Twitter Thread by Villain Gaon

Villain Gaon
@JustSayXtian

I want to do a brief deep dive into my frequent assertion that Messianic "Jews" are, in fact, Christians and that Christians cannot be Jews. Every time this comes up a bunch of people - mostly Messianic "Jews" and appropriative Christians - show up to argue with me.

They assert that if a Jew converts to Christianity, they remain a Jew and therefore Jewish Christians are a thing. And *technically* this is true - "once a Jew, always a Jew" is a thing. *Technically* it would be more accurate to say that "Jewish Christians" are apostates.

But while it's more *technically* accurate, it's more misleading. Because unless you know that apostasy is a complicated thing in Judaism, and that there are different classes of apostate, and what the legal restrictions and status are for them, it creates a false impression.

Converts from Judaism to Christianity are meshumadim, as distinct from apikoros and koferim. There's ambiguity in the status of meshumadim going back at least as far as 100 CE, but there is a general consensus that they are treated as non-Jews in all aspects *except* familial.

What that means practically is that *except* for matters of marriage and parenthood, a meshumad is treated as a gentile. They cannot pray with Jews. They aren't mourned as Jews when they die. They aren't counted in a minyan, and they cannot receive Torah honors.

The obligation to return a Jew's property if found doesn't apply to them. They can be charged interest on loans. They cannot be witnesses in a Jewish court. They can't write holy texts, and they can't slaughter kosher meat. They can't join their courtyard to an eruv.

For most intents and purposes, they are entirely outside the Jewish community - except that they are obligated by the Jewish laws of divorce if they have a Jewish spouse, and their children can be considered as Jews without conversion if they want to be.

It is to be hoped and encouraged that a meshumad will want to return to Judaism. In the event that this happens, some communities require a less intense process than a completely gentile convert. Others require a process very similar to the conversion of a gentile.

Pretty universally, though, ritual immersion is required along with SOME kind of process in order to return to being a member of the Jewish community out of a state of being a meshumad. Until that process is followed, the legal treatment as similar to a gentile holds.

But when talking about Messianic Jews on Twitter dot com, this is a lot to get into. I've just spent 8 tweets digging into the specifics of how a meshumad, while still considered a Jew in some ways, is functionally not part of the Jewish community and is treated as a gentile.

It is better, in my opinion, to focus on communicating clearly instead of sticking pedantically to the technically correct, but very inside baseball, definition of Messianic Jews as apostates. Just saying "they aren't Jews" communicates their status more clearly.

It is much more important that it be understood that Messianic "Jews" are not functionally part of the Jewish community, don't speak for Jews, and do not have the rights and responsibilities of a Jew than it is for everyone to understand the particulars of apostates in Judaism.