIRECTLY** about G-d's holy sacrificial system that was designed specifically to atone for sin.

For example, the entire book of Leviticus is about His law, regulation, explicit instructions at the sacrificial altar for the holy priests (the Levites), and the procedures for the implementation of the sacrificial system. So, if there is an entire **SYSTEM** set up to atone for sin, then that must mean that sin **IS** in fact a basic Jewish thing. When you think about it, the Gentiles got sin (and their Sunday cream cheese and bagels) from us!

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This clear reality of sin forced me to look more closely at G-d's **top 10 list** again - I needed to see where I had stacked up against His "goody two shoe" list. I figured, how bad could I possibly be? Well, as you can tell by the first 2 commandments, I had a lot to worry about! Here is where I measure up on G-d's next **8 commands**:

3. You shall not take the name of The L-rd our G-d in vain.

Have you seen me up in the boisterous blue seats of Madison Square Garden cussing at a New York Rangers game? Have you heard me yell "blankety" "blankety" G%^ d@mn at my TV set while watching the Yankees lose yet another World Series? OK, I failed that one.

4. You shall not break the Sabbath.

From Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown ... nope. Just not happening. I can't tell you how many nasty TV dinners I've microwaved during those exact hours (yes, while cussing G-d's name in vain at my TV set). Batting 0 for 4 so far. That's OK, there is still hope with a few more left to go.

5. You shall not dishonor your parents.

Yeah! Right! Please don't call my mom and ask for stories. Next ...

6. You shall not murder.

Well, I might not have actually murdered anyone ... but in my deep heart of hearts ... I've really desired to help a few

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certain people meet the brutal business end of a highly sharpened axe. Ugh! G%^ d@mn! Another one!

7. You shall not commit adultery.

Now, to date, counting the courting years I've been with my wife for over 23 years (isn't she lucky), and I can honestly 100% say that I haven't ever, ever cheated on her.

But there have been some drop dead gorgeous hotter than hot women over the years that I have pictured in my head fairly naked. Yes, and there were even a few of them on that cruise ship! How I hated that cold weather I tell you.

Ummmm. Does lust in my heart count for anything? UGH!!! 0 for 7 ...

8. You shall not steal.

I haven't stolen a car and I certainly haven't "Burn-ie Madoff-ed" anyone ... but I've stolen some printing paper, pens, manila folders, and paper clips from work a few times. And, when I was a teenager I stole a really cool Gumby eraser from a Hallmark store on Long Island ... so I guess ... I strike out there too. Ack!!!!

9. You shall not commit perjury.

I have **NEVER** lied! Ever, I promise! I swear! G-d as my witness! And I just took His name in vain for added bonus points ... 0 for 9 ...

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10. You shall not covet.

That's OK ... no thank you. Really, I'll pass - nah, I don't want it. As a school teacher who is paid on public funds (which I am greatly thankful for), I really don't want that Porsche you bought with cold cash the very day after you returned home on that private jet from that fancy "foo-foo" vacation to the Swiss Alps. What, you just parked that sweet ride in the garage of your \$10 million home! Come on now, that's not fair ... UGH!!!!

So, after careful review, it is G-d **10** and Alan **NOTHING!** Zip! Nada! Where does that leave me?

I have come to the ultimate conclusion that I must look at my sin right in the eye and figure out how I can best deal with this critical issue within the "personally uncomfortable" confines of G-d's Jewish Law of The Torah (you know, that pesky bar mitzvah book). Look, either I deal with my own sin, or I can deal with my G-d the very day that I die (or even sooner if G-d is in the "Alan smiting" kind of mood) ... so, honestly I'd rather deal with the sin. Anything less than that would mean that I love my sin **MORE** than I love my G-d ... and that is **SIN WORSHIP!**

Again, since The L-rd clearly expressed His distaste for anything that comes before Him **AND** for any fleshly sin that has gone without cleansing atonement at the sacrificial altar - I must figure out how to become **100% PERFECT IN LIFE** and **NEVER, EVER** sin (yes, my wife chuckled reading this) - **OR** like any decent accountant would, actively find a good

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loophole in the law to negate or wash out the sin from the "official" holy record (i.e. The Book of Life).

PERFECT? Let's face it - that just isn't going to happen. So let's try this loophole. Well, I've done more good stuff than bad stuff over the years so surely that counts, right? If we put good and bad on 2 separate scales, surely the good stuff tips the balance. Yes?

That's what I had used to think before my hard review of The Torah, but then I hit the painful realization that if this were in fact the case, life would be about our *bragging* rights. In essence, negating our sin and expunging the holy record of our past would be all about "I did this, and I did that" ... but what exactly is the nature of bragging? It is putting ourselves, our own strength, our own pride, and our own accomplishments **FIRST** and **DIRECTLY** ahead of G-d (and others). Blatant violations of commands both 1 and 2 ... which makes the bragging **SIN!** And, let's be clear. A sinful system of redemption *from* sin cannot help us avoid G-d's judgment of said sin. So, a life of purely "rolling the dice" and weighing good deeds versus bad deeds **cannot** be the spiritual loophole.

Honestly, using good deeds to brag our way out of the consequences for our own sin is a crazy and futile attempt to somehow put ourselves, stuff, money, time, and individual efforts *ahead* of our G-d Himself in **HIS** very own eyes! I mean, how could we ever as the *creation* be mightier

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or more capable than our G-d the Creator in His very own opinion?

Truly, G-d would never allow anything that we as finite created beings could ever accomplish to receive more praise, glory, or honor than anything that He as the sole "Creator of the Universe" would in fact be able to do for either us or Himself! Therefore, once again based on this issue of "spiritual bragging rights" - our own earthly works, fleshly deeds, charitable things that we do, or important Jewish causes we actively support with our time and finances ... simply **CANNOT** be the vehicle through which we are absolved, forgiven, freed, or cleansed of breaking the 10 commandments.

You see, only an act of G-d Himself as Creator can officially absolve or cleanse us from the perils of sin, and because it is **HIS** Kingdom, **HIS** set of rules, and **HIS** own system of sin redemption ... only He is allowed to brag about any existing spiritual loopholes. So, in effect, we are forced to come to the conclusion that aside from a plan of balancing out our good and bad deeds ... there must be another way to atone for sin!

G-d 'Aint Real Anyway!

Now, I realize that the majority of what I have written here means absolutely nothing if you, as the reader, don't even believe in G-d in the first place. Honestly, if that is the case, then the worst 2 problems you will have from reading this dizzying material is 1) a really bad headache and 2) being forced into deciding whether or not to actively boycott your neighbor's next bar or bat mitzvah. But, what if G-d really does exist? What then? Can you really afford to take that chance?

See, that is where I was at with this process. I wasn't willing to settle for anyone else's answer that has been potentially clouded, jaded, or impacted by thousands of years of Jewish history, traditions, cultural influence, and widely fluctuating rabbinic viewpoints that seem to contradict each other in every aspect of the Judaic faith. I mean, I even once met a rabbi from a prominent synagogue that admittedly does **NOT** believe in G-d. How is that even possible?

So, I wanted **MY** own answer to **MY** own question:

Is G-d real, and if so, what the heck does He want from me?

That indeed was the question I wanted answered. Until my early twenties I did not believe in G-d - nope, not a bit. But, after looking at the moral code presented in the 10 commandments, I was highly compelled to actively research G-d's very plausibility. Honestly, if there was going to be a

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HUGE consequence for violating the law of The Torah ... I wanted to first find out if there was actually someone up there in the wild blue yonder who was going to assume the role of enforcing that law.

Let's be real for a minute, shall we? If there weren't policemen out there hiding behind various rocks, curves, and traffic signs meanly speed trapping me ... I'd be behind the wheel of my car driving like a certified wild crazy man. Well, I still drive that way anyhow (check out the points on my driver's license), but at least I know **WHO** will be coming for me when I break the law!

I don't know exactly where in my journey I very **first** decided that G-d had to be real. But, I can tell you that when I began teaching 6th grade back in the 1990's, I was teaching science to my kids. It forced me to learn and teach about the solar system, galaxies, gravity, the complexities of the human body (especially the intricate human eyes and brain), the precise timing of oxygen and carbon dioxide cycles, and how everything around us wonderfully fits and works together.

For example, if the life giving sun were just a tiny fraction bigger, smaller, or even moved a little bit closer or further away ... life could not be sustained here on earth. Or, how earth could not exist without the strategically placed planet Jupiter (which is 5 times our size) absorbing the blows of the massive meteors that would hit and surely devastate our little blue planet. Even things like how our bodies are such a finely tuned "machine like" instrument that even heals, overrides, and repairs itself.

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Well, when we look at the "design" of the universe and the human body, there must have been a Great Designer! For human life to exist even at all, someone way smarter than me had to of put these things together!

And, as for me, I just cannot buy into an evolution theory for human life. To me, the "missing link" between humans and apes is still officially missing because there is **no** actual link! Look at it this way, how can it be even remotely possible that a multi-celled creature (or any creature at all for that given matter) was successfully formed from a single cell during the randomly created proper "life giving conditions" in a soupy, nasty primordial ooze?

Realistically, there would be much better odds of my lovely wife **RANDOMLY** dumping baking ingredients right out of the fridge, freezer, and cabinets into a huge mixing bowl, stirring the tasty concoction for however long she felt like stirring it, throwing the yummy mixture into an oven to cook for some random amount of time and baking it at some random temperature ... and then having a delicious meat lasagna magically appear. And, considering my wife is a vegetarian and a horrible cook - the odds are that much worse!

But, for me, the evidence of G-d is found right in the book of Jeremiah in The Tanakh. If you spend quality time reading both The Torah and The Tanakh like well documented **history** books (which is what they really are) it tells the story of a people that were, despite warnings from G-d and His

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chosen prophets, **repeatedly sinful and disobedient** to The L-rd.

We, the Jewish people, have been stubborn and defiant to Him from the time we began in the desert, to the destruction of the First Holy Temple, to the captivity in Babylon, through fallen Jewish kingdom after kingdom, through the destruction of the Second Holy Temple, through the "diaspora" or the dispersion of the Jewish people from Israel to across the four corners of the globe (which was **PROMISED** by G-d due to our un-repentent sin and disobedience) ... and from what I can tell from the current state of our bar and bat mitzvahs ... this attitude continues right on into this modern day and time.

But, in the book of Jeremiah The L-rd tells us:

Jeremiah 31:35-37

³⁵ This is what The L-rd says,

He who appoints the sun
to shine by day,
who decrees the moon and stars
to shine by night,
who stirs up the sea
so that its waves roar—

The L-rd Almighty is His name:

³⁶ “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,”
declares The L-rd,
“will Israel ever cease
being a nation before me.”

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³⁷ **This is what The L-rd says:**

“Only if the heavens above can be measured
and the foundations of the earth below be searched out
will I reject all the descendants of Israel
because of all they have done,”
declares The L-rd.

To me, this is **SO VERY HUGE!** Only by some ridiculous conditions, like if we could stop the sun and moon from shining - or if we could stop the waves from roaring - or if we could measure the heavens - would The L-rd reject **ALL** of Israel. Let me state this another way, He is promising that there will **ALWAYS** be Jewish people on planet earth - despite His displeasure with our sin and disobedience.

Think about that raw fact for a minute - let it soak in. The Jewish people have been persecuted and attacked from generation to generation - all the way from our beginnings in Egypt, to the Assyrians, to the Babylonians, to the Romans, to the pogroms in Russia, to the Crusades in Europe, to the Spanish Inquisition, to the Germans and Hitler, and right on through modern Muslim extremists and antagonistic groups like the Palestinians, Hamas, Hezbollah, and that little nut job Ahmadinejad from Iran who has openly threatened to wipe Israel off the map. Millions upon millions upon millions of our Jewish people have died and perished ... yet we as a people group are still here! There must be a G-d!

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Still, I don't think you are really bending your mind totally around what I am saying here. Of all the civilizations mentioned from the **HISTORICAL** records and accounts of both The Torah and Tanakh, those documented people groups that existed in biblical times such as the Hamites, Jebusites, Perrizites, Japhethites, Zemarites, Arvadites, Gergashites, Hamathites, Moabites, Caananites, Amalekites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, Sinites, and the Edomites no longer exist ... but, yet only the **ISRAELITES** have survived to this modern day as an intact people group with a language, core identity, religion, and culture.

We are probably the single most hated people group in the history of the planet, yet we still thrive and survive globally. I'd argue that the continued existence of the Jew is an absolute miracle - and with very hostile nations in this day and age openly seeking nuclear weapons to destroy our people - every day that Israel raises her flag in the morning is a continued miracle. The Jew is proof positive of both G-d's Word and His existence!

Look, I can't ever understand G-d and His ways, we aren't meant to as in **Proverbs 3:5** He says:

⁵ Trust in The L-rd with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding.

Therefore, I can't give you a good fleshly or human reason for the persecution of our people other than the mere fact that anything G-d loves and has chosen to be His ... darkness and the enemies of light will be forced to vehemently hate. But, in saying that, I have to go back to what I wrote earlier.

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In **Deuteronomy 8:19** He clearly states, "If you ever forget The L-rd your G-d and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed."

I know, that I know G-d isn't a liar - He simply can't be as it is against His nature. For in **Numbers 23:19** He says, "G-d is not human, that He should lie, not a human being, that He should change His mind."

So, follow this logic of mine. If G-d isn't a liar and He doesn't change His mind – and He in fact **SAID** that we'd be destroyed as a people if we ever forget Him and His commands – yet He also says that He'd never reject **ALL** of Israel as there would always be a Jewish remnant before Him – well, how then do I reconcile that numbing information? He said that He'd destroy us for our sin and disobedience, but despite the heavy, persistent persecution we are still here as a people group. Look, if He can't and won't lie, and if He must uphold His very own word ... how then can I make sense out of this sensitive issue?

I AM IN NO WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM JUSTIFYING THE HORRIBLE PERSECUTION OF OUR JEWISH PEOPLE, but I just want to throw the idea out there that it stands to reason that persecution – again, as based on His forced judgment of sin and on His very own words from The Torah - very well may be **ALLOWED** by our G-d to happen as part of the "destruction" that He is referring to.

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Please hear me and my loving heart, I'm not at all saying that He is **CAUSING** these continued atrocities to happen ... but rather that based on His very own word/warnings to us and the clear historical evidence, I'm forced to wonder out loud if His hands of protection on our people have been **partially** lifted. Given His word, it is highly plausible that His holy hands of protection have been lifted up just enough to let the persecution in from our enemies, but not lifted near high enough to allow complete destruction of the entire faith.

Hey, please don't hate the thinker ... I'm only saying that this makes a rather good explanation as to how our Jewish people can continue to exist despite 2,000 years of horrid persecution. If anything, this amazing enigma only increases the proof that G-d **DOES** exist!

Yet, for deeper insight on the inherent plausibility of this "hands of protection being lifted" concept, and for a real shocking eye opener into both our Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants (or non-voidable **AND** binding contracts) with Him, check out the "if-then" clauses regarding the "blessings and curses" for our direct obedience and disobedience in **Deuteronomy 27-29** (yep, that pesky bar mitzvah book). I promise you a chin hitting the ground type moment!

Truly, it isn't easy to decide to look for G-d because that would put someone else in our driver's seat. It is much easier, safer, and less threatening to put ourselves at the very center of our own universe (which is sin as based on commandments 1 and 2). If you, in your heart, do not

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believe that G-d is real then I encourage you to seek Him in the best way you know how. Honestly, I can tell you that a lot of my personal journey was me just asking Him to reveal Himself to me in a way I could understand. What loving Father that desires our heart, love, and affection wouldn't answer a sincere prayer like that.

I can say I believe in Him because of how my intimate prayers get answered by an intimate G-d and how I get answers in ways that I can understand. The search for G-d is a personal thing, and each person must undertake that process on their own road. No two people will undergo the same exact journey. Considering the dire consequences if He is real, we must at least make an attempt to seek. But, sort of like how I got to temple as a kid, it doesn't matter how you get there ... as long as you get there!

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More Loopholes ...

So, here we are in my thought process. It is a very, very scary place to be in my head, but let's review to this point a little bit. With all of my inner being, I believe G-d exists and I know that I do fail horribly by His righteous and holy standards on the grounds of the 10 commandments. Remember, just the simple fact alone that I willingly pictured in my head a few women on that cruise ship **VERY**, **VERY** naked (hey, they were really hot) ... makes me an impure sinner in His eyes. Although I could argue "no fault" as I had no other choice but to mentally visualize them naked since it was too cold for them to wear bikinis ... but somehow I don't think that argument will fare too well in G-d's holy court.

So, what do I do with the sin? Where can I hide it from G-d? How do I expunge this sin of mine from G-d's memory banks and the official eternal "guest registry" (i.e. The Book of Life)?

I've pointed out that loopholes just can't and won't work - especially the one about weighing the scales of justice (good versus bad). Let's assume that this good vs. bad loophole in G-d's law works, does that mean I can be a horrible, evil, rotten, hateful person and beat on people my entire life ... then on my death bed leave a couple gazillion dollars to a worthy charity ... and then be OK with G-d? Does one really awesome, amazing act of generosity or kindness wipe out an entire life of sin?

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It **CAN'T** because then the **ACT** itself would cleanse us of our sin ... our purification would not be coming from the sovereign power and loving hand of a sin cleansing G-d. You see, we don't cleanse ourselves, G-d Himself cleanses us! Plus, if this last ditch effort did work, I could just see every Jewish person in heaven bragging and comparing how much they had to give to get in the front door.

See, here again, based on sinful "end of life" boasting, this scales of justice thing cannot work. In essence, if a plan for repentance is at all unjust and unholy, then it simply can't absolve us from sin. A righteous, pure, and holy G-d must then have a righteous method of accounting for sin and for cleansing us of our sinful disobedience to Him.

Let's stick with the loophole thing for a moment. Ask 10 rabbis one single question, you will usually get 30 different answers. But, if you ask them **how** we purify ourselves from sin in the absence of a holy temple (remember, at the moment we have no animal sacrifice as the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD) - some of them will say that we are able to cite Daniel in his Babylonian exile to establish a **new** loophole in the law. See, rabbis will assert that when Daniel was exiled into Babylonian captivity in 586 BC he had no standing temple (as that First Temple had been destroyed by the massive Babylonian invasion) and that he was cleansed of his sin by **prayer, fasting, and a repentant heart.**

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To which I make this very simple point. Where has G-d commanded that prayer replaces blood sacrifice to make atonement for sin? Where did Daniel ever in his biblical "writings" assert that claim? It also baffles me beyond my comprehension that rabbis have downgraded Daniel from a "prophet of The L-rd" to just a mere writer or a contributor to the Hebrew Tanakh.

Of all Hebrew scripture, Daniel has some of the single most prophetic writings about the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms and the coming of the Messiah - so, how can he just be a writer and not a prophet? So, in my mind how can we accept his example of "prayer versus sacrifice" as being a divinely inspired solution to the problem if he wasn't a prophet hearing a word of knowledge directly from The L-rd? You can't have it both ways. You can't argue that he isn't a prophet, and in the same breath argue that he took his direction "prophetically" from The L-rd. This stance is very hypocritical ... and clearly flawed.

The issues with this "prayer" loophole in the law runs even deeper. If prayer was an acceptable method to atone for our sin ... how would we ever know exactly **how much** prayer covers us in His eyes? Again, it gets back to I did "XYZ" in my life ... well, how much prayer does that actually cost me? Is it an hour? 3 days? A month?

Personally, this would make me very, very nervous ... I'd have to be praying all day, every day (and then some) just to cover for my sin. Some of you know what I am talking about here - we'd be complete toast as there wouldn't be enough

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hours in the day to cover us! Yet, we have no idea **how much** to pray to cover our sin and consecrate ourselves before Him because it just isn't stated by G-d anywhere!

Worse, even if prayer was an acceptable substitute for sacrifice – how well are **you** covered under the replacement strategy?

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613 Laws: Oh Vey!

If you have made it this far in this writing, you are to be congratulated ... because evidently I am making a little bit of sense. Or, perhaps, maybe like when watching a really, really bad movie on TV, you keep on watching it because you want to see how this mess ends. Or, maybe I am just scaring you senseless! Either way, my deep thinking about our own Judaic faith is about to go even deeper. Get your coffee **NOW** ... don't worry, I will wait.

Obviously, loopholes don't work. Unlike our wonderful IRS and convoluted tax code, G-d has **no** loopholes. None. There is only one way out of sin, and that is His chosen way - atonement is only made through blood sacrifice (Leviticus 17:11). But, just for the sake of the argument, I am going to allow a "temporary" loophole. Let's say that we could get a giant pink eraser and blot out every sin both big and small from our past - sort of like how we can declare bankruptcy to become absolved of our owed debt. Once that debt is rendered null by the courts, we need to walk straight to make sure that we don't fall behind in payments again.

Right? With me?

So, for the sake of discussion let's say everyone reading this right now has their past paid in full. We have waived a giant pink eraser - and poof - by a declaration of the courts your sin balance sheet is now clear with G-d. Well, what now? How do we walk straight?

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If loopholes don't work, and we want to stay clean, we have to follow His exact law. Here comes the really, really bad news ... ready ... the 10 commandments are only the beginning of His law. Look, speaking for myself, I've failed **MISERABLY** on the top 10 quiz. But in The Torah (yep, that pesky bar mitzvah book) - The L-rd spelled out a total of **613** laws that, in order for us to remain clean, we as His Jewish people **must** indeed follow.

Honestly, if I can't follow 10 of these things properly, how well then do you think I've done on the 613? Although, one of those 613 laws is a command (Deuteronomy 6:7) to study and learn The Torah. Sweet! Thanks to my dad, I've got that one covered! Whew!

So, at this point I know that 1) I have sin in my life, 2) there are no loopholes, 3) there are 613 laws that as a Jew I **must** strictly follow to avoid being guilty of sin, 4) sin can only be atoned with the shedding of blood through animal sacrifice, 5) and there is no temple to sacrifice at.

Swell! It seems to me that I have only one choice from this point forward ... and that is to be **100% PERFECT!** If I could just be totally perfect (although I do tell my wife that I am), then none of this would matter. I wouldn't need loopholes or atonement - all of this sacrifice at the temple stuff would mean nothing. **So, for now on I am going to be perfect ...**

On second thought, for me, perfect just 'aint going to happen (I am on my computer typing this on a Friday night

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Sabbath, while listening to ITUNES, eating a cheeseburger from McDonald's, **AND** I just had another seriously heartfelt flashback to those hot women on the cruise ship) ... so what the heck do I do? Do you see the dilemma?

Honestly, this is the exact reason that both the Jewish Conservative and Reform movements had been created in the early 1800's. Because it just isn't humanly possible to fulfill these 613 commands and stay clean. Even if it were possible, it certainly isn't easy or convenient in this modern day and age.

BUT, how can we kiss The Torah as it passes by at a bar mitzvah or other wonderful occasion - or even in holy reverence refuse to allow it to touch the ground - but at the same time we pick and choose what to believe from it? We can't kiss The Torah with the same lips that condemn it as being too rigid, litigious, or outdated. Frankly, we cannot honor it as being a holy instrument, and at the same time decide what words G-d meant, sort of meant, maybe meant, or didn't mean at all. Either it **IS** holy, or it isn't. Something **HOLY** that represents a **PERFECT HOLY** G-d should in of itself be, in fact, **PERFECT!** If we are picking and choosing from it what we like and don't like, then we are saying it **ISN'T** perfect. Again, this is all **VERY** hypocritical to me.

I will tell you this, I give the Hasidic and Orthodox Jews a **TON** of credit. There is no intentional hypocrisy here as they do take The Torah very seriously, and they do absolutely all that they can to honor His word as instructed. They will even go to the trouble of a modified form of animal sacrifice with

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roosters to atone for sin ... but even that process ... although highly noble ... given that there is no temple ... it can't be done to the letter of the law. So, even the most devout Jews **STILL** can't be 100% perfect. As far as I know, close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, but here within the confines of the scriptures and according to His holy law, close doesn't count either.

Look, if I know that G-d is real, that He isn't and can't be a liar, that He means what He says, and that sin must be atoned for in His eyes ... so what do I do? Please tell me, how do I get around this issue?

For anxiety ridden Jewish rule followers like me, this is very stressful! You see, this is the exact reason that most Jewish people are so very distant from G-d. Based on The Law of Moses, it is far too complicated or burdensome to be Jewish, and who in their right mind wants to search for a "quasi-personal" relationship with a legalistic, tightly wound, rule happy G-d that is going to merrily burden us with a book full of laws, do's and don'ts, and heavy regulations.

To be Jewish according to Mosaic Law really does take the term of "throwing the book at them" to a whole other level, eh?

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The Talmud: Please Dear G-d, Not MORE Law!

I took a quick break before writing this particular chapter so my mind could finally rest from the over-heating, so I flipped through the cable TV channels. Lo and behold, there was my favorite show "Pawn Stars" from the History Channel. Well, in this episode a man found a Stradivarius violin in the attic of his house. This dude was so excited! It had the Stradivarius logo on it, it was very old, worn, made of the right wood, and the owner of the violin said, "I can feel in my gut that this is the real deal."

If this were a violin actually made by Stradivarius this thing was worth easily a million bucks. But, once the musical instrument "expert" took a flex-camera and scoped the inside of the instrument to see the crucial inner wood workings ... he saw that the interior components of the violin were not correct. With the wrong wood used inside, it was clearly **NOT** made by Stradivarius himself. So, it became clear this was just a very old **copy** of a Stradivarius violin and subsequently it was worth very little. In effect, **anyone** can strap a famous logo onto something that looks official and then dish the thing off as being real.

THAT is exactly what has happened with our Torah and Talmud. You see, in a need to interpret more clearly the cumbersome Law of Torah, back in the First Century A.D. the Jewish rabbis, scholars, and spiritual leaders began to decipher G-d's law into a super large collection of new

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rabbinical writings. That collection of "intellectual thought" by the rabbis is called The Talmud, which is actually now considered as Judaism's holiest book - yes, supplanting The Torah. The collection of Talmudic writings is well over **15,000 pages** of legalized code that was written in order to better define how to observe the **old** code and 613 laws of The Torah. So, what we have done is created **more** volumes of code and law to help us better understand and follow the old law. Sounds a lot like Washington, D.C. to me.

However, when you look more closely, these words were not the divine inspiration of G-d as in the scriptures – they are essentially the rabbis' personal interpretations of what the Jewish law **should** be. Like the fake Stradivarius violin example, the rabbis have gladly stamped an official "G-d" looking logo on the cover of some old volume of books they've written and declared the writings as an original Word from The L-rd.

Again, like when you take a look inside the violin to learn more about its history, value, and real origination, you see that the Talmud and its authority takes great precedence over both Torah and Tanakh in Judaism. Evidence of this may be found right in the Talmud itself, **Erubin 21b (Soncino edition)**: "My son, be more careful in the observance of the words of the Scribes than in the words of The Torah." Or, as leading rabbinic scholar Aryeh Leib stated, "Let the truth emerge from the earth. The truth be as the sages decide with the human mind."

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But consider what The L-rd said in Torah's Deuteronomy 12:32 "**See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.**" I then have to ask myself – why then do we have the Talmud in the first place if the whole premise of our Talmud is **ADDING** to the law! Not only were we defiant and stubborn enough to add to the law (which G-d didn't want us to do so we wouldn't stray too far from His commands), but we were also prideful and self-serving enough to **pick and choose** which of G-d's laws to keep or obey, and then we put the newly created law of men **AHEAD** of the Law of G-d!

In my mind, truth needs to be dictated from heaven **above** ... not from the earth below. Have **you** or a group you've ever known of been wrong about something? What makes you think that a collection of rabbis – each of them with differing opinions and perspectives - have it right! The Talmud is certainly a beautiful and highly **intellectual** collection of thought about how to live one's life as a Jew - but that is all it is - **thought!** Only G-d Himself knows for certain what He wants and needs from us ... and He has revealed that to us through the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures of both The Torah and Tanakh.

There is something wrong in my mind with putting both my earthly and eternal faith in **man's** interpretation of G-d's word – rather than basing my intimate decisions strictly on **G-d's** words. This is especially the case when the written words of "truth" that I'm reading about; revolving my life around; counting heavily on for redemption of my sin; and praying with are the highly suspect philosophical and

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theological creations of mankind. According to research from author Dr. Michael Brown, well over 90% of our modern day Jewish prayers, customs, laws, rituals, bar mitzvah practices, and traditions come from the Talmud and are **man created** – rather than G-d created – and that alone is an issue.

Knowing the majority of our current prayers were written by later day First Century Talmudic rabbis - and given the fact that our prayer is the most intimate, personal, and private thing that a human being could ever do with G-d – how then can we pray these prayers developed by men whose faith pre-supposes as fact that they are smarter than G-d?

In terms of law, there are several additional issues with placing any kind of spiritual emphasis on the Talmud itself. Being that a significant portion of The Talmud (Mishnah) are the **Oral Laws** passed down from Moses (a process described in the Torah) you need to remember that Moses chose many judges from the 12 tribes to preside over the Israelites and to decide issues based on G-d's word or Torah. Because of the large workload, Moses took the advice of his father in-law (Jethro) and essentially taught the selected leaders basic law in order to rectify disputes among the people of Israel – and Moses himself handled the tougher cases.

Ever play the game of telephone? The last person to hear something invariably hears something totally different than what was originally said – who is to say that thousands of

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years later from Moses - the very last judge or rabbi enforcing and teaching the **Oral Law** of the written Torah had the same original view as the Creator of the Law ... that being G-d Himself!

Let's take this thought a step further. In our country's judicial system – has a court ever gotten a case all fouled up and then had the case reviewed or overturned based on Constitutionality? Just look at what we are going through today as a nation with the courts and President Obama's new health care legislation. So, of course this type of issue has happened. These are situations where a ruling (or even a particular legislation) wasn't grounded within the written word of the Constitution – in essence, this is where a given ruling did not match the original wishes of the Founding Fathers.

This is no different than a ruling by a rabbi not being well grounded in The Torah, and where that particular interpretation is no longer in accordance with the wishes of the One who had founded the Heavens and Earth! Therefore, as these rulings become our new found law based on man-made interpretations – many of these Oral Laws then become long lasting societal or cultural traditions. These man-made traditions then in turn, aren't always well grounded in what our G-d commanded in the first place - and ultimately become further and further away from G-d's original intent.

Essentially, these legalized, sanitized, and ritualistic traditions become more and more about HOW to service G-

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d, rather than **WHY** we service G-d ... which is that we love and revere Him! Unfortunately, we end up seeing our faith through the eyes of tradition and ritual instead of expressing and seeing our faith through the eyes of G-d's given truth. To The L-rd's dismay, our prayer that should be an intimate experience becomes far more about the process itself ... so much so that the rituals, traditions, and laws become more a matter of the **MIND** rather than a matter of the **HEART**.

G-d wants your heart, not your mind - which one would you want your kids to love **you** with? The L-rd is no different.

Sin Atonement: Hebrew Style

Honestly, to this point I really wish I were wrong - really, I do. It would be much easier for me to **NOT** believe in G-d - sin all that I wanted - and be on my merry way. But, I do believe in The L-rd and since I can recognize where I fall short based on His moral and legal code, I must find a way to satisfy His call to be righteous in His eyes.

Unfortunately, I ask way too many questions, I refuse to be appeased with trite answers, and I take nothing anyone else tells me at face value. Within the confines and boundaries of Judaism, I refuse to be given answers that don't measure up to a spiritual litmus test. Every possible answer that I've held up to the light and closely examined is filled with flaws, holes, half truths, hypocrisies, and doesn't add up given scripture in The Torah and Tanakh. Shoot, I'd even accept a decent plausible answer from the Talmud (you know, that huge holy book our rabbis wrote to compete with the bar mitzvah book) but there isn't one logical explanation within it. For my own peace of mind, I must then boldly question everything I know to be true until I can find an answer without holes or loose ends.

And with that being said, this is where I want to go back to that freezing cold week on the cruise ship. This is where the key to all of this is at ... there is a **COST** associated with **NOT** following The L-rd ... but there is also a cost **TO** following The L-rd. Hence, the word sacrifice.

Leviticus 17:11

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"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, our Jewish ancestors honored G-d's law and sacrificed animals (lambs, bulls, rams, and doves) to The L-rd for atonement. **EVERY** Jewish family was required to sacrifice - you weren't able to have someone else do it on your behalf. You would bring your lamb (or other animal) for slaughter, and the priest (Levite) would take your sacrificial offering and place it upon the altar for you to make sin atonement. The animal that was slaughtered on one's behalf was not **FREE** - this animal came from their own personal flocks or it had to be purchased directly at the temple. So, there was a real, tangible financial cost associated with this sacrificial process. Not only wasn't it free, but they had to sacrifice their **BEST** animal that was without blemish or spot. This was not cheap!

Now, I want to point out that the rabbis will say that these animal sacrifices were only for our "unintentional" or "accidental" sins. Others will say too that sacrifice wasn't done often enough to even matter that much. Even if this were true (which is debatable), then the mere thought of accidental sins should make us **VERY** stressed. How can I possibly avoid "unintentional sins" my entire life?

Honestly, I should really sit around my house all day in a straight jacket holding my breath to make sure I don't sin by

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accident. Ooops! I was looking for a NY Rangers score and just now - **BY ACCIDENT** - I saw a smoking hot semi-dressed girl on the sports page of the New York Post. In doing that, I somehow flashed back in my head to those gorgeous women on the cruise ship. See, that sin right there would **NEED** to be atoned for.

Ever give your promised word to someone, and then go back on it because your circumstances have "accidentally" changed. Well, that would make your sworn word a lie, which based on His commandment number 9 is sin! So, we can argue about intentional versus unintentional all day long ... either way ... I'd be forced into a life of sheer **PERFECTION**. And, as my wife knows, that just isn't going to happen!

Plus, if accidental sins didn't happen all that often ... then why is there a complete sacrificial system for it? For such an elaborate well developed system to be set up by our G-d - with such massive sections of The Torah dedicated to highly detailed, particular, and specific instructions - then certainly accidental sin must happen enough that G-d put His priests and altars in place to handle that atonement. You think accidental sins happened **more** 2,000 years ago than today?

Look back at my top 10 list of commandment mess ups - I'm pretty darn sure a few of those had happened by accident. With that being the case, I'd be 100% hosed - where is the Holy Temple! Get me a lamb - quick! I mean, have you ever skipped honoring The Sabbath ... uh, by accident? If not, then The Sabbath was skipped by you on purpose ... and

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that is OK? So, sins of **INTENT** that are done with a predetermined **MALICE** and that are in clear violation of His law are less worthy of "blood atonement" than a sin that was done by accident?

Anyone out there have kids? In my house we have a shoe rule - no shoes worn past the front door because I want to preserve the really nice Berber carpet. So, if my 12 year old son walked across the house with muddy shoes to purposefully break the "law" ... I'd have a melt-down fit. But, if he was late for school, hurriedly ran back inside from the bus stop to get his homework in time - and his shoes were real muddy - that would be a clear accident.

Obviously, I'd be much more understanding of the accidental mud getting on the carpet than **INTENTIONAL** mud being on the carpet. So, with the accident, would I tell my kid ... "OK, I know it was an accident and you didn't mean to do it. Go get me something you place a massive value on (i.e. toys instead of farm animals) and then toss it on the burning hot fireplace to apologize to me." But if it was only on purpose, I'd merely say, "Oh, no worries, son. You did it on purpose ... so just tell me you are sorry."

How would G-d be any different here ... you see, this makes **NO SENSE**. Either both situations need an offering for our repentance from the sin, or **NEITHER** of them do. Since, rabbis do claim that there **IS** an offering required for "accidental" or "unintentional" sin ... then there must be sin offerings required for **both** situations!

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According to our own Hebrew scripture, of course there was a special sin offering that had been commanded for **ALL** types of sin. According to Leviticus 16, the priests were required one day a year on the Day of Atonement (or known as Yom Kippur) to offer a goat for the sin atonement of **ALL** the people and **ALL** of their sins. In fact, Leviticus 16:32 states, "This is to be a **LASTING** ordinance for you: atonement is to be made once a year for **ALL** the sins of the Israelites."

So, even if these "accidental" sins were the only ones covered by our repentant **daily or routine** sacrificial sin offerings, there was still this **LASTING** and permanent ordinance from The L-rd for the priest to sacrifice a goat in order to cover any and all sins of "intent" one day a year. So tell me again, as per the Law of Moses, how exactly are my sins of intent covered in the absence of a sacrificial system and the Holy Temple?

Even still, the hypocritical nature of this "unintentional sin" argument is gargantuan. Look, even if a sin happened just **ONCE** in my life by accident, I'd need to find me an animal and get to the holy altar **STAT**. Sin is still sin - and sin no matter how big, how small, how well planned out, how accidental, or even how often it is done ... according to The L-rd it **must** be atoned for. Based on His word, that atonement is only made through the blood of an offering at the altar. That is the only way!

See, that is the thing about accidents. In life, we can buy health, life, auto, boat, motorcycle, home insurance, and

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insurance for almost anything else that has a value. It removes the "fear" of having an accident and we know that someone **ELSE** will assume the cost of replacement for us. Because we have paid the **COST** of the insurance plan, we are able to enjoy our "stuff" and not be forced into a life of fear.

Yet, there is no **SIN** insurance - none! There is not one company to my knowledge that sells it. Now, that I think of it - that would be a very cool scam to place on the internet. Oooh - that was sinful ... but, I digress! One **accidental** sin, and you are then **blemished in the eyes of The L-rd forever** ... I don't think G-d wants us to live our lives that way. There must be more, there must be a way I can have my sin atoned for and not be forced to live in a mental, emotional, spiritual, or even physical straight jacket.

Here is the key point. There must be an acceptable way of atoning for sin that stays right within the confines of the Judaic faith and G-d's explicit directions in The Torah. After years of thought, it has dawned on me that just like the Israelites back in the day had to pay a **COST** of a highly prized animal at the altar for their "sin insurance" of old, we too must pay a personal cost to be free of the bondage of our sin. And, the cost I'm about to describe in the following pages is so very simple to understand, but as a Jew is so very hard to do.

Counting the Cost

If somebody told me that Banana Republic at the mall is giving away \$1 million to any customer that walks in their doors – it would make sense that I'd want to go check it out. I'd especially go check it out if my friends just came back from the mall and told me that it was true – and that there wasn't even a line to get inside!! Wow! What a deal!

Well, how much is your own soul worth to you? Is *that* an acceptable cost to avoid going to the mall? Certainly your soul is worth exceedingly more than the \$1 million – so what if someone is telling you that **Jewish** Yeshua is giving away eternal life to all those that seek? You might think the person is nuts – and that is certainly 100% OK to think that way – but what if they are right? Wouldn't you think that you have the obligation to at least go and check it out – especially if there were no commitment or "hidden contracts" required?

Even if you think that a belief in Yeshua is a bunch of "bubameis" or hooey, then what about checking into that very plausibility for your children's sake? Hey, as a parent, I'm sure that you would want to research whichever schools you send your kids to ... so why wouldn't you check into their eternity?

I remember when I was 16 years old, I was in the car with my mom. It was Christmas and I saw all the bright lights around town - and I asked her a very simple question. I asked, "What is the difference between Jews and

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Christians?" Her short, well thought out answer is one that I have never since forgotten and it has stuck to my ribs like a really bad burger my entire life. She said, "Jews believe that the Messiah is coming and Christians believe that He has already come." The more and more that I research The Torah, Tanakh, and The Talmud ... and the more frustrated I become looking for one single sensible answer about how I can get rid of my sin in the eyes of G-d ... the more that I've come to realize that this is a **HUGE** difference! This is a disparity that literally holds the **difference between life and death.**

Look at it this way, here is the **other** million dollar question for today. If you were to suddenly die tonight, why should G-d let **you** into heaven? On what basis would **you** be allowed to enter into His Holy presence? If you can't easily answer that single question based on The Torah and **WITHOUT** the crutch of phony, self-serving, make you "feel-good" type loopholes ... then you **must** keep on reading this information or at very least search out better answers than what you currently have.

Please forget everything that you know (or even think you know) to this point about a Jewish Yeshua - **right now** - if you were to walk away from a sin that you are currently convicted of inside your own heart, then are you really able to count the cost of **not** continuing your search?

Try this, before I get into bigger details based on scripture, here is a very simple way of looking at the "Yeshua versus

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sin" issue. Suppose you walked into Walgreens and you had zero money in your pockets. But, you really needed a new hair dryer - so you **accidentally** (yep, I threw that "accident" thing in there for good measure) forgot to pay for the item at the check-out counter. What happens? Well, when you attempt to walk through the silver sensor thingies at the front door, everything beeps and security comes to talk with you. Why? Because the price tag on the item has **NOT** yet been removed from the unit. In essence, the hair dryer you "took" has not been "redeemed" in order to clear the front door.

Heaven is much the same way. The L-rd is a righteous, pure, sin free G-d that cannot allow **ANY** sin - no matter how big or small - to enter into His Holy presence. Even if sin were able to enter **near** His presence the very object attached to that un-atoned sin would be 100% destroyed as it could not be allowed to remain intact at His throne. Furthermore, sin of itself cannot enter into His holy presence because it would spread and corrupt eternity the same way it has corrupted the earth. Simply, sin has no place in His eternity!

Therefore, in order for us to approach His gates, His throne, His mercy, and enter into His holy kingdom - the sin tag (or the price of our own sin) must be fully removed from us before we can enter into His peace, rest, and eternity. This is exactly why Yeshua had to do for us what He did on that wooden cross - with the sacrifice of His own blood as the **FINAL** spotless Lamb of G-d - He had removed the price tag of sin from mankind so we can gain full access to the kingdom.

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You see, there are **NO** human bragging rights at the throne. He, and He alone, gets to **BRAG** as **HE** paid the price of sin for us so we can live a life free of debt for our transgressions!

Let's try another way of looking at this. Let's say a 20 year old kid was caught with 25 parking tickets in his glove box and had to stand before a judge. What if when he gets to the courtroom, he finds that the judge is his own father! Even though he very much loves his son, it would be wrong (and a sin) for the judge to dismiss the charges as he must uphold the law. So, what does the loving and benevolent judge do? He takes off his judicial robe, comes right down off the bench ... and pays the fine for his son.

This is exactly what Yeshua did for us - He removed Himself from the judgment seat to pay the fine Himself for **ALL** of His children. **BUT**, it is up to us to accept that He **ACTUALLY** paid the fine in full. Look, the kid in that courtroom scenario could have been petulant and stubborn turning down his dad's loving mercy and benevolence. But, that is a foolish choice to make ... because, according to the law, the fine must get paid!

Here is where we get back to the concept of **COST**. Remember, the Israelites of old had to bear the financial cost of the animal for slaughter at the altar - their atonement was not **FREE**. This is where we as Jews must accept the ultimate cost of dealing with potential conflicts and hurts from family and friends. Yes, this **IS** our cost to

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bear ... any shame, animosity, bad feelings, guilt, and ill-will
... that is **OUR** price of admission.

Like I opened with, we all must worship something in life and everything we put ahead of G-d has a price. The Jewish people have been stubborn since the very beginning, but He gave us a way to access His throne despite our disobedience. He wants to know if you are willing to lay everything down at the altar and come to Him so that you may escape the price of sin.

Truthfully, we simply cannot let fear of lost identity, fear of rejection, or fear of scorn impact our relationship with our Holy Creator. Instead of fearing others, ourselves, or the unknown, we should fear The L-rd who created us, the earth, and the heavens. In the Hebrew scriptures the word "Sheol" - or hell - is used more than 60 times to describe an eternal destination. Hell is **NOT** a new fangled Christian term; it is a **HEBREW** concept! As Yeshua clearly stated in **Luke 12:4-5** "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into (Sheol) hell."

Simply put, fear cannot ever be an excuse for removing one's own human obligation to search for the truth, "**For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**" **Mark 8:36**. Frankly, whether we like it or not - no matter who we know, what good deeds we have done, how nice a person we are, how big our wallets

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are, how much money we gave to the local temple or United Jewish Federation, how much we smile at the grocery store, or what we have accomplished in our lives – we will ***all*** die.

Doctors (and even the most talented lawyers and accountants) agree that 10 out of 10 people will eventually die, and our G-d says **we can't live wrong and die right**. And frankly, much like getting a job here on earth, the day we die and meet our eternity face to face it won't be about **WHAT** we know ... but instead ... it will be about **WHO** we know! Our knowledge about Judaism can't and won't ever save us from ourselves ... only by accepting what Yeshua (Jesus) did for us on that cross as a final blood sacrifice can we be saved from sin.

Our time here on earth is nothing but a vapor, and physical death is an absolute guarantee from The L-rd ... eternity is not! I'm a firm believer that one day my G-d – yes, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - will ask me, "Did you know my son, Yeshua?" I don't want to have to look my L-rd in the eyes and tell Him that I was too embarrassed, too scared, too hung up on myself, too focused on my career, too afraid of risking friendships, too focused on having a good time, too afraid of jeopardizing my important business relationships, or too anything else that would have prevented me from seeking truth, eternity, and my G-d given personal relationship.

Look, if you are still reading this, and you haven't yet slammed the book down and rejected my heated thinking to

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this point - you are to be commended. Something inside you wants to get to the root of the sin issue. And, if you at this point are thinking about tossing the book right into the round file - then please bear with me a little while longer on this short section here ...

At temple, we as a Jewish people will read The Torah portion each Shabbat weekend (yep, that pesky bar mitzvah book) all the way clear through. We start at the beginning of The Torah and during the course of the year read all the way through a section at a time while reading about our sin, laws, disobedience, stubbornness, pride, defiance, and G-d's displeasure with us. Since these portions are usually read in **HEBREW** ... we tend not to notice! **BUT**, we **ALWAYS** skip this Torah verse of **Isaiah 53** ... because we Jews (i.e. rabbis) just don't know what to do with it.

This was written **700** years **BEFORE** the birth of Yeshua ...
please tell me WHO this speaks of:

Isaiah 53

¹ Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of The L-rd been revealed?
² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

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- ⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by G-d,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
- ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
- ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and The L-rd has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
- ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
- ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.
- ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- ¹⁰ Yet it was The L-rd's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,

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and though The L-rd makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of The L-rd will prosper in his hand.

¹¹ After he has suffered,

he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

To me, anything that can't be explained logically and that must be hidden away from someone's eyes, is a key issue and a major red flag. Again, if even a little bit of The Torah or Tanakh is false, a lie, or proven to be untrue - then the whole religion in of itself must be false. You can't pick and choose what parts of your faith to believe. Either the whole book is true because it is the Divine Holy Word of G-d and His prophets, or the book is nothing more than a corrupted false doctrine.

Well, in our Judaic case, the rabbis replaced Torah with our even more burdensome Talmud - so surely that has to be the right response! Hogwash! By my logical reasoning, I refuse to believe that Judaism is a false religion, therefore I must accept **Isaiah 53** as being true. If this scripture is true, then within the continued scope and boundaries of Judaism, the rest of the Messiah/sin puzzle must be followed up on.

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Here is another scripture clue (of literally hundreds) in Tanakh...

Proverbs 30:4

**4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Whose hands have gathered up the wind?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is the name of His Son?
Surely you know!**

The name of His son is Yeshua, and I am so glad that I do know! Honestly, there is nothing **more** Jewish than believing in a Jewish Messiah that was prophesied about by the Jewish prophets. I have not ever, ever - not once - ever denied my Judaism, I have merely become a stronger Jew!

WARNING: continuing to read this information will **NOT** make you a Christian! Much in the same way that reading a little book about being a computer programmer would not make you a computer programmer! But, this material that takes an in depth look at the facts about a Jewish Yeshua will, in fact, make you a much more **informed** Jew!

Honestly, there is nothing **more** Jewish than believing in a Jewish Messiah that was born as a Jew; had died as a Jew; was buried as a Jew; was resurrected as a Jew; had been prophesied about in hundreds of scriptures by the Jewish

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prophets of Torah and Tanakh; and who as a Jew will be forced to judge His own Jewish people based on their **SIN**.

Being born Jewish, here is the dilemma that we are faced with. The problem with being born at all is that you are born where G-d places you. If you are born to a Chinese family, you'll likely be a Buddhist. If you are born to an Iranian family ... you'll likely be raised Muslim. If you are born to a farmer in the Midwest ... you'll likely be raised in some form of Christianity. On the same line of thinking, if you are born to a Jewish family - like I was - then you will likely be raised in some "sect" or denomination of Judaism. Point being, you are typically handed the faith that your family hands **to you** ... so did you choose your faith or did your faith choose you?

If you are being raised in a form of spirituality other than one that puts belief in a Jewish Yeshua at the very core of the faith (i.e. Messianic Judaism or a denomination of Christianity), then you are taking the word of others that Yeshua was a mere prophet, teacher, liar, or some crazed lunatic – but you were not there for yourself – so how can you be 100% sure? That is quite a massive gamble ... if I'm going to put my eternal future and the **future of my children** on the line, I'm going to be sure that I have my historical facts straight and not simply take the truth as it has been handed to me. It only forces me to leave no stone unturned in my search for truth!

Not only that – but if Islam (1.3 billion people), Judaism (15 million people), and Messianic Judaism/Christianity (2.1 billion people) all claim that there is only one true G-d to

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follow ... and if all three of these faiths have their historical and theological roots based in Judaism's G-d of The Desert - then either all of them are wrong in the scenario that there just is **NO** G-d - or by the process of elimination **two** of these three faiths must be **incorrect** in their own teachings and understandings about G-d.

Whether we are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Messianic Jews, or some other form of spirituality - we are all born into this world with warning labels that read "**some assembly required**" – and given that somebody **must** be wrong and the extremely high stakes of needing to get this right - I'd want to double and triple check that I have read my Judaic assembly manuals correctly!

The best I can do is to **continue** to present this information in a factual, logical, and historical manner, and let you, as the reader decide for yourself whether Yeshua's claims that He was the promised Messiah are plausible or not. My goal is not to **MAKE** somebody a Messianic believer – rather – my goal is to make you think about what you believe.

If you walk away from reading this and stay resolute in the Judaic faith as it stands – then G-d bless. If you walk away thinking a bit more about what you believe – maybe even searching for more answers like I have – then even better. I see this information as part of one's **obligatory** spiritual research – I think each faith should offer courses on all the other faiths – just so people realize that they do have a choice.

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People don't have to be what they were born into – I'd even argue that for many people – at least in my case – I was born into the faith of Judaism for a G-d inspired purpose ... to help other Jewish families take a closer look at our own Jewish history and to take a quick glance at our "**spiritual assembly manuals**" (Torah, Tanakh, and Talmud) that have been handed down to us from generation to generation.

The New Covenant

The scriptures are clear that we all have sinned and need atonement with G-d. Scripture in our Hebrew Tanakh Ecclesiastes 7:20 states: "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and **never** sins." Notice, there is no mention here of "accidental" or "intentional" sins ... but rather our "sins" in general. Simply put, whether we admit it or not, and even whether or not we believe in Him as our G-d ... each of us has fallen short in our attempts to do right in the eyes of The L-rd – not one of us has stayed **perfect** and been without a drop of sin - accidental or otherwise!

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, The Torah is clear that G-d removes our sins by **sacrifice** as Leviticus 17:11 states, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is **the blood that makes atonement for one's life.**" This is an essential point to revisit, only the blood of a living creature can make things right between The L-rd and mankind – sacrifice is the foundational core of the permanent covenant (or contract) between Abraham and G-d.

To deny the existence of the **original** sacrificial covenant between G-d and Abraham, would be, in effect, to deny Abraham's existence as biblically stated. Follow this logic. Since he is known as "Father Abraham" - and the father of our Jewish people - if we deny the covenant and who he was

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as the father of our people - then what we have really done is denied our very attachment to the Jewish faith.

If the first covenant isn't real, then follow the types of questions I'd be forced to ask:

- If he wasn't real, and the covenant with him wasn't real - then, as a group, where did our Jewish people come from?
- What were our **REAL** beginnings as a people?
- If he wasn't real, how could Moses and our Egyptian bondage have been real if The L-rd **ACCURATELY** promised Abraham his people would be enslaved for 400 years?
- If Egypt wasn't real - then what the heck are we doing celebrating on Passover?
- If Abraham isn't the father of our people, how did I get to be part of this distinct group that is hated by the world so much?
- Why is even being Jewish important then? How did I get here?
- The 12 tribes came through Abraham's lineage, so am I really a Levite?

ACK!!!! See the problem with that "sacrificial covenant didn't exist" type thinking. If so, then in order to remain attached to the Judaic people that I so well identify myself

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with and to keep my spot warm in the "tribe" - there would be a whole **new** set of questions that would need to be answered!

OK, so now that we agree that was an original covenant, let's look and see where G-d told us a new and improved one was coming! Through His prophets, The L-rd did **REPEATEDLY** warn the Israelites that due to our sin and disobedience a new covenant was coming our way – but in stubbornness our ancestors refused to listen. Many, many hundreds of years before Yeshua, the prophet Jeremiah was sent by our G-d to warn both Judah (south) and Israel (north) that they are responsible for a broken covenant with our Creator.

Jeremiah had made it clear that The L-rd would no longer make a list of **613** rules for people to obey – instead – He would plant those rules on their own hearts so that they would **want** to obey Him. You see, my 12 year old son follows the unwritten rules in my house - yes, even the shoe rule - because he loves me! He doesn't make good choices because he fears me and my iron fist or behave just because I have the rules clearly posted on the kitchen wall (kind of like they do at the community pool). Good choices, a loving attitude, and proper behavior is quite the norm for him since the unwritten rules of the house are placed on his heart - because he loves me.

Jeremiah also made it clear that His people would know The L-rd personally on an intimate level and be able to speak

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with G-d directly (instead of having to use a priest as an intermediary for us at the altar). Jeremiah also makes clear that we can go before Him directly with a repentant heart to seek forgiveness, and that our G-d would offer us atonement for sins. These words are right from the Tanakh:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ "The time is coming," declares The L-rd,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"
declares The L-rd.

³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time," declares The L-rd.

**"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their G-d,
and they will be my people.**

³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know The L-rd,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,"
declares The L-rd.

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"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

To take this decree of a new covenant just a little bit further, some rabbis like to quote **Hosea 14:1-3** where Hosea urges his people to repent and "offer the fruit of our lips instead of calves" as the scriptural reference as to why we no longer need to use the blood of animals at the altar. But, using the words out of the intended context, they are **BLATANTLY** misusing that scripture! That is **NOT** The L-rd declaring that The Israelites were in any, way, shape, or form **FREE** of the requirement to shed blood for one's atonement ... a retraction of the requirement isn't even in, around, or near that scripture's given context. Instead, Hosea was a chosen **PROPHET** just like Jeremiah telling us what was coming once Yeshua's blood was shed!

If your head is spinning now, well hang on tightly then! Not only did The L-rd warn His children through the prophets that a new covenant was coming our way - but The L-rd also promised that in the days ahead He would no longer be speaking to us as a people! Besides the arrival of Yeshua, our Jewish people have not "officially" heard directly from The L-rd through a prophet since Malachi in 400 BC. Yet, the prophet Amos – who prophesized in Israel around 800 BC – promises to the Jewish people in the Hebrew Tanakh:

¹¹ "The days are coming," declares The Sovereign L-RD,
"when I will send a famine through the land—

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not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of The L-rd."

Amos 8:11

As a people we have not heard a single word from our Creator for almost **2,500 years** – it's not hard to figure why so many of my Jewish family members and friends are distant on an intimate level with The L-rd. Frankly, if I didn't speak a word to my child or spouse for **2,500 days** (about 7 years) – I would think that the lack of contact would certainly put some emotional distance between us! Yet, The L-rd has not discontinued the communication in the relationship between Creator and the creation – He has merely changed the rules to meet His own terms ... the terms that He told us were going to change!

As promised for centuries through His prophets such as Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ... our Creator did send us a set of new instructions for blood sacrifice in the form of a new covenant (or new contract) ... and His name is Yeshua.

We don't need to bring an animal to slaughter to atone for our sins, and we don't have to wait once a year for Yom Kippur to roll around in order to tell Him that we are sorry for a laundry list of poor choices that we've made. With the price of sin having been **ALREADY** paid in **FULL** ... we are able to come into His presence as His child and tell Him we are sorry for what we have done whenever and wherever we feel like telling Him – in the shower, in the car, in the backyard – anyplace, anytime!

Malachi: The Last Prophet

Remember from the Torah that our G-d has a huge problem with us putting idols before Him – and that was His number one "no-no" in the Ten Commandments! Any little pagan idol in our lives that we place before Him is sinful disobedience. This isn't pleasant to state, but for sinful disobedience to His laws and commands - especially commandments one and two - G-d Himself in The Torah (Deuteronomy 4:24; 32:22) depicts an eternal punishment (sheol; hell) as The L-rd clearly states that He is a highly jealous G-d or an "all consuming fire" and that "For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below."

As mentioned earlier, the prophet Amos stated The L-rd would no longer be speaking to us as a people - so we must then look at the **FINAL** words that were given to us by prophet Malachi in 400 BC. These are among The L-rd's closing words to us, "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says The L-rd Almighty (**Malachi 4:1**).

Seeing that The L-rd isn't speaking directly to us anymore as a Jewish people, and given that those are His closing words to us as a congregation ... that *isn't* good news! You know, when I was dating and I didn't want to see a girl anymore, I used to give the old "No, it's not you silly, it's me" speech.

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Here, in this case - G-d was in fact breaking up with us as people and He was saying it **IS** us!

The L-rd has moved on to a new covenant where we can commune directly with Him. As such, we as individuals in the Jewish congregation have been invited to follow Him over there at the other covenant if we wish! You see, we must now follow Him on His terms. Like the cost of the lamb at the altar ... we must **SACRIFICE** and pay the **COST** of whatever is blocking us in our lives from seeking Him. No matter friends, family, identity, shame, ridicule, or finances ... that is the price of admission we as a Jewish people must now pay to access His mercy seat.

To me, when I look at the eternal punishments and harsh consequences that were handed out in The Torah for direct disobedience to G-d ... I have to think that our G-d is more than serious about the eternal implications of not following His new covenant. Just to put this view in a little better perspective, the Tanakh ends chronologically with the prophet **Malachi** stating to all the children of Israel in 3:6-7, “I The L-rd do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says The L-rd Almighty.”

Amazingly, The L-rd in fact continues to keep up His end of the original covenant with Jacob's descendants by not destroying all the children of Israel, but given that The L-rd does not change - He is the very same today as He was in

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desert – then I have to think that The L-rd is serious when these are among His final and closing words to us!! It's also ironic to me that in our own Hebrew bibles the words of Malachi are hidden in the middle of the Tanakh ... his verses aren't placed at the end where they should be!

Here is the kicker, if G-d took the indifferent and rebellious attitudes of the biblical Israelites towards Him so very seriously and threatened their eternal destruction – what makes you think that G-d won't punish you for putting other "fleshly" issues ahead of Him?

The Time Frame for Arrival of The New Covenant

To the best that I can figure, here is the reason that Daniel was "downgraded" from a prophet to just a mere "writer" in the Tanakh. Daniel had nailed it right on the head **WHEN** the Messiah was to arrive! While Daniel was captive in Babylon, he prayed that The L-rd would show him how long they would be stuck there in captivity, when Jerusalem and the Holy Temple would be rebuilt, and **WHEN** the Messiah would appear. In **Daniel 9:24-27** The L-rd reveals to Daniel the **EXACT** time frame! Yes, the exact time frame!

It's complicated to break down the language of this scripture into all of its smallest parts and components, but here is enough key information for one's basic understanding. The L-rd tells Daniel in a vision that from the time the decree (order) is given by the king to go ahead with the rebuilding of both Jerusalem and The Holy Temple (as cited in our Tanakh's Nehemiah 2:1-8 the decree had been given by King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in the year 444 BC), that there would be a period of 69 **TOTAL** weeks (each week represents 7 years) until the Messiah was to appear. Accounting for differences in the slightly shorter prophetic 360 day calendar and the longer 365 day solar calendars, these **69 PROPHETIC WEEKS or 483 TOTAL YEARS** (69 times $7 = 483$) would take us right up to the year **33 AD**.

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Hmmm? Who entered Jerusalem declaring that He was the promised Messiah and was nailed to a cross in 33 AD? You guessed it ... Yeshua!

Some highly complex theories that I have read in books and online (which you can certainly on your own "Google" about for more detailed information) have projected this time frame out to be placed on the very EXACT day that Yeshua had made His triumphant entry riding a donkey into Jerusalem at the start of Passover week (yes, the same week He was crucified).

What's more, **Daniel 9:26** continues on to state that after the Messiah arrives and is crucified (or "cut off"), that the Second Holy Temple would be destroyed for our sin and disobedience ... which it was in 70 AD! This prophetic fact makes things very, very messy for us Jews - and you will in a moment see why Daniel, in my opinion, has been downgraded to just a writer! Through this prophecy, as it is written by the prophet Daniel, requires that the Messiah come while the temple of Jerusalem is still standing.

As mentioned, the Second Temple was destroyed in year 70 AD, and currently the spot in Israel where the temple once stood, is the only place in Jerusalem that is not under Israeli control. This holy spot is on Mount Moriah where the Arabs have built their famous Dome-of-the-Rock – which next to Mecca - is the second most holy place in the entire Muslim world. So, for the last 1900 years or so – and on into this present day – the Messiah could NOT come.

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Again, this fact makes things very messy for the rabbis of the time period, and I'd argue is the **exact** reason that the Talmud was put together! Remember, the Talmud (and Oral Law) had been written **RIGHT** after the Second Temple fell in year 70 AD (just as Yeshua had said it would be in Mark 13:1-4). In the roughly 40 years of time between the crucifixion of Yeshua and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, the rabbis (or known as Pharisees) **CLEARLY** state in the Talmud that G-d did **NOT** accept **ANY** of their continued sacrificial sin offerings at the altar in the Second Temple (**b. Yoma 39b**).

Why didn't The L-rd accept the Yom Kippur sin offerings at The Second Temple in that 40 year period of time? Ummm ... because as per our scriptures, 300 fulfilled Messianic prophecies, and a blood stained cross ... Yeshua was the **FINAL** sin offering on behalf of **ALL** the people!

In fact, He as the final sacrificial Lamb, is **THE** reason that there was no **individual** sin offering available to the Israelites for their sins of **INTENT or DISOBEDIENCE** (as previously discussed) ... because the blood of a mere animal isn't good enough to atone for intentional and disobedient violation of G-d's expectations, desires, and laws. Only the blood of Yeshua, the promised One, is powerful enough to get that "sin of intent" stain out!

Back to the Pharisees and The Talmud, all of a sudden, there was a gigantic G-d sized hole in the very foundation of the Judaic faith. The rabbis must have completely panicked as **MANY, MANY** Jews began to follow a resurrected Yeshua -

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despite imminent threats of death for their doing so. And to make matters worse for the Pharisees - G-d wasn't accepting their Yom Kippur post crucifixion sin offerings ... **AND** now the holy temple didn't even exist! Plus, thanks to Daniel, they knew the Messiah was supposed to have already come by that point **and** now He simply couldn't show up unless the Holy Temple was somehow standing. Oy vey! What a pickle!

There was just no easy way out of this mess for the rabbis, in my humble opinion, they had to quickly reinvent the "rules of the faith" in order to explain the massive theological shifts. Look, they knew their scriptures - that was something they were indeed very, very proud of. More, every Jewish male in **EVERY** Jewish household of that time period knew their scriptures. That was something that was done by Jewish men for sheer recreational enjoyment well before we in this modern day and age had our IPHONES and IPADS to mess with. These Pharisees **KNEW** all too well that Deuteronomy 12:32 forbade them from reinterpreting G-d's law by adding to it and/or deleting from it. But the creation of the Talmud had become critically necessary to keep the Judaic faith and their prominent roles in the Jewish community alive.

Consider too that as stated in the Talmud the punishment for disobeying a rabbi (**Erubin 21b**) "Whosoever disobeys the rabbis deserves death." To me, that statement seems like it had been written into the law in order to legitimize

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the rabbinic writings, teachings, new ways of thinking, and newly created laws of how to honor our G-d. Certainly a nice way to make sure that the replacement for that pesky bar mitzvah book would stick!

There is plenty of other double speak in the Talmud. You see, the Talmudic rabbis (Pharisees) are clear in the position that Yeshua wasn't the Messiah, but are quick to point out in the Talmud that the Messiah should indeed have come 2,000 years ago but didn't due to our sin and disobedience (**b. Sanhedrin 97 a-b**)!! Therefore, if He was due to come but chose not to – wouldn't that make G-d a liar as His word clearly states that He would come in that described Daniel 9:24-27 time frame?

If the Hebrew scriptures state that The L-rd “detests lying” – and Numbers 23:19 says that G-d is not a liar ... then how could He **NOT** come as He promised? What decent father here on earth would lie to his children – especially about their own salvation? Honestly, I can't understand the stubbornness to admit what is blatantly obvious – if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck – then guess what – it must be a duck!

As mentioned earlier, in Torah's **Deuteronomy 27-29** G-d spends a lot of time talking about all the blessings that would come our way if we were obedient, and then He goes on to talk about all the curses that we would certainly face if we were disobedient to Him (the list for both the blessings and the curses are far too long to recreate here, but I'd encourage you to go read it over). Yet, ever since the time of

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Yeshua the Jewish people have undergone **HORENDOUS** persecution from the time of the Spanish Inquisition, The Crusades, The Holocaust, and many other horrific times of trial.

I'm in no way justifying the persecution – but - if our Jewish leaders at the time of Yeshua had done the right thing in identifying the blasphemous false Messiah, wouldn't you think that The L-rd's protection of Israel would have **INTENSIFIED**? If the false Messiah was properly identified by The Pharisees – and if we are truly "treasured" by The L-rd (**Exodus 19:5; and Deuteronomy 26:16-19**) – why then has He stopped talking to us as a people?

Let's take the argument of Daniel 9:26 a little bit further - just for grins and giggles. How do we know that the Pharisees (rabbis) and Jewish people knew of Daniel's timeframe? How do we know for 100% sure that the Jewish people had already **ACCEPTED** Daniel's 9:24-27 prophetic timeline **BEFORE** they decided they didn't like the Messiah being this peace loving, miracle working Yeshua guy?

Well, let's start with the simple fact they were, at the time, greatly oppressed by the Romans. They were begging for a deliverer like Moses that would free them from the burden of political oppression. Needing to be rescued and delivered they were keenly aware of the scriptures ... and so too were the Romans. I mean, the Romans themselves had to of known the scriptures. How else do we explain that Herod the Great – the King of Judea – would at one point order his

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troops to massacre all children under 2 years old in Bethlehem? Simple, he feared the birth of a baby that would eventually seize his throne!

Again, remember that **EVERY** Jewish male could recite the words of Torah and Tanakh - without having to look things up on Google! Palm Sunday is proof positive of this fact. As Yeshua had entered the city riding on the back of that donkey (prophecy in Zech 9:9 stated He'd arrive on the back of a donkey and **bring salvation** with Him), thousands and thousands of Jewish people who had already arrived in Jerusalem for the **REQUIRED** annual Passover sacrifices then started declaring Him as King and began yelling "Hosanna to the Son of David," "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of The L-rd," and "Hosanna in the highest."

What does Hosanna mean? The term Hosanna back then was actually a plea for help ... and then the Jewish people gathered in the streets of Jerusalem started waving their palm branches which were a distinct symbol of asking for deliverance from political oppression. As all good Jewish men did, they **knew** Daniel's foretold timeframe and **knew** the Messiah Himself was coming quickly. With the palm branches and pleas of Hosanna, they were very much begging Him for freedom from the Romans. Thus being the very proof that the Jews of that time period were looking for Him. But, they were looking for the **wrong** type of messiah - they were looking for a fierce warrior, not a deliverer from sin.

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Strangely enough, that very same Palm Sunday that Yeshua entered Jerusalem to announce His Kingdom – was the same Sunday known in the Jewish tradition as our “Lamb Selection Day.” As according to Torah this was the **EXACT** day that each individual family was to select the perfect lamb that they were going sacrifice on the following Passover Friday. Ironically, the temple also had a long standing tradition on this very occasion (much like current Passover Seders) that the main doors of the Holy Temple would remain wide open for Elijah should he choose to return that day. Well, the doors were indeed left open for the Messiah ... but the rabbis missed Him.

Strange, huh? As they gathered to fulfill the requirement of celebrating the Feast of Passover to remember and honor their Jewish freedom from the bondage of Egyptian slavery - they wanted freedom again - but this time from the bondage of brutal Roman political oppression. Instead, however, they received their **ETERNAL** freedom from the bondage of their own sin. Funny how many times we don't get what we want, but we get what we need.

In order to "protect the Judaic faith" from our very G-d Himself, the rabbis missed the Messiah and paid dearly. Are you willing to recognize Him as **your** perfect Lamb?

Nope, Not A Prophet ... Not Even Possible!

G-d had a horrible dilemma - He loves His children so very much that He wants to be with us intimately, personally, and commune with us - but we can't be in His presence because of sin or evil – the very same sin that came into the world through the direct disobedience of Adam and Eve. With the undesired barrier of sin existing between a loving G-d and His created mankind, Yeshua came off the mercy seat to pay the price for our sins in order to remove the great divide that stood between us and Him.

Sin came into this fallen world through the direct disobedience of one man, but our grace, mercy, and forgiveness came into this world though the direct obedience of another. If so much sin, pain, and hate could enter the world from the actions of just one individual, then how much more love, joy, hope, and peace would there be from the actions of the other?

I can't imagine not being able to have a life with my own son – I can't imagine him being separated from me and not being able to personally and intimately share in his life. Well, our Father in heaven is no different – and He went to great lengths to provide a way for man to be able to come into His very presence - whenever we desire or so choose - despite our flaws! When our sins increased, amazingly His love for us only increased all the more. As stated perfectly in Romans 5:8, “G-d demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we

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were still sinners, Christ [*which means in Greek the Anointed One*] died for us."

As Moses had delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage, the Jewish people had been taught to believe that the Messiah would deliver them from their Roman oppression. The Jews of that time could not dare consider that the Messiah was here to be passive and die a martyr's death – especially one for the Gentiles (i.e. their Roman oppressors) as well as for the Jew. And let's remember that as stated in Torah's **Exodus 19:6**, the Israelites were originally hand selected by G-d to be a kingdom of priests to all the other nations (their animal sacrifices actually atoned for the sins of the Gentiles before the sacrifice of Yeshua). **Isaiah 49:6** even states to the people of Israel, "***I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.***"

As prophesied by Isaiah 700 years earlier, the Jewish people of that time **could not** and **would not** accept the incredible amounts of evidence that had been in front of them as it flew in the very face of their rabbinical teachings and beliefs. Not only couldn't they believe the evidence and well over **300** (yes, **THREE HUNDRED**) fulfilled prophecies of both The Torah and Tanakh, but they had Him – G-d Himself - right there in front of their very eyes performing miracle after miracle. Let's be sure to remember that the Jewish rabbis **never** once, not ever, dismissed the miracles and healings of

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Yeshua as they have repeatedly recognized these miracles as **fact** in the Talmud.

Yet, our Jewish people are taught by the modern rabbis that Yeshua was either a prophet or a false messiah – but Yeshua stated time, after time, after time that He was the Son of G-d – He claimed repeatedly that He was **equal** to G-d. For just one example, Yeshua stated in **John 14:6**, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."***

To make this issue more clear, when Moses was at the burning bush he asked The L-rd what His name was ... and He responded with "**I Am**" ... so, unlike today, to start off any sentence with "**I Am**" is declaration of equivalence to G-d. Good little Jewish boys just didn't do things like that way back then! Flat out ... our Yeshua left **ZERO** room ... ZIP, NONE, NADA ... for any other form of interpretation!

Any statement made that He was a prophet is a direct teaching of someone **other** than Yeshua Himself. Of all the great religious leaders - Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, and even Moses - not one of them ever once claimed to be G-d (and certainly not one shed their **own** blood to propel their thoughts and ideas). Yet, Yeshua's claim that He was G-d is the main reason why the Jewish leaders of the time (Sanhedrin) claimed that He needed to die.

In essence, by declaring repeatedly that He **WAS** G-d, in the eyes of our ancient rabbis, He was blaspheming The L-rd. Under Jewish law, that required immediate death - but the Sanhedrin had been unable to declare and enforce that

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punishment due to the occupied Roman rule. So the High Priest manipulated the situation by claiming Yeshua was performing His miracles on the Sabbath (which is also considered as blasphemy), and they ultimately forced Pilate's hand and used the Roman leaders to do the dirty work for them.

Well, let's assume that we were in an ancient court of law hearing the testimony of many, many first-hand accounts of Yeshua's life, words, and ministry. Now remember, given that the rabbis pushed hard for His execution by the Romans, wouldn't Yeshua's potential claims of being G-d and His teachings have threatened the rabbis very position as elite intermediaries between the people and their G-d? So, with their jobs, incomes, and of course prestigious social roles on the line ... could that have been a factor in their decision making?

So, it stands to reason, that if the Jewish High Priest had been on the witness stand as a first-hand eyewitness to the accounts of Yeshua and His life ... then certainly this potential motif would taint the High Priest's testimony and make him a poor character witness. Based on that information alone, the testimonies of **ALL** the members of the Sanhedrin would be dismissed in a court of law. And, we want to take their word for it that Yeshua was **NOT** the Son of G-d?

Much like the great writer C.S. Lewis theorizes, given Yeshua's very claim to be G-d, either we believe Him to be

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one of three things: **liar, lunatic, or L-rd** - there are just no other choices available to us – as He never even left the option open to be called a prophet. We will look at these 3 choices in better detail as we move ahead, but in the interim consider these critical words from John (who was one of the 12 Jewish Disciples):

John 3:16-18 "For G-d so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For G-d did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of G-d's one and only Son."

Honestly, The L-rd has placed His word and message upon my heart like a raging fire – so much that even when I try to keep quiet about Him - I just cannot! But, many years ago when I first came to believe in Yeshua I was greatly conflicted for what I had come to believe flew directly in the face of my Jewish faith – and it was certainly in contrast with the expectations and desires of my entire family.

But, the truth is that every ounce of our Yeshua (Jesus) - His arrival, deeds, words, promises, teachings, and massive fulfillment of Hebrew scripture – all comes directly from the Jewish faith itself and is merely the continuation of our Jewish history. Yeshua didn't come to change "who" we are - instead, He came to challenge us to be **better** Jews - and that's what He still expects from us today.

The Passover Sacrifice

Growing up in a Reformed Jewish household, I was unaware of the issues that directly connect The Passover to the resurrection of Yeshua (Easter). I knew the holidays were always close to each other on the calendar (FYI: as an **ANTI-SEMETIC** act, Easter was moved up a week in the third century by The Council of Nicea) – but I never understood how the two days were linked. In fact, I always thought that Yeshua was a "Christian" – which is the absolute furthest from the truth!! Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, died as a Jew, was buried as a Jew, was resurrected from the grave as a Jew ... and will one day return to judge His people as a Jew. And, ironically, for those that hate the Jews - they'd better realize that their ultimate and final judge is **Jewish!**

As mentioned earlier, the rabbis fulfilled prophecy by completely missing the Jewish Messiah, and there are many important issues surrounding the last week of Yeshua's life and death that I'd like to point out. Most of these issues I didn't even realize until long after I became a Jewish believer.

As written throughout the books of The Torah (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) The L-rd commands over and over that the Jewish people are to strictly observe The Passover sacrifices in memory of what The L-rd did to grant us our freedom from the painful bondage of Egyptian oppression. In Yeshua's final days, as previously mentioned,

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He had entered the city at the beginning of that Passover week (or better known as Palm Sunday) to scores of pleas for freedom from Roman oppression.

At the end of that Passover week (and hours before the betrayal by Judas) few Jewish people realize that “The Last Supper” was Yeshua leading a Seder with His disciples. As we do today, at that Seder they reflected on the freedom from oppression The L-rd had provided, and Yeshua promised the freedom to come Matthew 26-28: “While they were eating, Yeshua took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my **blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” The rabbis missed Him!

Few Jews (and even Christians) realize that the cup He offered to symbolize His efforts for us on the cross was the third cup of wine – or known at the Seder meal as The Cup of Redemption. To see the amazing symbolism of this cup of wine more clearly – here are a list of synonyms from the thesaurus for the word redemption: salvation; deliverance; rescue; release; and liberation. Yeshua willingly shed His blood to offer us freedom from the bondage of our sin, and He redeemed us with a painful price. To this day we still offer the “Cup of Elijah” as we wait for the Messiah to walk through our own doors. Yet, as promised, the Messiah had finally come to drink from His own cup! The rabbis missed Him!

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If your thoughts aren't scrambled yet, here is where it gets amazing. The L-rd had provided in The Torah explicit directions for those Jews that were on a journey (trip or vacation) during the Passover. They were still required to sacrifice a Passover lamb for their sins – but as according to **Numbers 9:12** “**They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones.**”

Remember, there were potentially millions of Jewish people there for the Passover on a holiday – and many of them were in the direct presence of “the sacrifice” as Yeshua had been crucified in a highly busy part of town. Incredibly, after Yeshua was on the cross for just a few hours, the Pharisees (rabbis) needed to speed up the crucifixion process because during the holy period of Sabbath and Passover they could not have dead bodies left after sunset.

So, in order to avoid breaking Torah law, the two thieves had their legs broken to speed up the suffocation ... but Yeshua did not have His own legs broken because He was already dead! In fact, **Psalm 34:20** promises out of the Messiah “He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” and **Psalm 22:17** proclaims, “I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.” Despite the intervention of man – and well beyond any human control - The L-rd made sure that His Holy Lamb was prepared as to meet the **highly specific law of Torah** ... the rabbis missed Him!

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The Torah commands that on Passover the sacrifice should begin at 3PM. As quoted in John 19 it was exactly at 3PM on that very Passover Friday - the same time sacrifices had begun for the previous 1,200 years - that hanging on the cross Yeshua said, "It is finished." After having made that statement, Yeshua bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The rabbis missed Him!

At 3PM - when the priests were just about to begin their ritual Passover sacrifices – something **IMPOSSIBLE** happened to the Holy Temple's curtain. The temple curtain separated the "Holy Place" from the "Most Holy Place" – an area in which G-d's Holy presence dwelled. This was the place that rabbis went to pray and intervene on behalf of the people to G-d – man could not come to G-d on their own because of their un-cleaned sins – they needed these "cleansed" priests to intercede on their behalf.

This curtain that separated the two holy areas was so massive that it required 300 priests to move it – the dimensions were 60 feet long, 30 feet high, and 4 inches thick. Yet - despite the massive size of the curtain - at the very moment that Yeshua gave His spirit on the cross at 3PM - the temple curtain had been torn right in two from top to bottom. G-d's Holy presence in the Temple was forever removed – which was never again to be replicated (as mentioned earlier, the Talmud even admits that G-d did not accept their sacrifices after Yeshua's death, and the Jewish people have never, **EVER** found a way to replicate His presence).

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As promised, Yeshua had removed the barrier of sin standing between man and G-d – all of mankind could now know The L-rd and come to Him directly in a new covenant - and this happened right during the annual sacrifices! They were **STANDING** right there ... and the rabbis missed Him!

Going back to just before the crucifixion - as Yeshua approached Jerusalem and saw the city - He began to cry aloud. Because He **knew** that the Pharisees (rabbis) were going to miss Him, He had warned that Jerusalem and the Holy Temple would be destroyed.

As written in Luke 19:42-44 He said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of G-d's coming to you." Forty years later, the temple was destroyed and one million Jews were killed by the Romans in 70 AD ... the rabbis missed Him!

The rabbis were unwilling to accept the blatantly obvious in order to maintain their status quo. Are you willing to risk the status quo and recognize Him as your Passover sacrifice?

No Way! That Resurrection Thing Couldn't Have Happened!

If nothing else written to this point gives you good cause for consideration, then these next sets of points are where it really all rests – for this is the very foundation for the Messianic believer. The key question becomes - did the resurrection really happen? If it didn't happen, then there is NO cause for any fuss about this Yeshua. But, if it **DID** happen - then with my eternity hanging in the balance - all bets must be off!

Yeshua spent three years spreading His message through His travels and the travels of his Jewish disciples – and the very basis of His teachings were that He would die and then rise again on the third day to ascend to heaven. Let's first begin with this dilemma ... how can a man base His entire 3 years of teaching on something as wild as dying a painful, horrific, and very public death - and then live again to tell about it three days later? If you are going to do something like that, you'd better be pretty well confident that you can pull it off!

Let's look at some of the core facts surrounding this resurrection issue. Yeshua was beaten, whipped, spit upon, punched, smacked, cursed, mocked, kicked, forced to carry His own cross uphill, crucified between two thieves, and then finally pierced with a Roman's sword in his right side in order to spill His blood (which was against the general procedure of crucifixion and yet again served to fulfill our

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Jewish prophecy) – even Jewish scholars, historians, and rabbis don't dispute that these very things happened.

Then, as **OUR** prophecy states, as a poor man He was buried in the tomb (cave) of a wealthy individual who had donated the sepulcher – which was then blocked with a 4,000 pound stone that had to be moved into place with huge levers. On the third day after His death, the rock was not only moved from the entrance – but pushed far away from the tomb as if it had been lifted and hurled. When looking at the gravesite, only the grave clothes remained – no human body to be found.

With that being stated, here comes a whole slew of radical thoughts. Some are my own, and some are adapted and expanded upon from a short and very easy-to-read book called "***More than a Carpenter,***" **written by Josh McDowell.** This book was written by Mr. McDowell as an attempt to **DISPROVE** Yeshua as the Messiah ... but He wound up believing! This is a wonderful resource for anyone wanting to take a deeper look at the facts surrounding Yeshua's life, death, and resurrection.

Anyhow, the Roman soldiers had placed the wax seal of Caesar on the tomb – and every Roman soldier knew that the seal was sacred. If it had been broken (which would only happen if the stone were moved as it is kind of like placing a seal on an envelope) then the Roman soldier is guilty of treason and put to death. Breaking the Roman seal was one of 18 reasons a soldier could be put to death – the other

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really big one – was leaving one's post while on guard duty. Well, we know from scripture that once the stone had been moved, many of the soldiers fled – knowing that they were in danger. So, with a broken seal of Caesar - and having left their posts - this was going to be a very bad day at the office!

From information given in Matthew 27, many skeptics claim that the Roman guards had fallen asleep and that while they were sleeping the disciples came and had stolen the body. There are **MANY** problems with that story of the guards falling asleep. The obvious one is that the guards knew better and could potentially face death for doing so. But, the other big factor is that these Roman guards were well trained, highly lethal assassins. They were trained to kill in a three foot radius, and their fearless fighting skills were solely responsible for the massive extension of the Roman Empire.

So, I ask – how is it possible that these peace loving disciples – who had **FLED** and **HID** for their own safety when Yeshua was taken into custody by the Romans – all of a sudden had found the strength and guts to take on a full Roman squadron? Also, how come not one disciple died in a scuffle with these trained warriors? How did they move this massive stone and not **WAKE** the guards? What, not one guard from the whole squadron could have stayed awake? For that matter, the guards fell asleep exactly on the famous **third day** – very the day that was the basis for Yeshua's teachings? You would think on the third day that they would have been even **more** vigilant in their duties.

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What's more, all the Pharisees had to do was show the head of Yeshua – just display His body on a cart rolling through Jerusalem – then the entire Messianic movement (and Christian faith) would have been squashed instantly. But they couldn't do that ... because they couldn't find the body.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, as well educated Jewish members of society – these 12 disciples were taught from early childhood that the Messiah would ultimately come to free the Jews from Roman oppression. They didn't fully understand that Yeshua had to die in order to free the Jews from the bondage of sin – not the bondage of oppression. Given the history of Moses and how he led the people from bondage in Egypt, it's not hard to figure why the Jewish people at the time thought that the Messiah would deliver them in the same manner from the Romans.

These disciples were set to help Him form a political march on the Romans to free the Jewish people – but that was **NOT** why He had come. At first, they were in it for the ride – what a really cool deal they had going - as per the scriptures - they were even fighting over who would get to sit at the right and left seats of His soon to be established throne. Essentially, their reason for following Him should have **STOPPED** right there the very second He had died on the wooden cross – or, why in their right minds would they go steal the body?

Well, maybe they would steal the body in order to help Yeshua prove He could defeat death – just as mere accomplices to validate what had been taught. Let's assume

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for a moment that it is true (even amongst all the reasons it **couldn't** have happened) – let's pretend that the disciples had stolen the body. Then why in the world would they continue this hoax – and then continue to preach in the streets of Jerusalem.

Further, why would they make their initial focus that of preaching exclusively to Jewish people when they know they are risking certain death? Each of these disciples (except for John) died horrible martyr's deaths as they were crucified, killed by the sword, stoned, beheaded, or killed with arrows. If they were in on the stealing of the body, they would have known it to then be a lie. Why then would they **KNOWINGLY** die for a lie?

What's more, as they all died at separate times over a period of a lifetime, you would think that certainly one of them would give up the story and save their own necks. In fact, Peter had been crucified **UPSIDE DOWN** at his own request – he deemed himself unworthy of dying the same way his Master did.

What also blows me away is that, according to scripture, Yeshua's half brother James wanted **NOTHING** to do with Him at all during His 3 year ministry - which was very embarrassing for a rabbi. However, after seeing Him **AFTER** the resurrection, James went on to be a prominent leader in the newly formed faith. **BUT**, here is the kicker, James was thrown off the top of the Holy Temple to a nasty fall of over 100 feet ... when he didn't die from the impact of the fall ...

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he was beaten to death by his enemies! All of this because he refused to deny his belief in his resurrected brother!

With the behavior of these faithful believers, and the other **500 documented witnesses** that are mentioned in the next section ahead ... then certainly this Yeshua **must** have appeared to them as the bible says. There would just be no other way for a person to go from a hiding coward to a willing martyr.

Over 500 Eyewitness Accounts

I had to ask myself - if I was not here when Yeshua was here – and if I need to base my beliefs about my salvation on the testimony of my Jewish ancestors who were in fact there – then I need to carefully weigh the evidence presented.

Should I believe the Pharisees (who had never dismissed the miracles, but disapproved of them being performed on the Sabbath), or should I believe the 500 people that risked a martyr's death seeing Him after He arose?

In the several months following Yeshua's resurrection, He had appeared to many people – and these persons were fiercely put on trial by the Jewish Pharisees. These people had a choice – either denounce that they had seen Him and be set free – or instead – confirm what they had seen and face the threat of crucifixion. Not one of them wavered – each of them stood resolute that they had seen Him after His death. What's more, as previously pointed out, the Pharisees had **everything** to lose by Yeshua's arrival – He came to remove the very purpose of their existence.

The Pharisees were the most eminent and prestigious in the land of Israel – they were placed there within the community to be G-d's intermediaries. But, under the new law or this **new covenant**, G-d came to remove the need for a rabbi to pray **FOR** you – so in effect – they were standing to lose their role, position, power, prestige, and place within the Jewish society. So, then who should I believe – those who willingly risked their lives for the truth – or those who

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needed to cover the existing truth with lies and manipulation to keep their societal position?

All we can really go on is the testimony of others. And let's not forget that a person caught preaching the word of Yeshua (Jesus) in Israel or Rome could be sentenced to death – so I must wonder how many Jewish people remained "Jewish" simply for their own protection – even if they believed Yeshua to be The Savior. I also have to wonder, of those Jewish people that remained silent believers – how many of those are direct ancestors of Jewish people today? For that matter, how do I know if one of the ancestors in **my** lineage believed the words of Yeshua or teachings of other Jewish-Christians, but in fear had kept their beliefs to him or herself? If that be the case, then taking the word handed down to me from generation to generation is an even bigger gamble than I had thought!

So, I must continue referring back to the testimonies of those who were there – and there is no greater testimony than that of Saul from Tarsus, who eventually became the Apostle Paul (apostle means "One Sent"). Saul was a son of a Pharisee and he was a Pharisee himself, Saul even possessed Roman citizenship which was a huge honor. Saul was fanatically devoted to Judaism, and was known to follow the exact letter of Jewish law.

There was not a person in all Israel that was more knowledgeable or more observant to the Judaic law than this man. Saul, as guided by his devout rabbinical training,

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also sat on the very same Sanhedrin council that had condemned Yeshua to the cross. Furthermore, Saul of Tarsus was widely known as a fierce and blood thirsty persecutor of those that followed Yeshua after His death – and Christians (who were originally called "The Way") lived in **extreme** fear of this man.

Setting out for Damascus, armed with the necessary documents, Saul was sent to seize the followers of Yeshua and to bring them back to stand trial in Israel. On the road to Damascus, he had an encounter with The L-rd Yeshua – and in this encounter Saul's sight was taken from him. The L-rd told Saul to continue on to Damascus, and so he did led by those that were with him. Upon arrival, a disciple named Ananias was sent by The L-rd to heal Saul. Ananias told Saul that Yeshua who he had met on the way to Damascus had sent him to restore his sight. From that moment forward, Saul (now called Paul) became one of the biggest supporters of Yeshua!

We don't know all of the details about what happened on Saul's journey – but we do know that it changed every aspect of his life. He went from an intolerant, bitter, persecuting, religious bigot – to a kind, patient, loving, enduring, and self-sacrificing individual. Not only did his own character change, but his own spiritual message had changed as well. Paul went from a bitter antagonist to a determined protagonist of the new covenant.

Paul immediately began preaching the word of Yeshua in the synagogues – despite the threat of death. Paul's intellectual

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convictions had 100% changed, and his experience with G-d forced him to openly acknowledge that Yeshua was the Messiah – even though it was directly against the Pharisees' Messianic ideas. Paul spent 25 years of physical suffering and being in service of Yeshua – he even was beaten many times to near death, flogged with the 39 lashes like Yeshua on five separate occasions, tortured, jailed, shipwrecked, faced starvation, and he eventually died a painful martyr's death as he was beheaded – all of which began with a sudden change based upon having seen the risen Messiah.

All of these people were willing to accept death as merely the **COST** of the price of admission to His Kingdom. Yes, it pales in comparison to any cost that I've had to pay. In fact, these martyrs would agree with me that **NO** cost would be too high for our own salvation.

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Traditions

Many well intending Jewish people hold the false notion that by lighting Friday night candles on the Sabbath or by attending an annual Passover Seder with the family ... that they will become righteous or just in G-d's eyes. Traditions are certainly wonderful as a method for remembering solemn and important occasions, and they are fantastic for getting the whole family together. But, they are also a very dangerous thing as they become blinding to truth, spiritually crippling, and a formidable barrier to reaching **HIS** merciful heart.

Honestly, with rules and traditions we get far more caught up in **HOW** to honor our G-d instead of focusing on **WHY** we honor Him. When we honor The L-rd it must come from our hearts, not our minds. Look, would you want your kids to honor you with pure, honest, sincere, passionate, heartfelt words from their very own lips, or by sending you a fruit basket sampler each month because they felt like they were supposed to?

Isaiah 29:13

The L-rd says:

"These people come near to me with their mouth
and honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
Their worship of me
is made up only of rules taught by men."

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That is exactly what we are doing as a people today, and this is exactly what Yeshua criticized the Pharisees for when He had recited the above words of **Isaiah 29:13**, and then had added His own commentary **Mark 7:8-9** "You have let go of the commands of G-d and are holding on to the traditions of men." And He further said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of G-d in order to observe your own traditions!"

Remember, as pointed out by scholar Dr. Michael Brown, most of our traditional and current Jewish law comes directly from the Talmud (not the Hebrew scriptures of Torah and Tanakh). Over 90% of our modern day prayers, rules, traditions, and bar mitzvah practices come straight from the writings of a post-crucifixion Talmud. These rituals were written down far well after Yeshua's death - and quite oddly enough - the ones writing down these traditions and rules for worship were in fact the **Pharisees**.

These words were not the divine inspiration of G-d as in the scriptures – they are essentially the rabbis' interpretations of what Jewish law **should** be. Honestly, how can we pray these prayers intimately from our hearts and honor these traditions as a method for accessing the throne of G-d when they had been fabricated by men that pre-suppose as 100% **FACT** that Yeshua wasn't the Messiah?

Again, don't read me wrong, traditions are a wonderful thing to honor - we have many in our household. We just can't let these be the vehicle through which we worship our G-d. The

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L-rd wants our hearts and to hear sincere praises from our lips ... not see that we can just follow our man created rule books.

Even if the Talmud were the “voice of G-d” – which it isn’t as it is merely the voice of man – there isn’t one single prophecy in the Talmud that has **EVER** come to pass. But, putting aside countless other historical prophecies about many nations that have proven true - The Torah and Tanakh combined have well over 300 accurate prophecies surrounding the Messiah alone! Which should be the spiritual authority? Which one is proven reliable? Obviously, G-d’s word is superior – and that’s the one I’m going to base my salvation on.

When reading through our Torah and Tanakh, without question, G-d took His own commands pretty seriously. In this new covenant (or new contract with His mankind) G-d had reduced the number of commands from The Torah to just ONE simple and all encompassing rule that would make things easier on all of us ***John 3:16 "For G-d so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."***

He isn’t asking us to follow a laundry list of 613 cumbersome laws and isn’t asking us to go through the trouble of offering continual animal sacrifices before Him. And, He certainly isn’t asking us to follow the traditions created and taught by men. Instead, He is simply asking us to get over our own emotional hang-ups, spiritually binding traditions and rituals, and to sincerely invite Him into our personal lives.

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The L-rd just wants us to love Him with all of our strength from inside our own hearts (Luke 10:27) ... that's it. Nothing more.

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Free Will

Inviting Yeshua into our personal lives is an act of our very own free will - which is a gift that G-d gave us at our creation. He gave us the free will to choose right from wrong, good from evil ... and the same free will to seek a relationship with Him or to choose to be separated from the relationship. Not only did G-d give us the awesome gift of choice or free will here on earth, but He also decided that we should choose our own eternal destiny.

I've heard people tell me over the years that they just can't believe in a G-d that would send people to hell. Well, spending eternity in hell isn't **HIS** choice ... it is ours! Frankly, what sort of loving G-d would force people to be with Him forever? That too makes no sense! Do you want your spouse to be with you because he or she truly loves you - or do you want him or her to be with you because they are **FORCED** to be in your presence?

Much the same, a loving G-d is just not going to hold us captive in His holy eternity against our **OWN** will. G-d doesn't want little "robotic-like" beings formed in His image worshipping Himself – rather, The L-rd wants people to want Him! That is why we were created as beings in the first place! Our G-d desires to be loved and He wants to pour out His love on you.

Look at it like this, if you have kids, I assume that you "made" your kiddos because you wanted to be with them and because you wanted them to experience your love.

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Well, would you want your own kids to love you because you **FORCE** them to love you ... or because they **WANT** to love you of their own desire? G-d is no different.

Since The L-rd created spiritual beings for the purpose of expressing actions and feelings of love (to both Him and to others), then those beings must have complete free will in order to express that love. Loving someone or even "something" is a personal choice that we make on our own accord – it is virtually impossible to have feelings of "love" without free will. The L-rd isn't going to make someone love Him – He is not going to tamper with our free will. But, for as long as we live on this earth, He will do everything He can to get our attention!

Of course, this free will allows room for possibility of those beings rejecting G-d and His plans. If we choose to reject G-d here on earth, then we, at the very same time, are choosing to spend eternity separated from Him. From G-d's perspective, there are only two kinds of people in the world. Those who say to Him, "Thy will be done," and those who say to Him, "My will be done." Therefore, if we say, "G-d I don't want you in my life," then our G-d says, "OK. I don't want you in my heaven for eternity."

According to the scriptures, "the wages of sin is death." It's a given spiritual law that can be suspended no more than any other laws G-d has put in place ... like gravity and time. You don't eat, you die. You don't breathe, you die. You jump off a cliff, you die. You swim with sharks, you get eaten. You

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jump off a really tall building, and the law of gravity will certainly take care of you. You might say "hell doesn't exist" as you jump off that building, but you're still going to get splattered when you hit the bottom! Yep, fire burns. Gravity kills. Water drowns. And whether you believe in hell or not ... your sin will still damn you.

What's interesting to note is that gravity itself is necessary or we'd fly off into space. Water is absolutely vital for sustaining life, and fire is a necessary tool for human survival. These cosmic laws in themselves don't absolutely kill. Yet, it is the willful and cognizant defiance of these laws and properties that can kill. G-d's laws don't kill. They are life, given in order to preserve life. It is when man defies G-d's laws that death results.

Simply, if someone is obstinate enough to not eat, stop breathing, jump off a great height or swim in badly shark infested waters despite what everything tells them.... their body's hunger, gasping need for air, fear, physical observations, signs, common sense, and even warnings from people ... well then, who can stop them! G-d doesn't doom them ... it's their choice. It's always been about choice.

Our G-d loves us so much that He came down from Heaven to pay the fine for us – as foretold for thousands of years by the Hebrew prophets. He loves us so much that He came down to earth to be beaten, whipped, flogged, cursed, mocked, spat on, humiliated, and to die a bloody and gruesome death ... just so people wouldn't have to face

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eternal judgment without Him. To me, that's a G-d of great compassion and mercy.

Our Creator will never, **EVER** stop attempting to wedge his way right into the very forefront of our lives – if for no other reason than because there is great sorrow at the prospect of eternal separation from His presence. To put it mildly, if G-d **IS** peace, joy, love, hope, grace, mercy, compassion, rest, and light - then those wonderful attributes simply **CANNOT** exist in hell. That is precisely why hell **IS** hell ... because G-d's holy presence is **NOT** there!

Yet, His presence in my own life is very real and tangible ... and my life will never be the same as before I knew Him. For as much as He has shown and done for me, I just don't ever need to understand the reasons for "how" or "why" He set up the sin system the way that He did – He's G-d and He can set up the rules any way that He wants! What right does the "creation" have to dictate how the Creator sets up His own kingdom?

He's a just, holy, and righteous G-d – and because of the power of free will - sin in this world is very real (just look around us these days – and I'd argue all evil human activities can be tied right back to free will). In The L-rd's eyes sin is sin – no matter whether it's a simple white lie, a lustful thought, or as serious as a murder. Sin cannot come in His presence, and He found a way to cleanse us before Him. In my own finite human mind, how can I ever truly understand His reasoning for the development of the "sin purification"

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system ... I'm just glad that He was long suffering, patient,
and He refused to quit on me.

His Treasured Possession

In Malachi's day (the final Jewish prophet who lived more than 400 years before Yeshua), the Israelites had complained greatly that others among them who did not honor G-d or keep His commands were **STILL** prosperous and had appeared to be blessed – so then what is the point of taking the far more difficult route and following The L-rd! Hey, look around us - there are plenty of highly prosperous Jewish people ... and they have **ZIPPO** belief in The L-rd ... period.

As a response to His Jewish congregation in Malachi 3:17-18, before "breaking up" with us, The L-rd makes clear His closing words to us in reference to those Israelites that do fear The L-rd, keep His commands, and Honor His name. The L-rd states "They will be mine," says The L-rd Almighty, "In the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve G-d and those who do not."

Albeit incorrectly buried in the middle of the Tanakh - these final closing words from The L-rd are recorded in our own Hebrew bibles – written 400 years before Yeshua and talking about a day or time of judgment. What fascinates me about these words is that despite all our historical and current rebelliousness as a people, G-d still does consider us His own

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treasured possession – not necessarily as an entire nation, but instead as His individual children who choose to serve or choose not to serve Him.

As with the clear expectations of the Torah's blood covenant (or contract), He still does keep us accountable for making Him the number one overall priority in our lives – and one day when we must account for our lives before Him – The Lord will show us the great distinction between those Jewish people that knew His son Yeshua and those that didn't. Ultimately, G-d is true to His promise and G-d still does treasure the Israelites just as He did 2,000 years ago ... but we need to be obedient to Him, put aside our pride and fears of lost identity, and accept Yeshua as the new blood covenant for the atonement of sin first!

Remember, since we were not there ... we must go on the testimony of those people that were there. We simply cannot rely upon the word of other people as sheer fact that Yeshua wasn't the promised Messiah. As discussed earlier, there was no better eye-witness than Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Recall he was the extremely devout Pharisee that had fiercely persecuted the Jewish followers of Yeshua. Then after a dramatic encounter with G-d he became a follower of Yeshua himself ... despite the repeated physical torment and threats on his own life!

Paul is responsible for a great deal of the biblical writings in the New Testament, and these are his own personally written words from Romans 2:5-11, "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing

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up wrath against yourself for the day of G-d's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. G-d will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and **who reject the truth** and follow evil [i.e. sin apart from Yeshua], there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil [sin]: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For G-d does not show favoritism."

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As the famous writer C.S. Lewis declares, when we look at the basic facts and evidence we must declare Yeshua as being just one of three things: **liar, lunatic, or L-rd.**

1. Liar

He simply can't be a liar if what He said was in fact true. Not one thing Yeshua ever declared was counter or conflicting with the prophetic words of either Torah or Tanakh, and defying all human logic He followed through on the promised resurrection. There have been over 40 major claims by people to be the foretold messiah, but not one has fulfilled even a *single* prophecy! Yet, Yeshua had been able to fulfill well over 300 prophecies of Hebrew scripture; right down to the very letter of the law!

To put these 300 fulfilled prophecies in a little better perspective, author Josh McDowell in his book "*New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*" cites the statistical work of Dr. Peter Stoner. Dr. Stoner makes the incredible point that the probability (or odds) of fulfilling just **48 of the 300** prophecies would be a staggering **ONE in 10 to the 157th power!** These are the odds for just 48 of the 300 completed prophecies! So, if He did what He said He'd do, and did it **ALL** as had been promised by Torah, Tanakh, and Himself - then He can't be a liar.

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2. Lunatic

Well, would you die for a crazy man? Case closed. Many, many that personally knew Him went to their deaths proclaiming He was Messiah. Plus, as previously discussed, the testimony of the Pharisees is highly suspect due to their potential motif. So, crazy He wasn't!

3. L-rd

He could **NOT** have been a prophet, as He said He was G-d. Therefore, this is the only option left available to us!

*****Who do you say Yeshua is?*****

As it has been foretold by the prophets, it is pretty clear to me that the ancient rabbis missed the promised Messiah. Look, if prophecy states that the rabbis were going to miss the Messiah (i.e. Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 53:3), then why in the world would we even look to them in the first place for direction on this critical issue?

Our scriptures foretell that our rabbis would be **BLIND** to the Messiah and miss Him completely. Think about it like this for a moment. For the messiah under consideration to actually be THE Messiah, then according to our scriptures the "builders" of the temple must reject Him as the

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"cornerstone." So, logically, when the rabbis had rejected Him ... doesn't that actually seal the deal and then make Him the promised Messiah? To accurately fulfill the scriptures - and to **NOT** make a liar out of The L-rd - the rabbis by literal default **HAD** to miss Him in order for Him ... to be Him!

I've gone to a lot of baseball games in my life, and we have all heard some yahoo in the stands yell at the umpire something like, "How could you miss that call ump! You're blind!" Well, this is exactly the same thing here with our rabbis and promised Messiah ... but the only difference is that this isn't a game where we get to play again another day ... this is the difference between life and death. We have allowed foretold **BLIND** umpires to call a spiritual ballgame for us, and because of a badly blown call, an eternity without the presence of G-d awaits us.

You see, that is the thing. So many Jewish people know that something is spiritually wrong, they can feel the G-d shaped hole living inside them. Remember, we as Jews were factory designed to worship Him - and that is built into our very DNA. What happens so often is that Jews search out other religions to fill that G-d shaped hole, and I have met so very many of them that have turned to Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Wicca, and some new age religions. **BUT**, they refuse to look at Messianic Judaism or Christianity for answers because they have been taught by their own faith that it just can't be that Jesus guy!

I completely understand the fact that for the last 2,000 years horrendous persecution has been done to our very own

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people in the name of Jesus Christ (but again, I **URGE** you to read in **DEUT 27-29** all of the "If-Then" clauses of both the blessings and curses in the Mosaic covenant). All I can tell you is that those were not real Christians. Those were not Christians that had ever read a single ounce of their own scripture, nor ones that truly knew the love of G-d The Father.

Real Christians have a deep, sincere appreciation for the Jewish people. Real Christians are the ones who stuck their necks out and put their lives on the line to help the Jews in The Holocaust. Real Christians know that The L-rd promised (Genesis 12:3) to bless those that bless the Jew, and to curse those who curse the Jew. Real Christians fear their G-d in holy reverence and know that they are expected to bless and keep Israel. Real Christians **PRAY** for the peace of Israel and protection of that holy nation. Real Christians help our Jewish people make Aliyah to the land of Israel. Real Christians are truly thankful for both the Jew and the Judaic faith. For without their own Judaic roots, there would be no salvation available for the Gentiles!

The New Testament, again written by Jews, talks about how Gentiles are "grafted in" to our lineage of Abraham by their own acceptance of the Jewish Messiah. The Judaic faith is the very foundation of the Christian faith, for without the Jew ... there is no earthly and eternal blessing of Messiah. For the real Christian, the Jew is a true reflection of the love of G-d.

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But again, for the Jew, accepting Yeshua in light of persecution and potential scorn from family, friends, or business associates is the very price that we must pay at the altar. As a people we have failed the test of our hearts, and this is the very sacrifice that we must now lay at His feet. Whatever holds you back from Him and His presence - money, self pride, self identity, scorn, rejection, fear - simply just isn't worth the cost of your eternal soul. Whether you like it or not, death is inevitable, and so too will be the question by our G-d, "Did you know my Son?"

Many Jewish people that I've talked to have fallen into a deadly trap. They look at the evidence, and they decide that Yeshua had to be the Messiah, but for fear of scorn or lost identity, they stop short of accepting Him personally. As taught by some misguided preachers which I will not name, these Jews will tell me that even if Yeshua is in fact G-d or the Messiah, they "don't need a new covenant" because they have the original covenants with both Abraham and Moses.

I'd argue that they are partly right - let me break this down a little bit and make this more clear. **Romans 11:29** says, "For G-d's gifts and His call are irrevocable." Which means both good news **and** bad news. The partial good news is that since G-d never retracts a "calling" or the gifts that He has given His people, that means both of those original covenants are still **ACTIVE** and **ALIVE** today. The bad news, however, is that our "call" as Jews to be His **CHOSEN** priestly and holy people (and the serious consequences for **NOT** doing so) are also **UNCHANGED**.

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See, when you look at the original Abrahamic covenant - there is not one single clause about **SALVATION**. That **PERMANENT** covenant between G-d and His people only refers to gaining the land, wealth, prosperity, and for Father Abraham there would descendants of his too numerous to count. Again, not one single mention of our eternal salvation - that clause only appears in the blood covenant with Yeshua. To obtain salvation, we must "**UPGRADE**" to the new covenant as that was not included in the original package!

This original covenant with Abraham has been left standing for two reasons. First, G-d promised it would never be removed - and that is a pretty good reason. But, the second reason is that the greatest test of one's heart comes during times of prosperity. When we are prosperous, we just don't see a need for G-d. If we can buy pretty much anything, then what do we need G-d for?

When we are prosperous, we are far less prone to evaluate ourselves - we become desensitized to recognizing our own sin and our standing with G-d. With prosperity and material abundance we feel very confident, safe, and satisfied - we feel like we can lean on ourselves and our own resources instead of leaning on G-d. In times of prosperity and material wealth, we fail to be pushed into any form of spiritual obedience. Again, we have failed the test of our hearts.

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As an example, I have a family member who was in the hospital years ago with a potentially deadly disease. To which the spouse said to me, "Not to worry. I can afford the best doctors. We are going to be OK." But, the response G-d really wanted to hear was, "Ask me. I will help you. And of course you will be OK."

I'm not saying here to **NOT** use the best doctors (and the person ended up making it through) but G-d wants us to fall to our knees and seek His help, love, and council. Look, it is easy to rely upon our own personal contacts and financial resources, but G-d wants to be our **main** contact and resource. When we have abundance, G-d quickly gets phased out of our lives and hearts ... just like He promised He would be (Deuteronomy 8:1-19).

So, we see that the material blessings of the original Abrahamic covenant still exist today - and how they **BLIND** us to the truth. And, if you are really wanting to cling to that Mosaic covenant - instead of upgrading to the new blood covenant - remember that Mosaic law is active today as well. That covenant from the desert was an "**IF-THEN**" covenant. G-d says that "If you do this" then "I will do that."

Among those serious "if-then" clauses, He promises in both **TORAH AND TANAKH** our earthly and eternal **DESTRUCTION** if we disbelieve in Him, and if we choose not to obey and follow His **613** given laws, rules, and commands. So, how badly do you still want to cling to that **ACTIVE** Mosaic covenant? As I've previously shown, without the blood

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covenant of Yeshua that includes specific clauses for salvation - we cannot ever fully follow His commands!

The scriptures tell us that there is a "veil" that covers the hearts and minds of the Jewish people that blinds or dulls us to seeing the full realm of spiritual truth. This "veil" that keeps the truth hidden from our hearts, minds, and eyes only becomes fully removed when we invite Yeshua into our own lives. Once we accept what He did on that cross as the final Lamb to atone for our sins, and we ask Him into our very hearts ... only then are the spiritual blinders totally removed. And, once that is veil removed, you will be amazed at how clearly you will see the things of G-d!

Consider this scripture from **John 9:39-41:**

³⁹ Yeshua said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

⁴⁰ Some **Pharisees** who were with Him heard Him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

⁴¹ Yeshua said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

What Yeshua is really saying here is that if you claim you **can** see spiritual truth, but you can't see Him - then you are guilty of your sin. But, if you were truly blind of your own sin - which you and G-d both know you aren't - then you wouldn't be guilty.

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Please refuse to accept the "spiritual truth" as you have been blindly told by your faith, your family, and your rabbis. Unfortunately, we as a Jewish people are truly a spiritual case of "the blind leading the blind." Desire Him, choose Him, accept Him, and invite Him into your world. If you come to Him on His terms, He promises to make a way for you through the potential social consequences of choosing Him and His love. Look, I can tell you from experience that it might not be an easy or short road to haul ... but I do 100% guarantee that you will have such joy and peace in your life, that it will make the journey more than worth it.

Unlike some people want you to falsely believe - there is **NO** conversion process. No classes, no formal prayers, no formal ceremony, no prescribed place and/or time, no magic words, and no required group to join. The only thing you must do is "convert your heart" and allow Him full access there. You see, the original Abrahamic covenant required circumcision of the **flesh** - but the new covenant requires a circumcision of the **heart**. A changed, repentant heart that seeks His will is what The L-rd truly desires.

Pray this prayer out loud with me:

"Yeshua, I want you in my life. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of my sin before you. Right this moment I open the door of my heart and life to you in the best way that I know how. I trust you as my L-rd and Savior, and please make me the type of person that you created me to be. In Yeshua's name, amen."

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If you read this prayer with all of your heart, may G-d continue to bless your path ... you are on your way to an amazing journey! Cling to Him, revel in His loving presence, and just keep asking Him to direct your steps.

Potpourri of Answers

In this section there are some other answers that I want to give that just didn't seem to fit in the context of everything else that had been written. These are the answers that I have given to people over the years on several topics. Many of these are additional "traps" that we as Jews fall into.

I'M JEWISH: I CAN ONLY HAVE ONE G-D!

True. You are Jewish, and you are **still** Jewish ... and you **still** have **ONE** G-d! We know The Trinity consists of The Holy Spirit, G-d The Father, and Yeshua. Well, The Holy Spirit (or known as Holy Ghost) is mentioned specifically **three** times in the Hebrew Tanakh (Psalms 51:11; Isaiah 63:10-11), and He is referred to as "The Spirit of The L-rd" several dozen times throughout The Torah and Tanakh.

So, here is how my logic goes. If a Jewish person says, "I can only have one G-d." Well, I hate to tell you - but you already have **2 out of the 3**. With that many references to The Holy Spirit and the "Spirit of The L-rd" - then how do **you** explain having 2 G-ds?

This is where we have to look at the Hebrew word "one" much more closely. When we recite the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel! The L-rd is our G-d, The L-rd is one [**Echad**]!" The one in that sentence is referring to a oneness in unity (**Echad**), not a oneness in absolute total or number (**Yachid**). The Hebrew word "**Yachid**" would be used

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to refer to a oneness in number (like if you were counting); and is NEVER used as a reference to G-d!

Here is how I can best explain this - using sports. Sports seem to make sense to people. If you like the New York Yankees - how many players are on the team? Counting the full roster, there are 40 players, plus the coaches, and when on the field there are 9 players out there at a time. That's a lot of people to make up **ONE** team!

You see, the New York Yankees would be referred to as "**ECHAD**" - a plural form of "one" that makes up a unity. Whereas, each individual player, would be referred to as "**YACHID**" - as one person in total number. For example, how many first basemen are out on the field at one time? Of course, just **ONE** (YACHID). With ECHAD, all of the parts (or players) make up the whole team as a single unit. Furthermore, each player on that team performs a unique role that allows the team to function collectively as a unit. Same with The Trinity - each part of The Trinity performs a specific role.

MAIMONIDES (RAMBAM)/RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Many Jewish people have been taught to rely upon this great thinker's Medieval writings as the basis for when/how the messiah would finally appear to us. For most Jewish scholars, "The 13 Principles of Faith" are used as the modern day blueprint for messianic arrival. This man was **ASBOLUTELY** a great philosophical thinker ... but we get

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back to the **SAME** arguments that I have made over the Talmud. Rambam **NEVER** claimed that these were the words of G-d - never not once did he **EVER** say the magic words ... G-d said!

So, this makes his writings and works just more thought - the thought of men. Again, additions and subtractions to the law are prohibited as per Torah (Deuteronomy 12:32); this is just more rules/laws/theories when G-d specifically said **NOT** to do so. Plus, this is a man who lived from 1130-1204 AD ... so he never met Yeshua or His original disciples personally. He had the same problem we have today, that of basing his thought on religious boundaries, accepted practices, and someone else's prejudiced testimony.

Further many Jews tell me that our Jewish people don't believe in a resurrection of the dead. Well, our Maimonides **DID** - and he is the guy Jewish scholars base the arrival of messiah on. Rambam's 13th Principle of Faith is that of ... yep, you guessed it ... resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, theologians on all sides of the faith argument agree that The Pharisees held as a very core belief in resurrection from the dead. **PLUS**, Elijah the Prophet in the book of 1 Kings 17:19-24 refers to a boy that was raised from the dead by the power of The Living G-d. So, in a nutshell, resurrection of the dead is clearly a Jewish thing!

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES: HOW DO I KNOW THEY WEREN'T FAKED?

Many people ask, who is to say that the words Isaiah wrote 700 years before Yeshua arrived had not been changed by people over the years? How can I know that this is the true and unadulterated word of G-d? Well, in 1947 a complete manuscript of the book of Isaiah (along with hundreds of other biblical manuscripts) had been discovered by a Bedouin shepherd. These scrolls - known as "The Dead Sea Scrolls" - were found in jars in a cave above Khirbet Qumran.

These manuscripts are written in Hebrew by a Jewish sect of devout rabbis and date back to as early as 200 BC. These scrolls had been hidden away by the Jewish leaders as the Roman army advanced in AD 66-70 to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple; murder over 1 million Jewish people; and force Jews to scatter and flee Israel (all as Yeshua had predicted). Plus, these scrolls have been proven to be authentic by scholars and scientists. Amazingly, the text of these scrolls is ***identical*** to the modern day text of Isaiah that we read in our bibles today. So, the words of Isaiah 53 are the same today as they were ***before*** Yeshua's arrival!

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**WAIT! THERE ISN'T PEACE ON EARTH! HE CAN'T BE
MESSIAH!**

That's what He **CAME** to do ... but was rejected by His people. If He had been accepted, maybe things would be a much different story! Of course, G-d knew His Son would be rejected - as the prophecies indicate that well in advance of His arrival. Plus, hours before His death, Yeshua in The Garden of Gethsemane had prayed that there might be another way around going to the cross ... so He knew exactly what was coming.

BUT, G-d **WILL** honor this promise of peace on earth. When Yeshua arrives for the second time (the Jews are looking for His first arrival), He will then at **THAT** given time arrive with millions of angels as a **WARRIOR** and place His feet on the Mount of Olives to put an end to the Battle of Armageddon. With His second return to earth, there will be a 1,000 year reign of peace. So, in theory, this "peace on earth" prophecy is one **yet to be fulfilled** - but this will come to pass with countless other prophecies regarding The End of the Age.

**HOW COME I DON'T HAVE TO FOLLOW THE 613 LAWS
WHEN I ACCEPT YESHUA?**

Yeshua said He came to fulfill the law and to bring the law to completion. Once we accept Him as Savior, the law is placed upon our hearts. As mentioned earlier, at that point we make good choices, obey, and live a life based on His will ... because we love Him. As far as sacrifices at the altar are concerned, those were a "band-aid" approach to cleansing

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us from sin. Yeshua, as the final sacrifice, is the permanent fix!

ARE YOU A JEWS FOR JESUS? THEY ARE A CULT!

I can't even begin to tell you how many times I've heard that question - from family members alone! No, I am not currently an active member of Jews for Jesus - but they are **NOT** a cult. They are simply a religious based organization dedicated to spreading the word of Yeshua primarily to Jewish people. They are an organization of Jewish believers in Yeshua that love The L-rd and desire for others to find salvation in Him. They are not a religion.

WHY DO YOU WRITE G-D and L-RD?

Many of my Gentile friends who have read this book have asked the question about the use of words G-D and L-rd. The answer is simple, in the Jewish faith to fully spell out the name of G-D is disrespectful because that spelled out name can be erased or defaced.

Deuteronomy 12:4 states it is forbidden to erase or destroy God's name. When printed, you can spill things on it, tear it, shred it, delete it, throw it out, mark on it, tear it out of the book, etc. So, the name is written out in a way to protect the Name.

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Resources

These are the resources that my wife and I have found to be useful in our journey, and they are surely a great place to find more detailed answers.

Books by Dr. Michael Brown (www.askdrbrown.org)

Dr. Brown is a brilliant Messianic believer, and has amazing answers to the questions that most Jewish people ask. These volumes of books are a tremendous resource for those needing more clarity on the questions that you have.

1. Answering Jewish Objections To Jesus - Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.
2. Our Hands Are Stained With His Blood.
3. What Do Jewish People Think About Jesus?

Books by Josh McDowell

Josh McDowell was a self-professed atheist and started out writing these books to **DISPROVE** Jesus as being The Messiah. These books do a great job of presenting evidential facts in a logical and easy to understand manner.

1. More Than A Carpenter. Recently revised 2009.
2. The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict. 1999.

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Books by Lee Strobel

Just like Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel too was a self-professing atheist. Mr. Strobel had sought out to investigate and disprove Jesus. After his intense research, he was forced to come to the final conclusion that Jesus is in fact the Messiah. Lee Strobel's research is **DEEP, THOROUGH, and AMAZING.**

1. The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus. 1998.
2. The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity. 2000.
3. The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward G-d. 2008.

Teen Study Bibles

I know this sounds crazy, but I honestly found teen study bibles to be the easiest to start out with. As Jews seeking truth, both my wife and I used them for years! They are a great help as scripture is broken down into its smallest components, and presented on an easy to understand level. By reading the scriptures in this format, it answered much of the questions we were having. Further, once you have mastered the basics of biblical understanding, then adult study bibles are much more clear.

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1. NIV Student Bible by Phillip Yancey and Tim Stafford.
2002.
2. Teen Study Bible (New International Version) by Author Zondervan. 2004.
3. Teen Study Bible by Lawrence Richards and Sue Richards.
2008.

Adult Study Bibles

1. NIV Life Application Study Bible by author Zondervan.
2005.
2. Zondervan NIV Study Bible. 2008

Novels

1. Betrayed! by Stan Telchin. 2007.
2. The Last Jew of Rotterdam by Ernest Casutto. Purple Pomegranate Productions. 2002.

Other Books by Alan Caplin

