

PRAISE FOR *IDENTITY THEFT*

There are some of us Gentiles who love Jesus, love Jews, love Jesus as a Jew, and realize we were drawn into an Hebraic faith when we became Christians, and we have long hoped for better literature to serve our cause. Much that is written about Jesus as a Jew is a scolding distribution of blame rather than an ennobling call to truth. Ron Cantor has changed this. He uses fiction, humor, a bit of fantasy and a time traveler's imagination to tell us a tale that ought to be told. He makes us know Jesus anew. I am grateful; and I hope he is forerunner of a new tribe on the rise.

STEPHEN MANSFIELD
New York Times bestselling author

Ron Cantor is not only married to one of my favorite people on the planet, he is also a friend and co-laborer in Messiah for well over two decades. In his book, *Identity Theft*, you will find him witty and clever as well as insightful as he shares Jewish roots from a totally unexpected angle. I was pleased to discover that *Identity Theft* is an engaging page-turner! I believe you will find this book to be pointed as well as helpful, and you might even catch yourself becoming an agent in restoring Messiah's true identity!

PAUL WILBUR
Recording artist
Integrity Music

Ron had my rapt attention from page one of the Introduction! And what a great title, as Ron effectively portrays the identity theft of the centuries—that Jesus has been robbed of His Jewishness! Tragically, many of those who professed to believe in Him would have put Him in the gas ovens of Europe had He lived during their lifetime.

DON FINTO

Author, *Your People Shall Be My People*

Former senior pastor, Belmont Church

Nashville, Tennessee

Ron Cantor's new book, *Identity Theft*, is as riveting as it is revelatory and as entertaining as it is enlightening. With the unique vantage point of a Messianic Jew living in Israel, Ron gives you a guided tour of history from the pages of the New Testament to the Holocaust and then back to the Cross for an extraordinarily powerful portrayal of the Messiah's sacrificial death. Buy a copy for yourself and one for a friend!

DR. MICHAEL L. BROWN

President, Fire School of Ministry

Concord, North Carolina

Host, national radio talk show, *Line of Fire*

Author, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* series

I've known Ron for a number of years and have always enjoyed his ministry. When I read *Identity Theft* I was captivated by the story. I couldn't stop reading until I was finished. What a must-read for anyone wanting to be part of an incredible journey to faith in the Messiah!

DR. EVON G. HORTON

Senior Pastor, Brownsville Assembly

Pensacola, Florida

How ingenious to embed a powerful teaching in an engrossing novel of a Jewish man's search for the truth! Many Christians today are experiencing a longing to know more about their Jewish roots, which are so foundational to all followers of the Messiah. But to really understand Christianity's Jewish heritage together with today's Jewish culture and mindset, Christians must know both the biblical narrative and the story of the Jewish people over the past 2,000 years, as well as how it has been so influenced and even dominated by the Church. In *Identity Theft*, Messianic communicator Ron Cantor has written the book that will give you this information in unforgettable portraits from first-century Jewish believers to the tragic wanderings of the Jewish people up until today.

ARI AND SHIRA SORKO-RAM
Founders, Maoz Israel (www.MaozIsrael.org)
Senior leaders, Tiferet Yeshua Congregation
Tel Aviv, Israel

Not just dramatic, but exhilarating! An easy-to-read story that draws non-Jewish readers into Jewish consciousness and Jewish readers into Jesus's consciousness. While many novels distract people from life, this one contains a life-changing message that can transform a reader's life. Happy to recommend.

DR. JEFFREY L. SEIF
Chair of the Jewish Studies Department
Christ for the Nations Institute
Dallas, Texas

This much-needed work is important for all seekers of truth. Though I am not much of a fiction reader, I quickly

found myself engrossed in Ron's manuscript and unable to put it down. *Identity Theft* is a great book for both those who recognize the Jewishness of our Messiah as well as those who've never truly considered His identity. As we enter into a season of unparalleled anti-Semitism, we must remember that our Messiah was born into a Jewish home, lived as a Torah-observant Jew, died as King of the Jews, and is returning as the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah."

SCOTT VOLK
Pastor, Fire Church
Charlotte, North Carolina
President, Hineni International Ministries

I first met Ron Cantor in our local congregation in Washington, DC, decades ago. It seemed readily apparent he would emerge in a leadership role, and this has happened. Now we serve together in Maoz Ministries (Israel), where he is the winsome televised messenger of God's good news of the Messiah.

His recent book, *Identity Theft*, artfully explains the ancient schism between Jews and Christianity. This he does not through dry theology, but rather through a captivating novel.

The book will fascinate both the Jewish and Gentile reader with its portrayal of the heartbreakingly true treatment of the Church's treatment of God's ancient people. The robbing of Yeshua (Jesus) of His cultural identity has resulted in a terrible and lengthy tragedy to the Jewish people. Ron's book seeks to restore to Yeshua His original ethnic context. The story helps us to better understand and reveals many, many things.

PAUL LIBERMAN
President, Messianic Jewish Alliance of America
Publisher, *The Messianic Times*

Ron Cantor has written a fast-paced novel that powerfully defends the faith. It reflects the understanding of many Messianic Jewish leaders in Israel and speaks the Gospel with simplicity and clarity to Jewish people who do not yet follow Yeshua. This book will open up minds and hearts—not only for Jewish people, but for many in the Church who will be enlightened as they see the first followers of Yeshua in their historical Jewish context.

DR. DANIEL C. JUSTER
Executive Director, Tikkun International
President, Messianic Jewish Bible Institute
Jerusalem

Ron Cantor adds his voice to the still small choir singing out the truth of the story of Jesus, His Jewish life and times, and the tragic opposite effect the rewritten story has had upon the Jewish people and Christians. As an orthodox Jew, I have not been convinced by this book to change my own life, but I hope Ron is not “preaching to the choir,” and Christians who feel uncomfortable with their understanding of Jesus will pick up this volume and discover biblical truths that they never knew existed. *Identity Theft* is an important milestone in the journey that Christians must take in times such as these, and by extension, it impacts Christian-Jewish relations as well.

GIDON ARIEL
Christian-Jewish friendship cultivator
Founder of the Facebook group “Jews Who Love Christians
Who Love Jews (and the Christians Who Love Them)”
and www.root-source.com

From the time I picked it up, I didn't want to put it down. Ron Cantor has ventured into "no-man's land." Is it possible that the bridge between Judaism and Christianity is where truth resides? This book will challenge Christians to reexamine their theological presuppositions and take a much different view of the origins of their faith. It will also challenge the Jewish community to reexamine their 2,000-year-old wound inflicted by Gentile hypocrisy and take a new look at this "Yeshua of Nazareth" in His real clothing!

RICHARD FREEMAN
Messianic Rabbi, Beth Messiah Congregation
Houston, Texas

Ron is a passionate communicator, teacher, and storyteller. I had the joy of serving with Ron in both Ukraine and Hungary where his teachings on Jewish roots, history, and Messianic theology blessed many. In this creative book, Ron takes you on a journey of his Jewish people's experience through the centuries. You will be enlightened and encouraged as you see the "family story" told in a very new way. I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

WAYNE WILKS JR., PH.D.
International Director, Messianic Jewish Bible Institute

If Jesus is both 100 percent deity and 100 percent human then it's essential to understand what kind of human He is. He is certainly not a blue-eyed Scandinavian as some have portrayed Him. For more than a decade, Ron Cantor has been passionately revealing the true face of Jesus to Israel and the nations. As Ron shows how Jesus came to earth as a Jew, many

truths in Scripture become more comprehensible and alive.
You'll be enriched by Ron's insights.

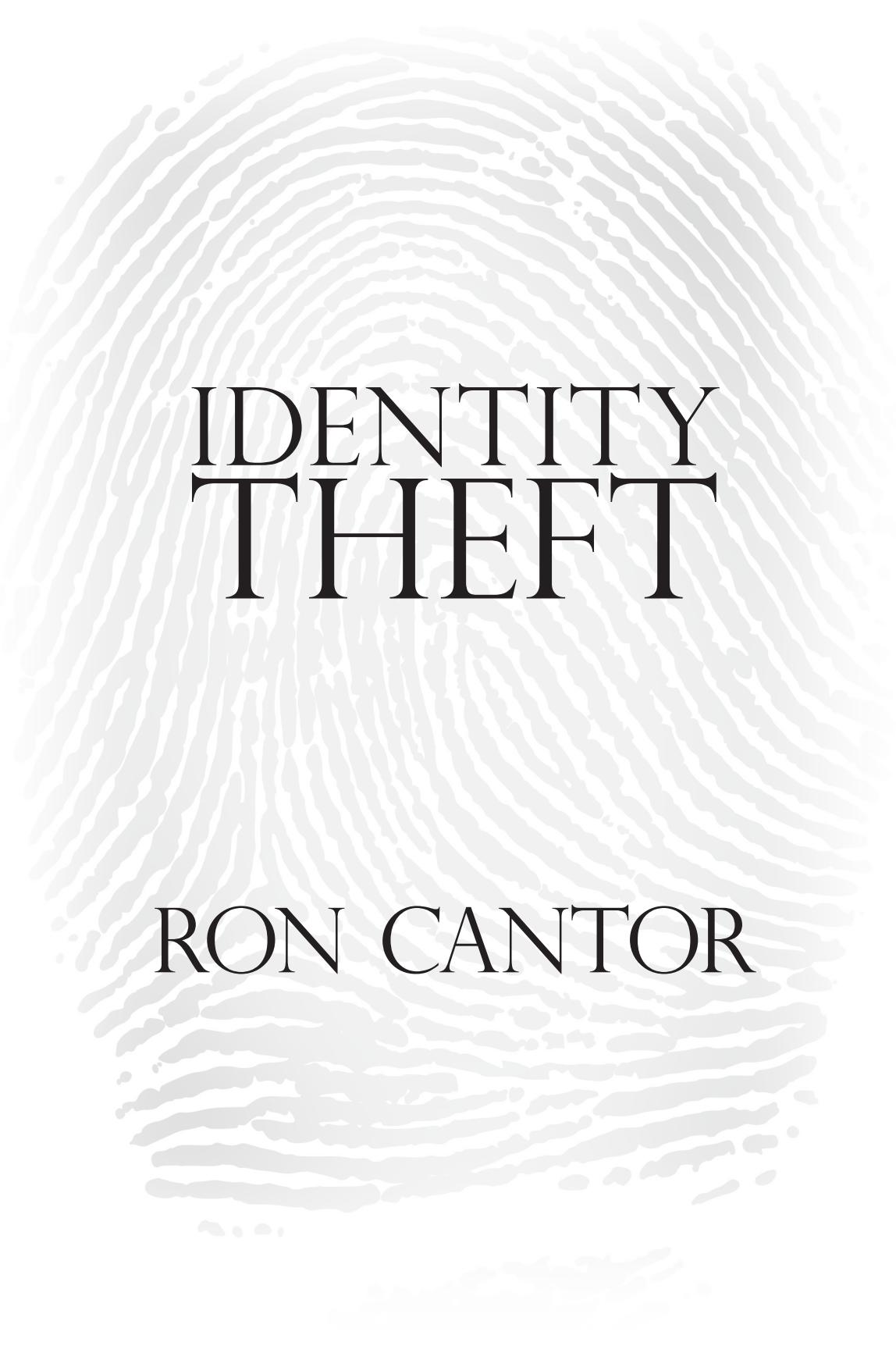
WAYNE HILSDEN

Senior pastor, King of Kings Community
Jerusalem, Israel

The emotional depth and immediacy evoked in this novel would be impossible in a theological tome with the same purpose. It's a book you will want to read at one sitting, and if you're like me, your only regret will be having to wait for the remaining two volumes of the trilogy.

Dr. David H. Stern
Translator, *The Complete Jewish Bible*

IDENTITY THEFT



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RON CANTOR

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the indirect victims of this *Identity Theft*—the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I implore you to take a fresh and honest look at Yeshua (Jesus) the Jew.

I think you will be surprised.

*In defending myself against the Jews,
I am acting for the Lord. The only
difference between the church and
me is that I am finishing the job.*

—ADOLF HITLER

Chapter One



THE VISITATION

It happened a year ago. He came in a vision. I have never fully shared this with anyone, except my wife, and at first, she didn't believe me, but I felt it was time to put my testimony on paper.

After all, I am a writer and He chose to send His messenger to me. People must know the truth. Christians must know the truth. And by all means, Jews must know the whole story.

Is that it?

Three words that turned my life upside down: "Is that it?" It wasn't that I was unfulfilled. On the contrary, I was extremely content. I was five years married and had two amazingly cute little girls. At twenty-eight, with only a bachelor's degree, I had risen in the ranks. I already had a daily column in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and a well-read blog. Life was perfect.

And yet *that* was the problem—what if there was something I was missing? Maybe there was a God out there who expected something from me. Maybe not, but the truth is, *I had no idea*. What keeps my heart ticking day after day? Who makes sure that it continues to pump blood through my veins?

I had taken all of this for granted. It suddenly hit me that we spend entire lifetimes working and planning just to make sure we are comfortable when we retire, which is a very short period of time. Yet we rarely consider what happens after retirement when we die. Is that it? Six feet under and never another conscious thought? Or is there life beyond the grave? And if so, where would I spend eternity? I had no idea.

I was determined to find God. I was full of questions and I had no clue where to begin. How do you *find God*? It's not like I could just Google Him as I had learned to do for everything else.

Where to start?

Being Jewish, I began to go to synagogue and even attend afternoon prayers, the Mincha service, when I could. It felt great when nine men were waiting and I showed up to complete the *minyan* (a quorum of ten Jewish bar Mitzvah'd males required to begin the prayer service). As a last resort they might grab some poor just-over-thirteen-year-old out of his studies to reach the required number, but then I would show up, saving the day.

While that made me feel good about myself, I didn't sense any personal connection with the Almighty. It was more a satisfaction that I had performed some religious duty, than actually feeling His presence. I began to study other religions

and actually began to pray—not in a formal sense like in the synagogue, but I simply asked God to show me if He was real and what He expected from me.

To be honest, I was drawn to Jesus. His message of salvation was so different from any other religion I had studied. Every single one of them put the emphasis on what I did. *Do this on Friday. Do that in the morning. Be a good person. And by all means, never do this.*

But the message Jesus preached conceded that my case was hopeless. There was nothing I could do to please God in light of all I had done against Him. That was why He came; in order to give His life as a sacrifice; to take my punishment—or so they say. It was the only philosophy that didn't stress religious obligation, but instead presented me with the opportunity to accept the fact that 1) I was a sinner; 2) I could not save myself; 3) Jesus had taken my punishment; and 4) through faith in Him, I could have eternal life.

You may be thinking, *So what's the problem? Buy into it!* It's not quite so easy. You see, being Jewish, I was convinced that to believe in Him would be to deny my faith, my heritage, and my community. Everyone knew that to believe in Yeshua was to betray the Jewish people—a people who had suffered more than any other, and had so often suffered in the name of the very One to whom I was attracted.

Also add to that the fact that the whole Jewish community knew my father was the son of Holocaust survivors. Surely they would all turn on me. And it seemed to me that they would be right. What kind of a Jew takes sides with the descendants of the Crusaders? When I went to my rabbi to confide in him, he nearly bit my head off. He told me to drop my pursuit and

never bring it up again—“For the sake of your family.” I was completely and utterly confused and immobilized.

And then he came. His name is Ariel. I was at Starbucks sipping on double-shot espresso. I have never been a Venti, non-fat, no-foam, no-water, six pump, extra-hot, chai tea latte kind of a guy—just strong espresso. That was all I needed to get my creative juices flowing in order to write.

I was sitting there reading the paper, getting ready to start on my column, when suddenly the entire room became white. In fact, it was so bright that *white* seems like an understatement. Everyone was gone—the girl behind the counter, the tattooed hipster listening to his iPod, the student on his computer, the couple that appeared to be going over a business plan...*all gone!*

I was terrified. Suddenly a man appeared...*an angel*. He introduced himself. “I am Ariel, an angel of the Most High.” He was about six feet tall, quite fit, with dark hair, dark skin, and a short beard. He was wearing a white robe, interestingly, just as I would have imagined an angel to be dressed.

I said nothing. “David, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you and the lessons you will learn, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.”

When he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

“I have been sent to give you understanding. You are a confused Jewish young man, but you have found favor in the eyes of Adonai.”

I knew Adonai was Hebrew for *Lord*. Even though I had not been very religious, going to Hebrew school three times a week during much of my teen years had not been a complete waste.

He continued, “I have come to take you on a journey, to show you the past, the present, and even the future. At times you will beg me to stop, but in order for you to understand the truth and help others to understand, you must experience it—you must experience *all* of it.”

I found my voice, but could not think of anything to say. Before I knew it the angel grabbed my hand, and suddenly we were flying through time. It is very hard to explain on paper, in words, what I was experiencing, which is one reason that it has taken me a year to begin this testimony.

I somehow knew that we were going back in time. It was thrilling and yet petrifying. I could see scenes in time, but from a distance. And then everything suddenly grew bigger, as when a plane lands. As though watching a timeline, I could see that we were in the second century, and then the first. Things grew really close, as if we were zooming in on Google maps. The Middle East, Israel, Jerusalem! And then, we passed right through a roof and gently landed inside what seemed like an ancient synagogue from the second Temple period. Only there were several rows of seats, like in a modern movie theater, and a massive screen. Torches lit up the room, as it was night.

There were other angels there. Two were above me and there were two at every entrance. They said nothing and Ariel didn’t even acknowledge them. It appeared they were standing guard. Then I thought, *Am I in some kind of danger?* It reminded me of the first time I visited Israel. The armed soldiers at the airport made me feel safe and deeply concerned at the same time. From what and whom were they were protecting me? And now the question that plagued my mind

was, *What dangerous spiritual force is seeking to bring about my demise?*

“What is going on? Is this a dream?” Words finally found their way out of my mouth. I knew this couldn’t really be happening and yet I was quite sure I was awake. The only thing missing was Morpheus offering me a blue pill or a red one.

“David, your journey will begin here. You will watch events in the lives of four Jews, all from different time periods during the past 2,000 years. You see, David, you are struggling with the idea of *being Jewish and believing in Yeshua*. You don’t mind if we refer to Him by His Hebrew name, do you?”

It was more of a statement than a question. He continued, “You feel that to believe would be a betrayal. But that is only because you do not know that the Yeshua you imagine in your mind is not the Yeshua who walked the streets not too far from where we are right now.”

“So, we are in Jerusalem?” I asked.

“The Old City, to be exact. The year is 35 CE, a time when the Messiah was understood in the context in which the Jewish prophets described Him. The multitudes who followed Him during this period were all Jews.

“Over the years, that has changed. His message has touched nearly every nation...and that is a good thing. However, in the process, the nature and identity of the Messiah has been tampered with, even altered, by those without the authority to do so. In short, there has been an insidious case of identity theft.

“Long before computer hackers and credit cards, the most destructive, most horrendous case of identity theft occurred, and the victim was the Messiah Himself! Today, we

will uncover it, and then you, young man, will expose it to the world.”

This was getting interesting!

“Sit down. Let’s begin,” instructed Ariel.

Feeling completely confused and utterly intrigued, I sat in what was the most amazingly comfortable chair I had ever sat in, immediately forgetting the burden that he had just placed upon me—“You will expose it to the world.”

I waited to see what would come next. Ariel picked up a remote, pointed it toward the screen, and pressed a button. The torches in the room faded, until it was completely dark. The film began to play.