

# Yellow Pages Are the Stage For a Debate Over Judaism

By ANDY NEWMAN

History, it is often said, is written by the victors.

Less often said is that it is written in the Verizon Yellow Pages for Camden County, N.J.

But it is there that a generation may soon learn the outcome of the latest skirmish between Messianic Jews — the sect known colloquially as Jews for Jesus — and the more traditional Jews, who consider Messianic Judaism a stealth form of Christianity.

It happened like this: Over the summer, a public relations man named Steven L. Lubetkin, whose clients include Temple Emanuel, a Reform synagogue in Cherry Hill, N.J., was asked by the rabbi there about buying an advertisement in the Verizon SuperPages.

Looking in the book, Mr. Lubetkin noticed that just before the heading “Temples & Synagogues — Judaic,” which included most local synagogues, there were two entries under “Temples & Synagogues — Jewish — Messianic.”

Mr. Lubetkin said he was appalled. Like many non-Messianic Jews, he believes that one cannot worship Jesus — or Yeshua, as the Messianic Jews call him — and still be a Jew.

“It’s like if I went to Verizon and said I wanted to be listed as a neurosurgeon, or a Roman Catholic

Jews worship, but was glad to get the word “Jewish” out of the listing. The change was reported in the current issue of *The Jewish Exponent*, a weekly newspaper in Philadelphia.

Such taxonomic distinctions may seem trivial, but they reflect serious struggles over identity politics and religious turf. The evangelical wings of Presbyterian and Baptist denominations have drawn fire from traditional Jewish leaders for supporting Messianic Jewish synagogues. In recent years, Messianic synagogues in Livingston, N.J., and Albany have agreed to be listed under “Churches” after pressure from non-Messianic Jewish leaders.

The rabbi of one of the Messianic synagogues listed in the Camden County book, Jan Rosenberg, who learned about the change only on Tuesday from a reporter, was upset that he had not been consulted.

“I don’t like the idea of somebody outside our congregation trying to define me,” said Rabbi Rosenberg, who heads Congregation Beth Zion Messianic Synagogue in Jackson, N.J. “You self-define.”

Rabbi Rosenberg, it turns out, was already having problems with the Yellow Pages. His synagogue is in Ocean County, and, in the 2005 SuperPages there, it was listed, mysteriously, under “Clinics — Surgical.”

Rabbi Rosenberg said it would be only fair for him to call Verizon and say, “The Methodist Church — I don’t want them listed under churches. Put them under ‘Synagogue of Satan.’” He hastened to add that he had no intention of making such a call.

In fact, Ms. De La Garza said, in the SuperPages, self-definition is the rule. Given the impossibility — and inappropriateness, she said — of Verizon investigating all of its advertisers, the company allows them to choose the heading they are listed under.

What’s more, she added, “If the laundry list of headings doesn’t fit, and it makes sense that the best way that our users can find that client is to create a new heading, we’d try to accommodate that.”

This means that Rabbi Rosenberg could elect to be listed under “Synagogues,” rather than “Synagogues — Messianic.” Or he could request that Verizon reinstate the “Synagogues — Jewish — Messianic” heading.

Upon hearing this, Rabbi Rosenberg said he was not sure what he would do. But he had made up his mind about one thing: “I’m definitely going to move it from ‘Surgical.’”

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## If synagogues are for Jews, where do Jews for Jesus worship?

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church,” said Mr. Lubetkin, 48, who is neither. “I suspect they’d have a problem with that.”

Mr. Lubetkin complained to the phone company. And so it came to pass that Verizon’s 2006 Camden County SuperPages will sort its listings into “Synagogues” and “Synagogues — Messianic.”

A spokeswoman for Verizon, Mary De La Garza, said Wednesday that similar changes would be made in several other SuperPages, including the Manhattan edition. Verizon is reviewing all 1,200 of its directories to see if similar changes have to be made, she added.

Mr. Lubetkin said he would prefer that the Messianic establishments not even be identified as synagogues, which are by definition places where