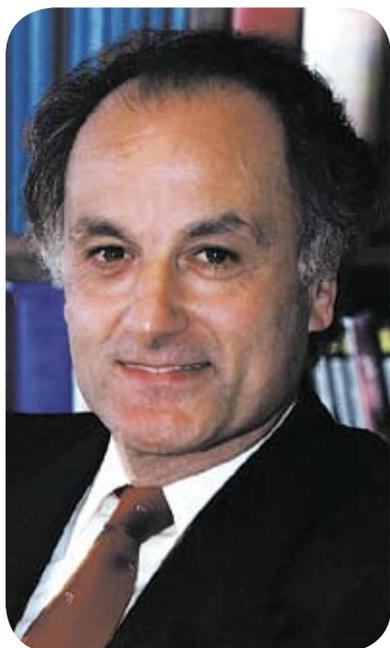




Who is a Jew?

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This question

disturbed the founders of modern Israel and still annoys the Israeli administrators, as well as the rabbis from all sides. Even many Christians with their ideas of “spiritual Jew” and “new Israel” are not clear on the matter. A clear and definitive definition has not yet been reached. The question remains suspended and tragically open.

Can a Jew be a Jew and yet

ignore or even reject the Torah? Could a Jew be a Jew and not believe in God? Could a Jew be a Jew and yet be an unrepentant bandit, an active and zealous member of some mafia, or a professional criminal? Can a Jew be a Jew and yet be anti-Israel, supporting Palestinian terrorism against the Jews? Can a Jew be a Jew and yet embrace the Buddhist ideals of the Marxist ideology, or be an animist, a pagan who treasures some strange but fashionable idol? The answer to all these unusual questions is unanimous and unclear. Yes, a Jew can be a Jew and yet deny the value of the Torah and of the Mosaic ethics, and even question the very existence of God; he can be a Jew while embracing strange philosophies and ideologies, and joining the worst gangs or clubs.

But if a Jew discovers that the so-called New Testament contains spiritual gems, and he is convinced by its message, even though it has been written by pious Jews; and even if in adopting its truth he feels more Jewish than he had ever been, more Jewish indeed than his Jewish friend, or even his orthodox father; and even if the discovery of this “wonderful news” turns

him into a more faithful observant of the Torah in keeping Shabbat, eating Kosher, learning Hebrew, and loving Israel, identifying with her destiny and suffering the pains of anti-Semitism, yet,—puzzling paradox—he will no longer be considered a Jew by the very people who responded positively to the questions above. This is what is challenged in this special issue of *Shabbat Shalom*. The Messianic Jews have had the courage to challenge the traditional clichés and compel Christians as well as Jews to redefine themselves. Certainly the articles and interviews will not please everyone. We will hear Alex Schlussler and Stan Telchin, both Messianic Jews and powerful leaders in their communities, pondering their problems, their experiences, and their hopes. But we will also hear from the Jewish side, with Rabbi Harris-Shapiro who asks the right questions and unveils the Jewish embarrassment. We will hit here the heart of the Jewish-Christian dilemma. Who knows? Perhaps in the process we may finally understand and somehow solve the mystery of this riddle: “Who is a Jew?”