

Jewish thoughts on Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah

It has been said that Jews who believe in Jesus have abandoned the Jewish institutions and separated themselves from the Jewish people, but isn't it the other way around? Ancient and even recent history seem to bear out the fact that Jewish believers in Jesus were intentionally isolated from mainstream Judaism. Today, Jews who believe in Jesus are told they have abandoned their Jewish roots and will eventually cease to be Jewish. Lionel Koplowitz, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews is typical of Jewish leadership in this analysis: "It is a fallacy to suggest that one can be both a Jew and a Christian. Throughout history those who have become converted to Christianity have, immediately, or after a lapse of time, ceased to be Jewish. The separation of Christianity from Judaism in the first century may have been a tragedy; it was, alas, inevitable." Not only is their future as Jews denied by those representing the Jewish institutions, but their motivation for accepting Jesus is seen as less than honorable. Eugene Borowitz, writing in *Reform Judaism*, points out, "The demographic precariousness of the Jewish people and the reality of antisemitism taints every convert—out as one who seeks self—gain by joining the oppressors, casts aside the proud record of Jewish accomplishment, and makes it more difficult for others to carry our traditions forward. In the post-Holocaust era, converting out is in Emil Fackenheim's luminous phrase, giving Hitler a posthumous victory. Such rhetoric seems self-serving at best since such leaders appoint themselves judge and jury in excluding Jewish believers from the community.

**Reform Judaism, "Are We Too Soft on Apostates?" by Eugene B. Borowitz, Summer 1996*

Reasons for Excommunication

- uttering the name of God in vain
- luring another person to sin [claiming Jesus to be Messiah]
- refusing to testify before a court at the allotted time
- selling nonkosher meat as kosher meat
- marrying a non-Jewish individual

One Excommunication rule-The Talmud forbids coming within six feet of a person who has been excommunicated

Excommunication-was commonly referred to in the Torah as herem. The biblical form of excommunicating indicates any person or thing that was removed from the community, because it was made sacred by God or perceived as a disgrace before God. After the Babylonian exile, the term herem began indicating the act of excommunicating people who disobeyed the law or authorities. If the elders and rabbis of a community believed a person to be disobedient, the offender was punished by being forced into isolation, removed from the community at large. The excommunication could last anywhere from a day to a lifetime, depending on the urgency of the convicted act. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary]