



Missionary Impossible, an imaginative video and curriculum guide for teachers, educators, and rabbis to teach Jewish youth how to recognize and respond to “Jews-for-Jesus,” “Messianic Jews,” and other Christian proselytizers, has been produced by six rabbinic students at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati. The students created the video as a tool for teaching why Jewish college and high school youth and Jews in intermarried couples are primary targets of Christian missionaries. Featuring a wide-ranging cast, the film is shot in various campus, home, and youth group settings.

Simulated dramas underscore the peer pressure and insecurities Jewish youths may face during encounters with cult recruiters.

The video presents four riveting yet engaging vignettes which pose genuine situations where Jewish youth may encounter missionaries, how they might respond, and then how they should respond. By utilizing actual Jewish college and high school students as well as rabbinic students rather than professional actors, the video works well with its intended audiences, according to Dr. Cook, “since the viewers can more naturally con-

tations, programming ideas for camps, and material on recognizing missionaries. In order to prepare viewers for missionary tactics, the curriculum guide also presents Jews-for-Jesus material and Biblical texts that are often corrupted or mistranslated to endorse messianic cults.

The emphasis is on the conceptual framework and practical strategies Jewish youth can realistically internalize to render themselves virtually immune from missionary encroachment. More so than other anti-missionary materials available, this production empha-

answers can serve as an incentive for Jews of all ages to deepen and enrich knowledge of their faith,” Dr. Cook observes. “The video’s culminating message is that the Jewish vibrancy of our camps, of Israel, and of our observances and spirituality is a compelling reminder that nothing missionaries offer can match the substantive excitement of what the Jewish experience and legacy already afford us.”

The video and guide have been tested, and are recommended, for synagogue religious schools, adult education courses and retreats,

Missionary Impossible

A video and curriculum guide, teaching Jewish youth how to recognize and respond to missionaries, created by HUC-JIR rabbinical students.

This video developed out of a Fall 1998 course on Christian Missionizing taught by Dr. Michael J. Cook, Sol and Arlene Bronstein Professor of Judaeo-Christian Studies. Rabbinical students David Burstein (C ‘01), Frank DeWoskin (C ‘00), Anthony Fratello (C ‘99), Scott Hausman-Weiss (C ‘99), Dan Moskovitz (C ‘00), and Joanna Tract (C ‘99) created the video. Rabbi Samuel Joseph, Professor of Jewish Education at the Cincinnati School, co-advised the video’s script and accompanying curricular guide.

“Missionary Impossible” is the name of the commando team of rabbinic student actors in the 45 minute video who teach Jewish youth how to recognize missionaries and, together with other actors, model how best to respond to proselytizers.



Students watching the *Missionary Impossible* video

nect and identify with those in the film.” Despite the sober subject, the video manages to be highly entertaining, in places very humorous. Adult viewers say they have found themselves remarkably enlightened, particularly parents who can now better comprehend both the approaches of missionaries and how more effectively to alert their youngsters.

In addition to presenting lessons and exercises to accompany the video vignettes, the curriculum guide includes discussion questions, an exercise on the differences between Judaism and Christianity, an exercise on Freedom of Religion and its limi-

Frightening Facts

- Over the past 25 years, over 250,000 Jews worldwide were converted by missionaries using deceptive tactics.
- Over 600 missionary groups are actively working to convert Jews in North America, spending more than \$150 million annually.
- The annual budget for “Jews for Jesus” is over \$12 million.
- According to Gallup and Harris polls, there are over 70 million “born again” Christians in North America.
- According to a 1990 Council of Jewish Federations study, over 600,000 Jews in North America identify with some form of Christianity.
- Evangelical Christians have established over 250 “Hebrew-Christian synagogues.” Only 20 such “synagogues” existed 20 years ago.
- In Israel, there are over 40 “Messianic Congregations” and two “Messianic Yeshivot.”

(From Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, *The Jewish Response to Missionaries. Counter-Missionary Handbook*, Los Angeles: Jews for Judaism, 1996.)

sizes conceptual understanding, and does so in ways that are easily assimilated.

The video and the curriculum guide conclude with positive, affirmative Jewish cultural and religious celebrations and texts, encouraging viewers to learn and experience more of their authentic Jewish heritage. “Realizing that they may not have all the Jewish

UAHC camps and *kallot*, secular college and high school classes, and Jewish youth programming of all sorts.

Missionary Impossible
(the video and curriculum guide)
is available for \$20 at:
HUC-JIR College Store
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH, 45220-2488
phone (513) 221-1875, ext. 322.