

JUDAISM AND JESUS

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PREFACE

When Albert Schweitzer wrote *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), he was hardly producing the last word on the subject, whatever his original intention may have been. Indeed, the quest of which Schweitzer wrote has continued unabated, and is in many respects more diffuse and nuanced than ever before.¹ Of approaches and angles to evaluating the great Galilean there is no end, and understanding his place, not only in the culture of his day, but as an image-bearer of hope and humanistic values in contemporary society is eternally challenging. What fresh perspectives can yet another short volume of scholarly reflections add to the already dense collection of tomes on Jesus the Jew? However fashionable to consider Jesus in terms of his own piously religious, Jewish culture, this subject by itself is no particular guarantor of academic merit. It has after all been the habit of a good many scholars and critics to produce commentary regarding the “Jewish Jesus,” as if such a moniker were in some way insightful. Such “insight” is of course no more profound than speaking of the “American Washington,” the “British Churchill” or the “French Napoleon.” Yet, over the centuries, the historical Jesus has effectively been “de-Judaized” to such an extent that pointing out the obvious has in fact become germane. For most modern people it is all but impossible to pull back the curtain of what became Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant Christianity to appreciate the Jew who preceded the faith established in his name. An impressive array of contemporary scholars have tasked themselves with this challenge, and the current work represents no different a burden. What sets it apart is its reliance on a collaborative effort to shine a fresh Hebraic spotlight on the ancient Galilean sage known in antiquity as *Yeshua m’Nazeret* - Jesus of Nazareth.

To be sure, identifying Jesus as a Jew is hardly sufficient, given the multitude of ancient sects inhabiting the land of Israel during the Second Temple period. We know a great deal about Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes,

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911). Schweitzer’s book not only established his theological credentials, but essentially halted additional scholarly consideration of the historical Jesus for a good many years. Schweitzer himself, however, found it necessary to publish a second German edition (1913), including important revisions and addenda, challenging the “Christ myth theory.”

et al, and entire treatises have identified Jesus with the Zealot camp. Creating a compelling “ID” for Jesus is an understandably complex, daunting and even mystifying task, since virtually every letter of every word of the texts we have about him has been and remains subject to vigorous debate and skeptical criticism. Whatever additional insight can be provided in these pages will of course be subject to the same critical apparatus as the multitudinous approaches that have come before. This is as expected. In any case, while formulating the “last word” on the subject is no more our aspiration than Schweitzer’s, it is hoped that these somewhat varying approaches to the historical Jesus/ Yeshua will be appreciated as the strength of the work, diversity of opinion being more valuable than a single voice.

Specially, the two unique perspectives behind the essays in this short volume derive, one from an Orthodox Jewish scholar and the other from a convert to Judaism, with evangelical Christian roots. Both of us have come together in order to probe the multiple issues, both theological and historical, relating to Jesus/ Yeshua, and also to challenge the artificial separation between Jewish, Christian, and messianic Jewish scholarship. We are in agreement that there is considerable value in pursuing interdisciplinary and inter-religious research of this variety, not only in the academic realm, but in developing broad dialogue among Jews and Christians. The stereotypes developed by practitioners of both faiths over the past two millennia need to be challenged, and no one should be excluded from the interchange of ideas. That includes Messianic Jews, who are generally looked upon with a good deal of suspicion by the greater Jewish community.

My own background is certainly relevant to my approach to researching Jesus/ Yeshua, especially as it relates to issues of language. The power of language cannot be overstated, as it can be well argued that our language patterns contribute much to our cognitive processes and perspectives on the world around us. I long ago recognized that the evangelical Christian world, in which I was raised, has its own language of religious and theological expression, inspired by the New Testament and, it seemed to me, especially by Paul. The repetitive use of religious idioms and jargon produced a kind of popular evangelical subculture, in my mind western and Christian and far removed from the Jewish society to which Jesus himself belonged. My own “watershed” moment involved learning Hebrew, which for me meant adopting a completely new language pattern, deriving from a uniquely Jewish worldview. It would by degrees lead me on a personal journey into the Jewish faith, as a *ger tzedek*, a “righteous convert.” Furthermore, while

messianic Judaism is generally greeted with a skeptical eye in the traditional Jewish world, being considered a missionary movement intent on converting Jews to Christianity, in my case it served as a catalyst that ultimately drew an evangelical Christian into Judaism.

It was my exposure to the cultural phenomenon of messianic Judaism as a young undergraduate student that fueled my initial interest in the Hebrew language. Popular concerts and vinyl record albums produced by Messianic Jews in America introduced me to an entirely new vocabulary. I was instantly intrigued by the Hebrew name for “Jesus,” Yeshua, meaning “salvation,” of which the Greek *Iesous* is only a transliteration and carries no particular meaning by itself. How is Yeshua/ “salvation” understood, Hebraically? What connotations are conveyed by the word, and what impact does this have on traditional Christian theology/ “soteriology”? I was also introduced to the word *mashiakh* (“anointed one”), translated by the Greek “Christos” and of which “messiah” is the transliteration. I nonetheless wondered how my meager and culturally conditioned understanding of the word “messiah” properly compares with the meaning and essence of the word in its original Hebrew context. How indeed should ancient Jewish messianism be understood? What are the contours of messianic thought in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves, and how can they be appreciated without a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language? I became convinced that I must not only learn Hebrew; I must learn to think and to reason as a Jew if I were to have any hope of understanding the historical Jesus. I was deeply impressed by the Messianic Jews I encountered, whose training in Hebrew (so I reasoned) must surely afford them insight that I lacked. I began studying Hebrew on my own, as best I could, even attending synagogue services in order to appreciate the “Jewish mind.”

Such steps were only the beginning. As an undergraduate history major I determined to spend my senior year of study in Jerusalem, Israel. I enrolled in an institute for American students on Mount Zion, where I engaged in intensive study of the ancient land of Israel, its history, archaeology and literary product. This would be my springboard into more serious Jesus research. During my residence in Jerusalem, I was privileged to study under the tutelage of Prof. Isaiah Gafni, of the Hebrew University. It was at that time that I became specifically interested in the Second Jewish Commonwealth and its multiple literary attestations, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish pseudepigrapha, early rabbinic literature, and the New Testament.

My growing interest in the Hebrew language led me to conclude that Yeshua must not only have lived as an observant Jew, but spoke as a Jew and in Jewish idiom as well. I wanted somehow to get inside the mind of Yeshua, and I was convinced that language was the key. I was told that the vernacular of the period, as well as the spoken language of Jesus, was Aramaic; yet, I was instinctively drawn to Hebrew as the language of the Scriptures. I could not escape the fact that the overwhelming majority of textual sources from the Second Jewish Commonwealth have come down in Hebrew. Reading the Qumranic corpus (over ninety percent of which is written in Hebrew) amounted to peering through an open window on this most seminal era. Other written sources from the period, from inscriptions to the Bar Kokhba Letters, further underscored the prominence of the Hebrew language, not only as a holy tongue, but as a spoken idiom of the Second Commonwealth. It also seemed telling that the Mishnah (albeit a religious text), dating from the early third century, came down in Hebrew. It has long been observed that the Mishnah contains many vernacular Hebraisms which would not be expected had the text been compiled as an artificial “holy tongue.” It seemed clear to me that Hebrew must have remained a spoken language in the land of Israel at least as late as the reduction of the Mishnah, circa 220 C.E.²

In addition to my historical studies, I would spend a full year learning “modern Hebrew” at a government-sponsored language institute (*ulpan*). I marveled at the succinct, direct nature of the Hebrew language – very different from Greek, or my native English for that matter. I wondered if the pointedly direct mannerisms of modern Israelis might be related in large part to their speech patterns. I was aware that modern Hebrew essentially amounts to the revival of the ancient biblical tongue, with some syntactical modifications. After just a few months of language training, I was already able to access and read the Hebrew Scriptures with little difficulty. I was even able to decipher many passages of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was my acquisition of modern Hebrew (originally inspired by my exposure to messianic Judaism) that inexorably drew me into the Jewish faith. The simple elegance of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4) in its ancient Hebrew formulation took on profound significance on a deeply personal level, as I recognized

² B. Spolsky suggested the presence of a “triglossia” during this period, consisting of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. He points out, “During the Tannaitic period Hebrew continued as a spoken language...” See Bernard Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 60-62. See also Bernard Spolsky, “Triglossia and Literacy in Jewish Palestine of the First Century,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 42 (1985): 95-110.

the unique and revolutionary nature of Israelite monotheism in the ancient world. I came to see the Hebrew language, even in its modern idiom, as an avenue into the mind of the biblical writers, as well as the many centuries of rabbinic thought which followed.

My research of Second Temple Hebrew thus led me back to Jesus/ Yeshua, who, to the extent that he might be called a historical character, must have been deeply acquainted with Hebrew, not only as the language of the Scriptures, but as the spoken idiom by which he conveyed his own brand of “pre-rabbinic” teachings. Over time I began to wonder whether the gospels themselves came down to us in what amounted to “translation Greek,” the writers and redactors having attempted to render Hebrew concepts through a very different linguistic vehicle. Why, I wondered, should Hebrew be accepted as the tongue of other ancient Israelite sages, from Ḥoni ha-M’agel to Ḥanina ben Dosa, and not of the historical Jesus/ Yeshua? Moreover, from my first reading of the gospels in Hebrew rendering, I recognized implicitly the idiomatically Hebraic “flavor” of the texts. From the beginning of Luke’s Gospel, with its repeated use of the “vav consecutive,” it seemed reasonable to assume that the gospels had been set down in a series of texts descending from an earlier “lost” Hebraic source or sources.³ I was intrigued to discover that such an avant-garde theory had not occurred to me alone, but that several Jerusalem-based scholars, both Jewish and Christian, had long propounded this idea.

During this time I discovered a lively scholarly coordination between certain Christian scholars living in Jerusalem and Jewish scholars of the Hebrew University. In studying the abundant Semitisms that lay behind the Greek gospel narratives, they pioneered a new dimension of collaborative research, breaking the brittle boundaries that have historically isolated Christian scholars into one camp and Jewish scholars into another. David Flusser’s compendium of articles, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, did a great deal to inform my own scholarship, as did Robert Lindsey’s short book, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark*.⁴ Much of the insight I present in these pages has grown directly out of my interaction with this Jerusalem-based scholarship. With respect to my own embrace of the Jewish faith, I

³ See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 82, n. 47: “The change to the aorist may reflect a Hebrew ‘waw consecutive’ construction...”

⁴ David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988); Robert Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (Jerusalem: Dugith Publishers, 1969).

came to see myself, not as a “turncoat” who had “rejected” Jesus, but as one who, through many years of studying the Jewish faith that informed his worldview, could appreciate him more accurately than I had ever imagined. Additionally, I could appreciate his uniquely Jewish idioms, most importantly his reference to the “kingdom of heaven” (מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם), as the heart and essence of his “rabbinic” message. All of this in turn led me on my own decades’ long “quest” to evaluate freshly the recorded words of Yeshua (whether or not we are audacious enough to label them “*ipsissima verba*”), so as to uncover his essential “Torah” and hopefully to mitigate some of the anti-Jewish flavor that has occasionally been associated with his words.

My own contribution to this volume (a total of five essays) consists of research directly resulting from this effort. At the outset, I provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities involved in teaching Jesus in a Judaic Studies program at a major state university. Next, I examine the religious party deemed to be enemies of Yeshua, the historically maligned Pharisees, with an eye toward ameliorating their presumed villainy. Thirdly, I discuss the focal point of rabbinic Judaism down to the present day, the *Shema* (Deut 6:4), and its bearing on the fundamental issue of the potential “inclusion” of Messianic Jews among the larger Jewish community. Fourthly, I evaluate the early pietistic movement within Second Temple Judaism, the ancient Ḥasidim, comparing them with Jesus and discussing their apparent militancy, or lack thereof, as well as their attitude toward ritual purity. Finally, I call for a new openness at the table of scholarship, affording scholars of all persuasions, including Messianic Jews, a valid voice and an opportunity to be heard. My collaboration with Prof. Garber on this short scholarly tome is but one small step toward the lofty goal of bringing about a truly inclusive, interdisciplinary and inter-religious approach to the great Galilean, Yeshua the Nazarene.

– Kenneth L. Hanson

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INTRODUCTION

The Twenty Century theologian Paul Tillich defined religion as a system of beliefs, rituals, symbols, and myths directed towards an ultimate concern of a society. Religion has meaning in the sense of absolute interpretation of the central values of a society, and it has force as sacred power which stands behind these values. In addition, a religion provides important integrative functions for its members and manages tensions within the threats from without by establishing important defensive mechanisms. Religious beliefs and practices are often couched in religious creeds and outlooks which for many traditionalist Jews and Christians are rooted in the Bible, seen as monolithic and complete.

Decades of academic biblical scholarship, however, show that the biblical canon is a product of historical, political, and social forces, in addition to religious ideology. Indeed, the many Christian fragments and texts discovered in the last 70 years disclose the diversity of the early Christian movement. The enormous publishing success of Dan Brown's historical fiction, *The Da Vinci Code* (book and movie), tapped into the Gnostic gospels of Mary Magdalene and Phillip, and portrayed the holy union of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, by which the divine feminine is celebrated. The National Geographic Society mega-promotion of the Coptic Gospel of Judas (press, documentary, book, exhibit) revealed Judas Iscariot as the facilitator of salvation. Jesus says to Judas: "Lift up your eyes and look at the cloud and the light within it and the stars surrounding it. The star that leads the way is your star." (cited in R. Kassler, M. Meyer, and G. Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* [Washington, DC: The National Geographic, 2006]). In Christian Gnostic writings, Judas Iscariot is not the villainous enemy of Jesus so believed in centuries of orthodox Christian thought but he is the one apostle who understood well the message of Jesus' death. Interestingly, non-canonical sources and pop culture venue have made accessible the complexity and diversity of ancient Christianity to millions of readers and viewers.

Many Catholics and Christians accept the age-old authorized Christian teaching that salvation comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus and not by special knowledge imparted by the Christian Savior to select people during his time on earth (as suggested in the Gospel of Judas). And for scholars Elaine Pagels and Karen L. King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel*

of *Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (Viking, 2007), re-discovering who Jesus was and what he taught within a second-century context (e.g., immortality of the soul apart from the body) helps to restore legitimacy to the oft-maligned “other story.” In our view, however, both sides are necessary to tell the whole story. And by all accounts, truth must be distinguished from fiction and agendas (ecclesiastical, conspiratorial, feminist), realized or fantasized.

Arguably the Nag Hammadi library and other first and second Christian centuries records of Jesus are as old (or older) and as valuable as the canonical New Testament in projecting a down to earth picture of the Teacher from Galilee. However, Helmut Koester, *From Jesus to the Gospels: Interpreting the New Testament in its Context* (Fortress, 2007), opines that all quests for the historical Jesus are bereft of historical data and shaped by predispositions emanating from modern biblical scholarship. He speaks for many liberal Christians (and others) that the continuity of the historical Jesus with the Christ of faith is found only in cultic belief.

True, but the Easter faith without its Jewish historical context is unwieldy, or worse, a proven feeding ground for centuries old Good Friday sermons that espoused anti-Judaism (replacement theology, conversion of the Jews) and anti-Semitism (“perfidious Jews and Christ killers”). Fortunately, in our time, knowledgeable and empathetic Jews and Christians in dialogue are eroding the teaching of contempt from the Cross at Cavalry by seeking the Jewish Jesus in the context of his time and clime. Popularizing the Jewish Jesus, reflecting on Paul’s theology, teaching John the Baptist, and engaging post-supersessionist Messianic Jews manifest challenges and corrections in the academic quests for Jesus.

Popularizing Jewish Jesus

Robert Aron, the decorated writer of history and politics and the author of *Jesus of Nazareth: The Hidden Years* (1960; English ed., 1962), writes on the Jewishness of Jesus as reflected in the Jewish customs, prayers, and rituals he knew in his home, in the synagogue, and in the Temple.¹ Written in a brisk, translucent, and absorbing style that often characterizes a good historical novel, this work could appeal to an audience with little knowledge

¹ Aron, Robert, *The Jewish Jesus*, trans. A. H. Forsyth and A.-M. de Commaile, and in collaboration with H. T. Allen, Jr. Maryknoll (N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1971), vii + 183 pp.

of Jewish liturgy or with an ignorance of the cultural and religious world of Palestinian Judaism in the time of Jesus. The knowledgeable student and scholar, however, will find the work a gross disappointment. There is no attempt to grasp the origin and history of the noble ideas of liturgy presented. A critical appreciation of the structure and content of the liturgical cycle for the Sabbath, holidays, and weekdays is noticeably lacking. The reader is not exposed to the sources used in the author's recording of historical events in the life of Jesus and of Palestinian Jewry. A summary of the content of a prayer and often its relevance to the contemporary man of faith are given, but technical and scholarly comments are a scarcity. The book abounds in misinterpreted rabbinic sources, mistransliterated Hebrew, anachronisms, and popular ignorance of Jewish religious customs and observances.

It is highly questionable if the tradition of Elijah at the Passover meal, the Bar Mitzvah ritual, and the obligatory daily wearing of a *tallit katan* are found in first-century Judaism. The language of the Kaddish is not literary Aramaic (p. 62) but Hebrew-Aramaic, the vernacular of the Jews during the period of the Second Temple. The Kaddish in the Jewish service occurs in four different forms (five if one includes the Kaddish of Renewal recited at the graveside by the mourner after interment of the deceased), each with a different function, and not one as implied in the text. The author's selection of the Mourner's Kaddish as having been recited by Jesus (p. 62) is unfortunate since the original Kaddish was a doxology of the messianic hope whose language was derived from the prophets and psalmists and was recited by the teacher at the end of a religious discourse. It had no relation to the prayers and still less to the dead. In asserting that a 1st-century congregational service ended with the Aleynu, a prayer proclaiming God as supreme king of the universe and Israel's hope that humanity "on that day" (cf. Exod 15: 18; Zech 14:9) will recognize the one God of Israel, the author shows his ignorance of the history of Jewish prayer. It is only since the 14th century that the Aleynu was selected to close all public services on weekdays, Sabbaths, and festivals. The version of the Aleynu cited (p. 63) is from the 14th century and it is essentially the Aleynu adoration edited by the Babylonian Amora Rabh in the New Year Mussaf Amidah but minus "For they bow down to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god who saves not." Granted that the ideas of the Aleynu (nota bene there is no reference to the destruction of the Second Temple) are very old, this does not mean that the poem was recited in 1st-century Judea since its composition as acknowledged by most scholars was 3rd-century Babylonia.

On p. 133 the author states, "The Seder itself is followed by readings from the Bible, and by songs, the most popular of which is the 'Song of the Kid,' the *Had Gadya*. It was composed in Aramaic . . . but only written down long after the time of the Second Temple." This may be taken as a typical "factual" understatement made often by Aron. In actuality, the "Song of the Kid" is written in poor Aramaic with a smattering of Hebrew words by an anonymous author of no earlier than the 15th century who modeled his poem after certain types of medieval European folksongs.

One is not at a loss to cite other errors and anachronisms. Tishri was not originally the first month of the Jewish year but the seventh. The earliest traditions of Kabbalat Shabbat may have begun with Pss 92 (p. 52) but this is not the situation today as claimed by the author. Since the beginning of the 17th century the Inauguration of the Sabbath has begun with Pss 95-99, and 29. These six Psalms, first introduced by Moses Cordovero of Safed, represent the six days of work. The Amidah of the Second Temple period consisted of more than six blessings (p. 60). The Zaddikim blessing (cf. *b. Meg.* 17b; benediction number 13 in the Amidah of every day) was composed at the start of the 2nd century and could not have been known by Jesus. The Havdalah ceremony, parts of the Grace after Meals (*birkat hamazon*), and Blessings on Various Occasions (*birkoth hanehenin*) described in the work were composed later than the period of Jesus and not during or before. On more than one occasion the author instructs with half a truth; this is a dangerous thing. For example, he mentions that Pss 126 is chanted before the Grace after Meals, but he fails to state that this is only the custom on the Sabbath and holidays when joy is expressed. In other circumstances Pss 137 is recited.

Although specific presentations and arguments in Aron's book must be rejected outright, this volume can serve as a simple anthology of Hebrew prayers which the historical Jesus would have felt at home with, and it provides a convenient summary of Hebrew worship that can grace any interfaith service. Footnotes are scarce and there are no indices nor bibliography. The work would have been strengthened considerably if the writer had been able to utilize studies in Jewish prayer aside from the excellent study by Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, *The Authorized Prayer Book* (originally published in 1948). Reference to the works of Grant, Oesterley, Dix, Dugmore, Arzt, Kadushin, Idelsohn, Werner, etc., are sorely missed.

Apostle Paul: God-in-Christ

On the Apostle Paul, who he was, what he believed, and his signature role in the origins of Christianity, a great deal has been written on his contribution and influence in Christian *Geistesgeschichte*. Here we ask a fundamental question: What may be said about a devout Jew of Tarsus albeit tinged by Stoicism, who became a Jerusalem Pharisee loyalist and teacher and how and why did it come to pass that he, rival to contemporary ideologies within and without first-century Judaism, emerged as the catalyst in separating followers of Jesus from the fellowship of rabbinic Judaism. The short traditional answer is by the authority of God-in-Christ who supersedes the rabbinic God-as-Sage incarnate in a monolithic Torah and *halakhah*. To offer a typology of models of natal Christian authority (individual, institutional, textual), that posits that one-dimensional explanations of Christian belief and authority are hard to defend and are best avoided. In addition, the Pauline epistles uncover a multi-faceted Pauline mind, nurtured by desperate teaching encounters and molded by exegetical and hermeneutical principles (legal and homiletic), which were acquired gradually in the growth and maturing of Paul. We view Paul in the long line of Israel's visionaries who, separated from the authority of James and Peter, incised the Torah of Moses into bits and pieces, and profoundly decided that this teaching is not binding on Gentiles baptized in the Spirit.

John the Baptist, A Jewish View

Second Temple Judaism rather than Church doctrine is the central focus that draws a comparative interest in the life and teaching of John the Baptist in contemporary Jewish religious thought, not practice. Christian scriptures and interpretation suggest that the John the Baptist, hailed as a great prophet (Matt 14: 5; Mark 11: 32), was inspired by the *ruakh ha-kōdeš* (divine inspiration) to proclaim the coming of Messiah (Matt 3:11-17, Mark 1:7-11, Luke 3: 16-18, John 1:34). Josephus (*Ant.* 18.5.2) records that John was a good man, commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and to join him in the rite of ritual bathing (baptism) not for remission of sins but purification of the body conditioned by the premise that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Multitudes listened and converted to his preaching of repentance and faith in the way of the Lord. Their spiritual transformation was confirmed with a water ceremony akin to *ṭēvīlat miqwā*. In the rabbinic mind, total immersion in collected "living waters" (rain, glacial, ocean, river not faucet) necessary for Temple access and sacrificial offering is no longer valid due to destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. Nonetheless, Torah Judaism (e.g., Lev 14-15, purification of a leper and

impurity issues respectfully) and Halakha of the ages requires *miqwâ* to purify oneself from ritual impurity (e.g., touching a dead body, female coital rite [virgin before marriage, post-menses resumption of coitus], male spiritual preparedness before Shabbat and holiday observance, etc.), conversion of Gentiles, and *koshering* of new utensils and cooking ware for Passover observance. Neither Hebrew Bible, New Testament, rabbinic law and lore associate Baptism and *Miqwâ* with personal salvation; though intricacies may suggest state of preparedness.

John the Baptist was regarded by the multitude as an important prophet (Matt 14: 5, 21:26 ; Mark 11: 32; Luke 20:6) but Jesus proclaims that he is more than a prophet (Matt 11:9; Luke 7:26) His prophetic role, out of the wilderness (Matt 11:7) powerful baptism cum messianic rhetoric (Matt 3:13), his clothing attire of a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle around his waist, and his diet on locusts and wild honey (Matt 3:4; see "soft raiment" in Matt 11:8) invite comparison with Elijah the Tishbite, the herald of the messianic age (Mal 3:23). Powerful voices in behalf of righteousness, defiant in their rhetoric against state evil (Elijah to Ahab and Jezebel on the vineyard of Naboth incident: "Have you murdered and also taken possession"; see 1Kgs 21, comp. v. 19), viewed as a threat to the despotism of the state (death of John; see Matt 14:3-12, Mark 6:17-19; Josephus *op. cit*) and more interweave these icons of biblical narrative. Alas, history and lore of Church and Synagogue part the ways of Tradition's first Baptist and last Prophet. Jesus of Nazareth, his life, teaching, and very being created a new epoch in those circles among which Jewish and Gentile Christianity arose, so the whole life-work of John the Baptist was given a new meaning— from Baptism to Messianism to Salvation. Beheading of John to the crucifixion of Jesus and belief sets you free. In contrast, Jewish tradition proclaims that Malachi ("My Messenger") was the last of the prophets. His last words are a fitting epilogue to their legacy of teaching. Remember the Torah of Moses, *huqqîm* (statutes that bind God and Israel such as *miqwâ*) and *mišpāṭîm* (civil ordinances enabling just living and respect) in preparation of the return of Elijah the prophet (unlike John and Jesus, Elijah dies no mortal death; he went up by a whirlwind to heaven [2 Kgs 2:11]) before the dawning of great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal 3:22-23).

Messianic Judaism, Where I Stand

I have written and edited academic articles, reviews, and scholarly books on the historical Jesus and related New Testament matters. My Orthodox Jewish lifestyle and my critical biblical acumen transverse my writings. The

following points reflect my position on Messianic Jewish religiosity and theology.

- Messianic and Rabbanite Jews are united by God, Torah, Israel (People and Land). They differ in biblical exegesis, understanding and application of *halakha*, fulfillment of prophecy, role of Messiah, messianic age, resurrection of the dead, and life immortal. Christology and/or Jesuolatry testify to conflicting *not* converging forms of Judaism. And Christian Gentiles are extra *synagōgē*.
- The time is long overdue for Jewish educators, clergy, and lay people to penetrate responsibly into Christian scriptures in order to discover and appraise the historical Jesus which can help to illuminate and correct the misgivings and misdirection about the Jews found in Christendom. Reciprocally, attributed Jesus admonitions (“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they teach you” [Matt 23:2a] and “salvation is from the Jews [John 4:22b] mandate the *Ecclesia* to engage the *Synagoga* on matters of Heaven and Earth. Birthing Jewish-Christian dialogue is an exciting and exacting learning experience for the enrichment and betterment of two sibling religions committed to biblical narrative and teaching.
- Incarnation theology brought a radical departure from traditional Israelite religion. Christological views are a non sequitur in Jewish thought and offer an ideological justification of compromising the authority of Jewish tradition; namely, the organic relationship of God-Torah-Israel (religion, culture, peoplehood). By bestowing equality, identity, and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (see 1 Cor 12:13, Gal 4: 26-29, Eph 2:11-22, and Col 3:11) the process of redefinition and replacement of Second Temple Judaism began in earnest. And this is transmitted in a number of core events (birth and infancy narrative, last meal, trial and execution of Jesus, resurrection) and vilified proclamations associated with the Jews’ desire to kill Jesus (e.g., Matt 27:25, John 8:31-47, 1 Thess 2: 14-15) dispersed in the Four Gospels and in the Pauline letters. Nonetheless, I concur that the historical Jesus is a charismatic first-century proto-rabbi whose *torah* is exclusive of the evolving changes toward Judaism in the apostolic era and beyond. Concise textual exegesis and criticism can forge an indisputable link between Jesus and the Jews, a lesson Christians ought to know and Jews need to discover. And Messianic Jews claim is their forte.

- Messianic Jews across the spectrum affirm the infallible, unerring Word of God is Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and believe in the Creator of heaven and earth, who is eternally existent in the plural unity revealed in the *Shema*: “Hear O Israel, the LORD (*Yahweh*) is our God (*Elohim*), the LORD (*Yahweh*) is one” (Deut 6:4). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in God (*Elohim*). There is no God but one, meaning, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” (1 Cor 8:4-6).
- In rabbinic *halakha*, reading the Trinity into the *Shema* is unprecedented; further, divine unity is sufficiently expressed, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One.” Hence, the *Shema* verse in the context of Israelite monolatry asserts the First and Second Commandments of *bein ‘adam la-Makom* (“man/one’s duties towards God”) noted in the Decalogue: recognition of the sovereignty, unity, and spirituality of God (“I am *Yahweh* your *Elohim* [God] who brought you out of the land of Egypt... you shall have no other *elohim* [gods] before Me ... nor bow down nor serve them”) (Exod 20:2, 3-6; Deut 5:6, 7-10). And eisegesis of the exaggerated *‘ayin* in אָיִן (“hear”) and *dalet* in דָּ (“one”) spell *‘ed* (“witness”) to the absolute unity of God; hence Yeshua, worshipped as truly God and Man (and other Messianic belief articles) is totally unacceptable and incompatible to (Rabbinic) Judaism.

I have engaged Messianic Rabbi Dr. David Rudolph, Director of the Messianic Jewish Studies Program at The King’s College and Seminary, Dallas/Fort Worth area, TX (March 2018) and Rabbi Chaim Urbach (Congregation Yeshuat Tsion) at Denver Seminary (November 2018) on acceptance/rejection of the “The Jewish Jesus” by Jews. Stern Halakha prohibition condemns *crossing* into a church setting and sharing biblical thought and theology in a Christian setting committed to outreach to Jews and others. Was I naïve not to see deception, meaning my Jewish Orthodoxy will be seen as legitimization of Messianic Judaism and outreach in my agreeable discussion with leading Messianic Rabbis? And so forth. On the contrary. Director David Rudolph’s introductory words suggested that here on the stage sit two Jews who cordially agree to disagree on tenets of Jewish belief. He then added that my remarks are to bring the Jewish Believers to *teshuvah*. Not my intent at all. In an environment where the love of the Lord, the Jewish People, and the Church prevailed I talked on the Jewish Jesus, the Incarnate Christ is *‘avodah zara* for Jews, including, Messianics, and

affirmed that Christianity plays an important role in redemptive history. All went well. Barukh HaShem.

Finally, my perception and reception of Jesus in classroom teaching, academic research, and intra-Jewish dialogue are my chapters in this monograph. Against a synopsis of statements and standards (mission, vision, learning) of the first accredited Jewish studies offerings at a public community college in the State of California, I discuss my methodology of Reason and Revelation in presenting Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus related issues in lower division Judaica (“Teaching Jewish Studies, Hebrew Scriptures, and the Historical Jesus: Rationale, Objectives, Evaluation”). In postulating the Jewish Jesus in the context of the Synoptic Gospels, I engage methodology (text and interpretation) and a plethora of views albeit controversial (political, social, religious, and theological). For example, Jewish Jesus zealot sympathizer; Easter faith without its Jewish historical context is unwieldy and a feeding ground for replacement theology and antisemitism. (““The Jewish Jesus: a Partisan’s Imagination”; and ““One in Christ Jesus’: The view from Torah and Shoah”). Respectful dialogue between myself and Messianic Jewish leaders relating to belief, practice and theology – controversial and problematic as seen by mainstream Jewish academics and denominations – is the focus of my last chapter (“Perpetual. Dilemma”). Let the learning begin!

– Zev Garber

SECTION I

CHAPTER ONE

TEACHING JEWISH STUDIES, HEBREW SCRIPTURES, AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE CONTEXT OF JEWISH STUDIES AT A FOUR YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE: RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES, EVALUATION

ZEV GARBER

This essay by Garber was published in *Teaching the Historical Jesus: Issues and Eisegesis*, ed., Zev Garber (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 13-25.

Key words: Los Angeles Valley College, Jewish Studies, Sinai and Cavalry, rabbinic Torah, testimony of Jesus, Judaizing Christians

Information on Judaica in American colleges, universities, and seminaries is scattered through a variety of sources. National surveys, school catalogues, dissertations, opinion columns, etc., have something to say about the scope of the discipline.¹ Rarely is there mention of the teaching of Jewish Studies in a two-year public college with the exception of my pioneering articles.² This chapter is parsed into two parts. Part 1 reviews the

¹ Garber, "Jewish Studies on the American Campus: *Yiddishkeit* or Scientific Dialect" (Hebrew), *Hadoar* 72.2 (December 4, 1992): 21–22.

² *The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: Reviewing Curriculum and Instruction* (Center for the Study of Community Colleges and ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, UCLA, Summer, 1975) reports, "no other information written by anyone

rationale, curriculum, and ideology that I introduced in the early 1970s to set up the first-ever public Jewish Studies program funded by the State of California. Part 2 deals with issues of faith, ideology, and biblical criticism in the teaching of Hebrew and Christian scriptures including my philosophy on biblical revelation and insertion of Jesus.

LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

School and Mission

The 104-acre Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) campus is situated in the Southeast Central portion of the San Fernando Valley, an area of 234 square miles located approximately fifteen miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. One of the nine public colleges of the Los Angeles Community College District, LAVC opened its doors in June 1949 with a student body of 440 and a faculty of 23. LAVC serves approximately 20,000 students mainly in the areas of Van Nuys, North Hollywood, Panorama City, Pacoima, Sherman Oaks, Valley Village, Studio City, Encino, Tarzana, and Burbank. Valley College is a student-focused campus that is known for its high-quality educational courses and that prepares its graduates for university or vocational work.

After teaching one semester of two sections in basic Hebrew and one course in Hebrew civilization (Fall 1970), it became clear to me that the educational needs of the Jewish community of the San Fernando Valley³ could be better

but Garber has been discovered to indicate that Jewish studies courses are indeed being offered anywhere else” (p. 80). See the following ERIC documents: “Jewish Studies at a Two-Year Public College (and) Lower Division Judaica Problems and Solutions” (ED 086269, 1973); “Alternative Teaching Methods in Teaching Introduction to Judaism” (ED 099077, 1974); “The Journal Synthesizing Activity” (ED 114151, 1975); “Teaching Lower Division Hebrew Language and Literature at a Two-Year Public College” (ED 162703, 1978); and “Teaching the Holocaust at a Two-Year Public College” (ED 230226, 1983). Drawing upon my experience of setting up a Jewish Studies program, I served as the respondent in a special session of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion devoted to “Teaching Religious Studies at Community Colleges” (Orlando, FL, November 22, 1998).

³ In the decade 1950–1960, the San Fernando Valley was one of the fastest growing urban areas in the United States with a percentage growth of 110%. The decade 1960–1970 saw a much slower growth rate and the population at the end of 1971 was about 1,246,177. Following the pattern of growth in the general

served if more courses in Judaica were introduced on campus. There developed a widespread faculty-student agreement, supplemented by community support and interest, that courses in Jewish content should be part of the College curriculum. The administration agreed, and the new curriculum in Jewish Studies was recognized in Fall 1972.

Rationale for Jewish Studies

The formation of a Jewish Studies Program at LAVC was established on the strength of a number of factors:

- Jews and Judaism are a dynamic and vital force in Western civilization but until the late 1960s have been generally shunned on their own merits as an academic discipline. Schools under Jewish auspices have always offered classes in Jewish content but their success in reaching the general community is minimal. A number of Christian schools of higher learning offer courses in classical Hebrew language and theology with various degrees of stress but often this is seen as *praeparatio* for Christianity. A number of departments of religion at colleges and universities teach Judaism as part of the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” but these classes by and large coincide with so-called Old Testament thought and rabbinic Judaism, areas important for Christian origins, suggesting that the Jewish people is a non-entity for the last 1500 years. This void in education contributes to the ignorance of the Jewish people as a living culture and religion in history, which in turn feeds anti-Judaism and antisemitism.
- The present situation of Jews in the United States, as is true with other ethnic groups, is in dire need of change. Jewish norms, traditions, and culture have been compromised in the Jews’ attempt to assimilate into the American way. It is clear that the melting pot cooks only when different groups full of complimentary but distinct ingredients assert their individuality. It is essential to recognize that there is something problematic in being a Jew in contemporary America. Thus, in addition to descriptive courses in Judaism, one needs analysis of problems

community, the Jewish population trend in the Valley was on a continual upswing. In 1970, the overall Jewish population count in the greater Los Angeles area was nearly 600,000, of whom approximately 180,000 lived in the twenty-one communities, including North Hollywood, Valley Village, Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, Encino, etc., served by LAVC.

presented in the religious and social history of the Jews. In an ethnic sense, the desire for Jewish Studies on campus is a minority's quest for identity.

- Traditionally, the Jewish collective memory goes back 4000 years. The Jewish experience is complex, diversified, and intellectual. It is not a come-by-night phenomenon. Jewish Studies belongs on campus not because of injustice, persecution, and guilt complex but because Jews as a group have contributed to the improvement and advancement of humanity. Indeed it is the Hebrew prophet and not the Greek philosopher who had the optimistic dream shared by all people of good will today that there will be no more oppression, poverty, and war and that humanity will one day be one family.
- The decade of the 1960s (Viet Nam, counter-culture, "power to the people" movements, Eichmann Trial, Six-Day War) seeded Jewish activism and relevancy on campus. Involved Jewish students and faculty requested and received academic classes that address the reality of Jewish existence, determination and achievement. Hillel Council at LAVC and the greater Jewish community enthusiastically encouraged the Jewish Studies agenda. Also, administrative insight into the importance of the program proved to be present at the very beginning. Finally, UCLA's endorsement of a Jewish Studies major in March 1972 made it easier for the Curriculum Council of the Los Angeles Community College District to approve the Jewish Studies major.

The rationale for Jewish Studies at LAVC, I claimed in 1972, would give the Jews (and others) of the San Fernando Valley a new sense of Jewish ethnic identity and would aid them in their investigation of the culture, language, religion, nationality, and other aspects of their people. A half century later, my view has not changed.

The Jewish Studies Program (JSP)

The educational program in Jewish Studies at LAVC is designed to provide an opportunity for the student to complete a two-year undergraduate major in Jewish Studies. The major consists of a minimal eighteen semester-designated units in Jewish Studies. Students meet graduation requirements for an Associate Arts degree by completing a minimum of sixty semester units of course credit in a selected curriculum.

The educational objectives of JSP are (1) to satisfy the intellectual and cultural interests of the College; (2) to enable students to appreciate the rich Jewish heritage in all its aspects; (3) to help students understand the Jewish contribution to world culture in general and to Western civilization in particular; and (4) to develop the skills to read and interpret relevant sources in the long history of the Jewish experience.

Since the beginning, I nurtured, crafted, and taught all the Jewish Studies offerings. These included Hebrew and Yiddish language and literature in translation, history and civilization of the Jews, Jewish philosophy, the Jew in America, and American Jewish literature. In five classes, in particular, I consciously insert Jesus-related issues.

- *The Talmud: Mishnah as Literature* is a study of the Talmudic period, giving an analysis of the religious-cultural, socio-economic, and political conditions in Eretz Israel and in the Diaspora from ca. 330 BCE to 500 CE. A unit on Jesus in Second Temple Judaism is part of the curriculum.
- *Israel: The Theory and Practice of Zionism* consists of a general survey of the historical survey of the area with an emphasis upon the social and political development of the State of Israel. The social and political institutions of the State of Israel are analyzed along with a general study of the geographic, economic, ethnic, and religious composition of the land of Israel. A general study is made of the ideological and historical background of the Zionist movement as well as a general survey of the origins of the Palestinian national movement.⁴ Imagining Jesus, views on Zionism, Palestinianism, and Christian Zionism is a current and exacting class exercise.
- *Jewish Religious Heritage* comprises an exploration of the major teachings of Judaism. A brief historical background dealing with the development of Judaism is related to an exposition of its central affirmations. The goal is to familiarize the student with what the Jewish religious tradition regards to be its essential genius and also provide an opportunity for an appreciation of the similarities and differences between Judaism and other major religious groups of American culture.

⁴ Garber, "Teaching Zionism: The Introductory Course," *Shofar* 13, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 8–37.

Among the topics are the following: (a) The shape of faith: God, man, rites of passage, Jewish festivals, community; (b) The dynamics of faith: religious commitment and social problems, contemporary values, the present state of Jewish belief.⁵ Valid questions regarding the adherence or departure of Jesus and his followers (Jews and Gentiles) to the faith of Judaism are discussed.

- *Shoah/Holocaust: A Prototype of Genocide* describes pre–World War II Europe, emphasizes the nature of Hitler’s Nazi movement in Germany, reviews the war years and program of genocide against the Jewish people of Nazi-occupied Europe, and considers reasons for and theological responses to the Shoah, roles of the perpetrators and victims, and results.⁶ Under the rubric of Calvary and Auschwitz, belief and practice of European Christians are carefully debated in the tone of “What would Jesus have said and done?”
- *Judaism, Christianity, Islam*: A scholarly study of religion that explains the basic structure of religious belief and practice. It examines the cultural history and social aspects that influenced and shaped the growth and development of the Western religions in order to encourage a desire to understand as a means of overcoming the destructive exchanges that frequently accompany religious discussion. Jesus seen from views expressed in the Tanakh, New Testament, and Koran are presented sacredly and in the context of conformity and conflict between the Abrahamic faiths.

Teaching Jewish Studies

Different disciplines have their own particular patterns of thinking, inquiry, or information gathering and processing. For example, scientific inquiry calls for classification, explanation of technical processes, detailed statements of fact often containing a definition or statement of principle, problem solving, and experiment reporting that involves discriminating observation, careful explanation, and considered conclusions. Many of the Jewish Studies courses taught at LAVC are interdisciplinary in scope. As

⁵ Garber, “Notes on Teaching Jewish Religious Heritage,” in *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of Judaism*, ed. Zev Garber (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 5–7.

⁶ Garber, “Teaching the Shoah: The Introductory Course,” in Garber, *Shoah*, 23–50.

such, the JSP is an instructional form of the humanities and its emphasis is on reading, writing, and reasoning.

What is the proper way of instructing these skills? There are as many approaches to teaching Jewish Studies as there are instructors in the discipline. At the two-year college level, however, teacher-student interchange is paramount. Take my approach to teaching Second Temple Jewish texts, for example.

A slogan of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Zunz, Scheinschneider, Jost) prevails in “higher” Jewish Studies: Every writer must be a “digger,” and all scholars antiquarians. The traditional methods of teaching the Hebrew canon, New Testament, and Rabbis in the original, found in upper division and graduate courses, namely, translation, expounding of grammatical intricacies, hoary lectures, etc., prove less than adequate at an introductory level. In its place, I use an historical-critical method that stresses that two-millennia-old Jewish texts and related literature are engaging diversified Judaism (religion) as an interpretation of ethnicity in the context of the Ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman era. On a given unit, one-third constitutes lectures on the socio-historical forces that motivated and shaped the contextual history. Two-thirds are devoted to a direct interpretation of the assigned texts in order to discern major values and trends found therein.

A deeper appreciation of cross-cultural explorations of Jewish and Christian literature and beliefs develops if the instructor plays more of a passive role than is traditionally assigned to him or her. By encouraging the student to do research at home in order to explicate the text in class, and answer questions of difficulty from a peer group, one plants in the students seeds of loyalty to great concepts, which otherwise would not grow from the total lecture method that often detaches the student from the material. Furthermore, the student gains self-reliance from such an exposure, his or her own germane ideas are able to sprout, and a relaxed teacher-student relationship is created.

By playing the role of a class catalyst, the instructor has many opportunities to present his or her own contribution and to refine it in light of class feedback to a greater degree than the straight lecture method. An ideal educational experience is thus fulfilled because the goal of discovering provocative ideas of the biblical and rabbinical age is brought about by professor and student exploring together.

This is aptly expressed by a parable narrated by S. Y. Agnon, Nobel Laureate in Literature (1966), in his novel *Guest for the Night* (1939):⁷ It is like an architect who asked for a stone and they gave him a brick, for he intended to build a temple, while they intended to build a house to live in. Clearly, my intent at LAVC is to provide a secure home for Jewish Studies in the San Fernando Valley. I do not see it an ivory tower temple—all who are hungry for Jewish knowledge are welcome to take the classes and join in the learning experience.⁸

In the Introduction to *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of Judaism*, I raised the issues of what constitutes Jewish Studies, how to teach it, to whom, etc., and I expressed that undergraduate Jewish Studies classes are being broadly transformed from an exclusive to inclusive offerings. The once-narrow gates to higher Jewish education have been thrown wide to admit everyone, regardless of background, age, gender, and creed. In such a situation, the old structural lecture method (the “facts”-only school), where the student sits back and absorbs like a sponge the knowledge of a professor’s lecture, would simply not do by itself. The Jewish Studies scholar should attempt to teach Judaism creatively and objectively without indoctrination. One must have the right to challenge students and to set and maintain scholarly standards, but one is also responsible to respect the students’ right to learn, to ask questions, to defend beliefs, to express opinions, or disagree without repression or reprisal.

Arguably, Jewish Studies at a two-year college is more about teaching than researching and writing. In truth, however, both are equally important. To think otherwise, in my opinion, is to wither Jewish Studies.

SINAI AND CALVARY

Teaching Torah in the Academy

Successful teaching, I believe, is a learning exchange. Learning involves not only information given but the recipient’s critical application of what that knowledge means to oneself as an individual and as a member of a

⁷ S. Y. Agnon, *Guest for the Night* [*Ore’ah nata lalun*], trans. Misha Louvish (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004 [1939]), 101.

⁸ Leonard Greenspoon, “Not in an Ivory Tower: Zev Garber and Biblical Studies,” *Hebrew Studies* LI (2010): 369–373.

community (faith-bound, or not). As I argue above, my major concern as a teacher is that I am less of a knowledge-dispenser and more of a knowledge-facilitator, who leads his student to make discoveries and articulate values and conclusions. Flexibility, innovation, implementation, enthusiasm, and relevancy are characteristic of a good teaching methodology. The college classroom should not serve as a podium for intellectual exhibitionism or be a forum for undisciplined free for all ranting. Some information and delight may result from such activities, but they are achieved at the expense of compromising student learning and scholarship. Instruction in the classroom ought to be student oriented so that students are involved in comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation rather than becoming amen-sayers to authoritative professorial ranting. Students will be able to ask appropriate questions, collect accurate information, evaluate its quality, and reflectively, and creatively analyze, synthesize, and organize the information. As a result, students will be able to reason logically and come to reliable conclusions that will enable them to successfully navigate lecture and text in the context of the class. Related are communication skills, social responsibility, and personal development.

My pedagogic philosophy in teaching the Hebrew Bible is infused with a binary *midrashic* model: *midrash 'atsmi* (self exegesis and eisegesis) and *midrash tsiburi* (explorations of others). In teaching the Hebrew Bible, for example, I encourage my students to engage the text as is (*peshat*), and in return, the Scripture begs, *darshani* (*derash*; “expound me”); and by sharing research and by learning from class discussion, seeds of *midrashic* activity are planted. Furthermore, the student gains self-respect from such an exposure, his or her germane ideas are able to sprout, dialogistical learning commences, and a relaxed teacher-student symbiosis is created. Also, I grow in stature as an educator. By playing the role of a class catalyst, I have opportunities to present my own contribution and to refine it in light of class feedback to a greater degree than by the straight lecture method. My goal is to integrate teaching and learning, rooted in the way of Midrash, and the reward is in the participatory doing.

I respect the binding authority of the Torah. The doctrine of the eternity of the Torah and the covenant between God and Israel—what I understand to be the deep truth behind the mythicized construct of *Torah mi-Sinai*—is implicit in verses that speak of individual teachings of Torah. Take, for example, phrases such as: “A perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your (lands of) dwellings” (Lev 3:17) and “throughout the ages as a covenant for all time” (Exod 3:16). Although the Sages describe a pre-

revelatory Heavenly Torah (see, for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 8:2), this concentrates, I believe, more on the Torah's eternal humanistic values than on the specific details of the narrative or the laws. Indeed, the Rabbis speak of two strains: revelation ("everything which a scholar will ask in the future is already known to Moses at Sinai"; see *b. Meg.* 19b; cf. *b. Menah* 29b) and the rabbinic understanding of revelation. The latter encompasses strict literalness and liberal interpretation, which sees theophany-related vocabulary and events as literary categories. By twinning the two dialectics of revelation and reasoning, the Sages may have taught more Torah than was ever received at Sinai.

I too try and follow in the footsteps of the Sages in this regard, but I do so with a twist. I combine modern biblical scholarship and classical Jewish learning to make sense of the *Tanakh* in the life of the people then and now. I conflate profane and sacred ways to return to Sinai and back. Source criticism to unravel complexities in transmission (composition, dating, events) and perplexities in thought (Israelite religion, biblical theology), but I remain very much, perhaps wholly concerned with faith questions such as, "What does the holistic Torah teach?" Various biblical verses point to the Pentateuch as "Torah" distinct from the rest of the Scriptures. The verse "Moses charged us with the Teaching (Torah) as the heritage of the congregation of Jacob" (Deut 33:4) suggests the inalienable importance of Torah to Israel: It is to be transmitted from age to age. This transmission has become the major factor for the unity of the Jewish people throughout their wanderings.

The rabbis of the Talmud kept the Torah alive and made its message relevant in different regions and times. This has been done by means of the Rabbinic hermeneutic of a dual Torah read into verses from the book of Exodus. The Rabbis find the hook to their oral Torah in the very words of the written Torah itself. Regarding God's words to Moses on the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, it is said in Exodus, "Write down (*ktav*) these words, for in accordance ('*al pi*'; literally, 'by the mouth') with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exod 34:27). It also says earlier in Exodus, "I will give you the stone tablets with the teachings (*torah*) and commandments which I have inscribed (*ktav-ti*) to instruct (by word of mouth) them" (Exod 24:12).

The Sages saw the words *write*, *accordance*, and *instruct* as the legitimate warrant for the written Torah (*Torah shebiktav*) and the oral Torah (*Torah shehb'al peh*). In their view, the written Torah of Moses is eternal. The oral

Torah is the application of the written Torah to forever changing historic situations, which continues to uncover new levels of depth and meaning and thus make new facets of Judaism visible and meaningful in each generation. In other words, the Rabbis find written and oral word complements, which compliment written and oral Torah in the text of the Torah.

In sum, my teaching Tanakh, critically speaking, at a public community college, accepts the existential position that God's teaching was shared at Sinai/Horeb, face *into* face (Deut 5:4), with all of Israel, present and future. Present, implies that God's primary revelation occurred and that the Torah is the memory of this unique theophany; future hints that Israel's dialogue with God is an ongoing process. This view holds that people know only a part of divine truth and that each generation seeks, makes distinctions, categorizes, and strives to discover more. My preferential Torah rallying cry: *Na'aseh ve-Nishma'*. ("We shall do and we shall hear [reason]." [Exod 24:7]). *Na'aseh* alone permits no ultimate questions; *nishma'* alone provides no ultimate answers. *Na'aseh* and *Nishma'* together ask questions and attempt answers but leave many uncertainties unanswered. Yet uncertainty is truth in the making and the inevitable price for intellectual academic freedom.⁹

Dvar Yeshu'a

Religious beliefs and practices are often couched in religious creeds and outlooks that for many traditionalist Jews and Christians are rooted in the Bible, seen as monolithic and complete. Decades of academic biblical scholarship, however, show that the biblical canon is a product of historical, political, and social forces, in addition to religious ideology. Recent quests for the historical Jesus are eroding the teaching of contempt from the Cross at Calvary by finding the New Testament Jesus in the context of the Judaism of Erets Israel in first century. Thus the continuity of the historical Jesus with the Christ of faith is found only in cultic belief. My view of Jesus as a proto-pharisaic rabbi-nationalist closely aligned with the anti-Roman zealot insurrection is a proper though controversial *learning* topic in lower and upper division Judaica.

⁹ Extracted from my essay, "Torah Thoughts, Rabbinic Mind, and Academic Freedom," available online at <http://thetorah.com/torah-thoughts-and-academic-freedom>, accessed January 17, 2014.

Teaching about Jesus and New Testament–related issues in Jewish settings of higher education is proper in classes covering Second Temple Judaism and/or Jewish-Christian relations through the generations. In the inaugural 2011–2012 Faculty/Student Seminar Series sponsored by the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies (October 10, 2011), I spoke on the Synoptic Jesus in the context of history and tradition. Among the perspectives I presented were establishing the historicity of Jesus, seeking ways of understanding Jesus in the religious and cultural milieu of Second Temple Judaism, and in the spirit of reconciliation, encountering the Jewish Jesus in a dialogue between Jews and Christians. I also shared that a number of contributors to Zev Garber, ed., *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011) reacted vehemently about the cover that depicts Jesus reading from the Torah. Why? Concern over Jewish triumphalism and/or fear of Christian backlash supersessionism.¹⁰

My reasoning for advocating the legitimacy of *dvar Yeshu'a* in Jewish Studies classes is straightforward and transforming: dialogue, celebrating uniqueness without polemics and apologetics. As a practicing Jew who dialogues with Christians, I have learned to respect the covenantal role that Christians understand to be the way of the scriptural Jesus on their confessional lives. Also, Jew and Christian in dialogical encounter with select biblical texts can foster mutual understanding and respect as well as personal change and growth within their faith affirmation. Moreover, interfaith study of Scriptures acknowledges differences and requires that the participants transcend the objectivity and data-driven detachment of standard academic approaches, and encourages students at whatever level to enter into an encounter with Torah and Testament without paternalism, parochialism, and prejudice. My *dvar Yeshua* is infused with the teachings of the Sages: *talmud torah 'im derekh 'eret*, here meaning, study Torah and respect of ideological differences (*derekh 'erets*). Critically speaking, teaching, *dvar Yeshua* by conversation not conversion twists and winds to the wellspring of Torah (Teaching). Take Reflections and Reimagining, for example.

Reflections on Worldviews: Rabbinic Torah and the Testimony of Jesus¹¹

¹⁰ Garber et al., “That Jesus Cover,” *Shofar* 30, no. 3 (2012): 121–141.

¹¹ My view on the historical Jesus is spelled out in Garber, “The Jewish Jesus: A Partisan’s Imagination,” in *Mel Gibson’s Passion: The Film, the Controversy, and*

There is a line of basic continuity between the beliefs and attitudes of Jesus and the Pharisees, between the reasons that led Jesus into conflict with the religious establishment of his day and those that led his followers into conflict with the Synagogue.

Two of the basic issues were the role of the Torah and the authority of Jesus. Rabbinic Judaism could never accept the Second Testament Christology because the God-Man of the “hypostatic union” is foreign to the Torah’s teaching on absolute monotheism. As the promised Messiah,¹² Jesus did not meet the conditions that the prophetic-rabbinic tradition associated with the coming of the Messiah. For example, there was no harmony, freedom, peace, and amity in Jerusalem and enmity and struggle abounded elsewhere in the Land. This denies the validity of the Christian claim that Jesus fulfilled the Torah and that in his Second Coming the tranquility of the Messianic Age will be realized. As Rabbi Jesus, he taught the divine authority of the Torah and the prophets,¹³ and respect for its presenters and preservers,¹⁴ but claimed that his authority was equally divine and that it stood above the authority of the Torah. I agree with others who see this testimony as the major point of contention between Jesus and the religious authorities that ultimately led to the severance of the Jesus party from the Synagogue. However, I maintain, that the quarrel began in the words of Jesus on the road to and from the Torah.

For example, the distinction between the positive articulation of the Golden Rule as given by Jesus¹⁵ and its negative form as given by Hillel.¹⁶ The

Its Implications, ed. Zev Garber (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 63–69. Reprinted with slight changes in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011), 4, 13–19.

¹² Cf., among others, Matt 26:62–64; Mark 14:60–62; Luke 22:60–70.

¹³ Cf. Matt 5:17–20

¹⁴ Matt 23:1–3a

¹⁵ Cf. Matt 7:12 and Luke 6:31.

¹⁶ The origin of the Golden Rule is Lev 19:18. Evidence of the Golden Rule as an essence of the moral life is found in Jewish tradition long before the period of Hillel and Jesus. For example, the books of Ben Sira and Tobit (both second century BCE) expound: “Honor thy neighbor as thyself” (Ben Sira) and “What is displeasing to thyself, that do not do unto any other” (Tobit). Similarly, *Testaments of the Twelve*

Jesus ethic as seen in Christianity is altruistic. It denies the individual objective moral value and dwarfs the self for the sake of the other. Hillel's moral code as understood within Judaism eliminates the subjective attitude entirely. It is objectively involved with abstract justice, which attaches moral value to the individual as such without prejudice to self or other.

Hillel's argument is that no person has the right to ruin another person's life for the sake of one's own life, and similarly, one has no right to ruin one's own life for the sake of another. Both are human beings and both lives have the same value before the heavenly throne of justice and mercy. The Torah teaching, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"¹⁷ means for the Sages *just* (sic) that, neither more nor less; that is, the scales of justice must be in a state of equilibrium with no favorable leaning either toward self or neighbor. Self-love must not be a measuring rod to slant the scale on the side of self-advantage, and concern for the other must not tip the scale of justice in his or her behalf.¹⁸

Hillel's point stands in contrast to the standpoint of Jesus, whom Christians believe is above the authority of the Dual Torah. The disparity of self and other in the ancestral faith of Jesus is abolished in the new faith in Jesus: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."¹⁹ This may well explain the words of Jesus on retaliation,²⁰ on love of one's enemies,²¹ and on forgiveness at the crucifixion.²²

The difference between Hillel and Jesus, the Synagogue and the Church, on the purpose of Torah and the person of Jesus, acquired new intensity after the passing of the Jewish Jesus and the success of Pauline Christianity.

Judaizing Christians:

Patriarchs (first century BCE) warns: "A man should not do to his neighbor what a man does not desire for himself."

¹⁷ Lev 19:18.

¹⁸ Cf. the Baraita in *B. Meši'a* 62a, which pits the view of the altruistic Ben P'tura against R. Akiba, and *Pesaḥim* 25b where a man asks Raba (280–352) what he should do if an official threatened to kill him unless he would kill another man.

¹⁹ Gal 3:28. Also, 1Cor 12:13; Col 3:11

²⁰ Matt 5:38–42; Luke 6:29–30.

²¹ Matt 5:43–48; Luke 6:27–28, 32–36.

²² Luke 23:34.

Reimagining *Christendom* as an Open Door to the Passover Seder

Open Door Policy. The controversial role of Elijah's Cup at the Passover Seder and related matters of wrath, disputation, genocide, respect, reclamation and reconciliation. Streams of Jewish consciousness from the biblical period to the current epoch of Jewish memory and history with an emphasis of Jewish Self and Christian (Gentile) Other. In the main, the pageantry of the Passover Seder focuses on two periods of Jewish history: the biblical Exodus from Egypt and the rabbinic recalling of the account. Through ritual food, drink, and animated reading and interpretation, the participant travels with the Children of Israel as if "s/he came forth out of Egypt," and sits at the table of the Sages as they observe Passover in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. Alas, the forty-year trek from wilderness into freedom succumbed in Jewish history into a long night's journey into exile. "Begin with disgrace and end with glory" (*m. Pesachim* 10.4). That is to say, talk openly and informatively about exilic degradation and destruction, so that, in contrast, the experience of Jewish freedom and triumph are cherished and appreciated. Thus, it is suggested, nay expected, that the greatest tragedy of the Jewish Night, the Shoah in the lands of Christendom, be recounted on the night that accentuates Jewish birth and being. But for many Jews, it is not. How come? And for Christians who commemorate the Lord's Supper as a Passover, may it not be *asked*, what have you done actively (executed) and quietly (bystander) to the Lord's Anointed People?

A number of questions arise for those who insert contemporary genocide in the midst of freedom. Where is the Shoah inserted: beginning, middle, or end of the Seder ceremony? By inserting Shoah into the Haggadah, are we not turning Judeocide into a paschal sacrifice making it a biblical *holocaust* rather than a contemporary Shoah of millions? Nonetheless, the *why* of the Shoah is unexplainable and may explain why it is inserted in the second part ("future") of the service. Rabbinically speaking, the Four Cups at the Passover table represent the verbs of God's freedom in the biblical Exodus story (Exod 6:6–8). The Four Cups are the matrix around which the redemptive memories are spun. Cup One, the *Kiddush*, festival benediction of blessing and joy; Cup Two, in honor of God, the Redeemer of Jewish history; Cup Three, an abbreviated *Kiddush* for the benefit of latecomers at the transition between the first and second part of the Seder service; and Cup Four, the acknowledgement of the Passover of the Future. The Third Cup follows the Grace after the Meal without narrative accompaniment. Then a special cup, the Cup of Elijah, is poured to overflowing, and the door is

opened and the “Pour Out Your Wrath” paragraph bellowed to the outside world. After the door is closed, the Fourth Cup is filled, and the “Egyptian Hallel” (Pss 113–118), “The Great Hallel” (Pss 136), and “Benediction of Song” (m. *Pesaḥim* 10.7) are recited. Finally, the Fourth Cup is drunk at the close of the Passover Seder. The excruciating question, why Shoah memory and the curse of Nations (pagan and monotheistic) at the Cup of Elijah, symbolic herald of messianic peace?

According to the tradition of Rabbi Judah ben Bezalel, the Maharal of Prague (c. 1525–1609), one reads the “Great Hallel” with the Fifth Cup in hand, and in testimony to the passage, “Who remembered us in our low estate and has delivered us from our adversaries” (Pss 136: 23–24). So in our day, drinking from the Cup of Elijah testifies “to the land (He gave) for a heritage unto Israel” (Pss 136:21–22). Is there a link between Auschwitz and Jerusalem? Cause and effect or remembrance and never again? To drink or not to drink from the Fifth Cup is the thematic link extended to the celebrants of the Lord’s Supper to experience the last meal of the Jewish Jesus with his Jewish disciples before the *Passover* of the ways.²³ The learning objective invites the Prodigal Son to join the Children and together convert the “Cup of Wrath” to the “Cup of Love.” Exploring and experiencing aspects of cultural and religious dynamics is a *raison d’être* for a Jesus visit to my Jewish Studies class.

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²³ Double entendre is intentional; it is meant to question the accuracy of the institution of the Last Supper to be a Passover Seder meal. Luke 22:15 reads that “I (Jesus) have earnestly desired to eat this passover (offering, meal) with you (disciples) before I suffer” and follows with the benediction of the wine (*Kiddush*) and blessing of the bread (*Motsi*) (vs., 17–19). However, Mark 14:22–23 and Matthew 26:26–27 reverse the order of bread and wine before the meal. Further, I Corinthians 11:23–25 speak of breaking bread at the start of the meal and drinking the cup of wine *after* the meal. In sum, Luke follows the order of a Seder ritual; Mark and Matthew do not; and the older Pauline version in 1 Corinthians speaks of a *Chavura* fellowship and not the ritualistic Passover meal.

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CHAPTER TWO

JESUS “IN THE TRENCHES”: PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES POSED BY TEACHING THE NAZARENE IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDAIC STUDIES

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This essay by Hanson was published in *Teaching the Historical Jesus: Issues and Eisegesis*, ed., Zev Garber (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 37-48.

Key words: Judaic Studies, historical Jesus, online education, comparative religion, source criticism

The Problem

Five decades ago Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik produced a consequential essay particularly relevant to teaching about Jesus on a university level. Entitled “Confrontation,” it expresses his deep skepticism about Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue, namely, that ultimate religious beliefs cannot be communicated or shared, and that dialogue often involves the need for religious or theological change, blurring the differences and leading to a loss of identity.¹ Some contend that Christianity can only be defined by its hostility toward Judaism, being a supersessionist faith at its core.

¹ J. B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 6 2 (1964): 5-29; cf. Michael Gillis, “Other Religions in Jewish Education,” in *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, Part 2, ed. Helena Miller et al. (London: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg, 2011), 568.

Reconciliation is arguably impossible without the loss of identity of one faith or the other. Moreover, the historical Jesus is deemed to be unrecoverable, essentially a construction of Christology. According to this view, the study of Christianity is important for the simple reason that it aids in understanding the unbridgeable divide between the two faiths, each being focused on a claim of divine election.²

By contrast, it is argued that “dialogue” should be distinguished from “education,” which can indeed become a vehicle for reconciliation.³ A case can in fact be made that the recovery of the Jewish Jesus is not only possible, at least to some extent, but an entirely appropriate academic pursuit in an institution of higher learning. But should such a pursuit be entertained in a Judaic Studies program at a secular state university? By the same token, we ask whether, within the context of a Judaic Studies curriculum at such a university, it is necessary to devote any serious time to considering the presumed founder of a major non-Jewish faith, the concerns of which are largely if not entirely irrelevant to an education in Judaism? Should Jesus (known more accurately by his Hebrew name, Yeshua) be given more attention than, say, the prophet Muhammad, the Buddha or Lao Tzu, for that matter, given that Jews have certainly resided in many different lands dominated by disparate religions throughout their history?

A case will have to be made that Jesus/ Yeshua of Nazareth, or at least the “myth” of Jesus, is particularly important in understanding the Jewish people, and of singular importance in appreciating the course and development of Jewish life, thought and culture across history. It will, moreover, be argued that failing to approach the Jesus of history and/or myth amounts to a serious deficit in what has classically been termed *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – the “science of Judaism.”

Jesus, Comparative Religion, and Judaic Studies Courses

² Yeshayahu Liebowitz and Eliezer Goldman, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); cf. Gillis, “Other Religions,” 568. As Flusser observed, “Scholarship and ecumenicism were never identical; nevertheless ... sound scholarship removes obstacles and paves the way for truth and for mutual understanding.” David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), xii.

³ Gillis, “Other Religions,” 568.

Indeed, contemporary approaches to the study of Judaism necessarily involve the integration of multiple disciplines, some of which represent a radical departure from “traditional” modes of study, as practiced for centuries in yeshivas and *batei midrash*. Far from weakening an appreciation for Jewish life, faith and culture, the appropriate synthesis of “comparative religion” in Judaic Studies programs should be seen as an essential element in understanding Judaism within the larger fabric of world religions.

In my own experience I find it appropriate to reference the historical Jesus/ Yeshua in a number of semester-long courses that I regularly teach to undergraduates, both in the classroom and in an online environment. These include:

- “The Jewish People in Antiquity” (covering a period extending from the patriarchal age, in ancient Mesopotamia, to the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem).
- “The Jewish People in Dispersion,” (a survey from the Muslim conquest through the rise of modern Israel).
- “The Dead Sea Scrolls” (a survey of the manuscript finds of the Judean Desert).
- “Kabbalah” (an overview of the mystical impulse in Judaism, from ancient times to the present).
- “History of the Holocaust” (a survey of the Nazi persecution of the Jewish people, beginning with the legacy of Christian anti-Semitism in western lands).

In teaching these classes it is my observation and adage (oft shared with my students) that an idea or concept is not fully grasped until we come to an understanding of what it is pitted against. (“Beware the sound of one hand clapping.”) So it is with competing philosophies and competing religious systems. Appreciation comes when the larger conflict is perceived, in the pedagogical equivalent of John Stuart Mill’s “marketplace of ideas.” This does not of course imply endorsing one religious philosophy over another, but it does involve highlighting the attributes and relative deficits of each, vis-à-vis the societies in which they evolved, while recognizing the lively interplay between faiths over the course of history.

It is important as an instructor to be reminded, at the outset of each semester, that many of today's students are almost entirely lacking any knowledge of the scientific approach to religious studies. This may well result from the larger debate about whether teaching the "liberal values" of religion in fact amounts to teaching religion rather than teaching *about* religion, the end result being the near exclusion of serious reference to religion from the classroom. Consequently, most students have been exposed to religion only in the confines of their respective places of worship (synagogues, churches, mosques) and are at the very least uncomfortable with "Jesus talk" in the classroom or the online environment.

Doubtless, this serious lack of teaching about religion in contemporary secular education all the more complicates the issue of how to approach "sacred" texts in a diverse/interfaith university environment. We might certainly argue that novel approaches to teaching religion are called for. When it comes to teaching about Jesus/ Yeshua in a Judaic Studies curriculum, novel approaches are demanded. An appropriate starting point is the recognition of the need (at least in a number of my courses) to cover an assortment of themes that cut across the fabric of Second Temple Judaism and Jewish culture. In framing the issues revolving around the historical Jesus, we must address Jewish students attempting to understand the contour of pre-rabbinic Judaism, and Christian students seeking background for the development of early Christianity. Jesus/ Yeshua, oddly enough, becomes a "matrix" for examining a whole gamut of religious, political and social phenomena relevant to the entire period.

It is of course important to recognize that the best we can provide when it comes to teaching this material is an overview. Yet, an overview is exactly what is needed in a classroom setting, especially on an undergraduate level. Moreover, the online environment provides new opportunities to go into depth with this material, for those who so desire, without devoting what some might consider an inordinate amount of class time to the study of the Jewish Jesus. The online course I have developed ("The Jewish People in Antiquity") will be the focus of the current study, as it incorporates multiple links, to articles, books and video presentations (documentaries) that allow interested students to delve much more deeply into the issues raised than might otherwise be possible in a "traditional" classroom. I have also been able to "publish" a portion of this study as a framework for integrating the multiple facets of Second Temple history and culture, affording students a

more thorough look at the contour of the debate than would be afforded in a live class environment.

Jesus Meets Hegel

There is of course significant contemporary critique coupled with occasional vitriol directed at the overall state of education in today's America. The "prime directive," attested by many a pedagogue, is, put simply, to teach to the test. Students are increasingly admonished to seek "the right answers," and their faculty "coaches" are incessantly challenged to supply them. Rather than acquiring the skills of shrewd analysis in the "marketplace of ideas," education is reduced to a pale Pavlovian exercise of recitation and regurgitation. Whatever happened to the charmingly antiquated Hegelian notion of thesis colliding with its antithesis, to produce a new, lively and insightful synthesis? Truth be told, when it comes to Jesus/ Yeshua, there are clearly no "right" answers. While today's flock of young academic charges are understandably frustrated by this, the dilemma of teaching Jesus may in the final analysis be seen as a serious opportunity to confront students with the "art" as well as the "science" of scholarship.

Not a few Jewish students understandably recoil at the very suggestion of entering a serious academic discussion of Jesus/ Yeshua. Jewish sensitivities must certainly be taken into account, given that most Jews in modern American culture have at some point been the object of sincere if misguided proselytization efforts on the part of evangelical Christians. I nonetheless argue that teaching Jesus affords both Jews and Christians the opportunity to broaden and enrich their faith perspectives, while gaining fresh insight on the history and culture of the land of Israel in late antiquity.

As a matter of personal pedagogy, I find the methods advanced in the "dialogical model" proposed by James F. Moore particularly relevant to my own instruction.⁴ These involve the cultivation of "openness" on several levels: listening to the viewpoints of others, accepting "truth" in such viewpoints, learning about one's own traditions, and risking change in one's personal perspectives (the admonishments of Rabbi Soloveitchik

⁴ For more background regarding the challenges faced by Jewish students in Jewish Studies classes as they attempt to grasp new and "foreign" viewpoints, see James F. Moore, "Dialogue: An Infusion Method for Teaching Judaism," in *Academic Approaches to Teaching Jewish Studies*, ed. Zev Garber (Lanham, MD: University Press, 2000), 233-46.

notwithstanding). Such openness is particularly germane to teaching Jesus in an interfaith environment, given that Christian students are often defensive of the person of Jesus/ Yeshua, while Jewish students are just as defensive about the need to discuss the founder of a non-Jewish faith responsible for centuries of anti-Jewish rhetoric and behavior. Add to this the most significant challenge I have faced in the many years I have been addressing the historical Jesus in a Judaic Studies curriculum, namely, how to steer students away from making “religious arguments,” either in a traditional classroom setting, or, more recently, in an online environment.

The latter (while a fairly recent innovation when it comes to my own methods of instruction) provides new opportunities for interaction with students on any number of levels. I have long noted a certain reticence among many students to be as candid and forthright as I would hope when it comes to expressing their ideas about topics as deeply personal as their religious perspectives. Many clearly prefer to keep their opinions to themselves rather than to engage in dialogue and “openness.” Such students have also been called “silent conservatives,” who refrain from sharing their religious convictions, either out of shyness or fear of being ridiculed.⁵ To its credit, the online environment, which requires of class members weekly discussion posts, possesses the clear advantage of encouraging and fostering, in a less “threatening” mode of communication, an openness that is often elusive when students are “face-to-face” with each other and their instructor. While online courses have been criticized for fostering a disembodied anonymity, I have found this characteristic to be of considerable benefit vis-a-vis eliciting student commentary and interaction regarding otherwise sensitive areas of religious faith.

This increased openness, however, is attended by an increasing number of pedagogical dilemmas. How, on a practical level, is this instructor to respond to such blunt online comments as “Jesus was the Messiah”? How can one point out that the very existence of Jesus/ Yeshua is debated, without being perceived as attempting to undermine sincere Christian faith? The challenge for the instructor at this point is to remind the student politely of what the study of religion involves, academically, and the kinds of issues debated by scholars, in published articles and at scholarly conferences. While we encourage lively debate, what we cannot do, I remind the students,

⁵ Bruce Zuckerman, “Choosing Among the Strands: Teaching Hebrew Bible Survey to Undergraduates at a Secular University,” in Garber, *Academic Approaches*, 77.

is to argue whose religion is “right,” as we have no way of establishing the “truth” of any particular religion or religious tradition. Such things are matters of personal conviction. Nor is “apologetics” the domain of interfaith scholarship, since we cannot “privilege” one faith tradition over another. Such pursuits are best left to the domain of theological seminaries, rabbinical yeshivas and the like.

As class instructor, my comments are posted openly on a discussion board, for all the students to read. Nonetheless, the essence of academic discourse is not easily grasped for undergraduates unaccustomed to perusing scholarly articles on the subject of religion. A case in point involves one of my students, who raised the following question on a discussion board: “Was it possible that Jesus was the Messiah, but that the people were looking for a warrior, not a shepherd?” Obviously, this student lacks a knowledge of fundamental Christian traditions about Jesus/ Yeshua, specifically that he was said to have been a “carpenter” (actually a “joiner,” which likely refers to a stone mason) by trade. Beyond this, however, the question betrays the stereotypical depiction of Jesus/ Yeshua as the “prince of peace,” who was rejected by “the Jews” for failing to accomplish a military deliverance from Roman rule. The implications of this stereotyping have been devastating, historically, feeding into the charge that the Jewish people en-masse are “Christ killers.” Another student in the same class commented online as follows:

Jesus of Nazareth came to be a peacemaker at the wrong time in history. He came at the point in time when the Jewish people were looking for a savior to free them from the tyranny of the Roman Empire. The Jews hoped that Jesus would be this warrior who would lead them into battle. But the Romans did not see him the same way. In the historical account, the Romans aren’t the ones who try to crucify Jesus; it’s his fellow Jews. In every account about Jesus he is spoken of as a peaceful man, a teacher of the Law, not one who would lead a rebellion. Assuming these accounts are accurate, could the frustration of not having a military savior ... have driven the Jewish people to have [Jesus] wrongfully put to death?

There is no simple way to alleviate the confusion about Yeshua when faced with attitudes that are not only grossly oversimplified and historically inaccurate, but deeply offensive to our Jewish students. The tack I have taken is twofold: to address these misunderstandings individually, and to use them as a segue to approaching the larger cultural, textual and historical milieu of the Second Jewish Commonwealth.

How much do we know about the Judaism of the Second Temple period, and what was Yeshua's relationship to the religion of his own people? What do we know about the politics of the age, the anti-Roman agitation that was rampant across *Eretz Israel*, and the "Zealot" movement? Only when we have a good understanding of such cultural, religious and political currents can we dare to approach the illustrious Nazarene.

The Jesus Matrix and Josephus' Four Philosophies

What indeed were the various socio-religious currents active in the land of Israel in the latter part of the Second Temple period, and where might Yeshua fall with respect to them?⁶ A handy instructional rubric for categorizing these trends may be found in the writings of Flavius Josephus, who famously described four major "philosophies" prevalent among the Jews of that era. They include the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. To be sure, the writings of Josephus are a major component of the "Jewish People in Antiquity" course, and since one of the most important early references to Jesus/ Yeshua of Nazareth is contained in this material, we have in these writings a natural point of departure for our debate. A suggested question for discussion, especially in the online environment, is: "To which of Josephus' 'four philosophies' was the historical Jesus closest?"

With regard to the Pharisees, it is by no means inappropriate to interpose the discourses of Yeshua into the larger debate (also covered in our course) between schools of Hillel and the more "conservative" Shammai, in several instances placing him closer to the latter. This comes as a surprise to many of my Jewish students, who think of Yeshua as – at best – a not very observant Jew. It also comes as an understandable shock to Christians of evangelical persuasion, who are inclined to view the Pharisees, not only as Yeshua's natural antagonists, but as conspiratorial murderers, whose hypocrisy knew no bounds. To discover that Yeshua's famous "Golden Rule" is essentially a paraphrase of the words of Hillel the Elder is surprising enough, but to find that the larger context of the great "Hillelism" ("That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor") is a debate over proselytism opens the door to a much greater cognitive dissonance. This is

⁶ As David Flusser pointed out, Christianity did not evolve from the religion of the Old Testament, but from the Jewish religiosity that flourished during the intertestamental period. See Flusser, "A New Sensitivity In Judaism and the Christian Message," in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 469-89.

because Shammai was said to have pushed away proselytes. Similarly, Yeshua is said to have instructed his disciples (“*shlikhim*”) not to go into the way of the Gentiles (Matt 10:5). In what ways might this alter the traditional view of Yeshua as the founder of a non-Jewish faith?

As our Jewish students continue to ponder the relevancy of so much “Jesus talk,” not a few Christian students find themselves troubled by Yeshua’s possible affinity with Pharisee thought and teaching. In class material covering Jewish culture during the Second Temple period, we had emphasized the fact that the Pharisees were known to have cultivated the concept of an “Oral Law,” communicated to Moses on Mt. Sinai and just as binding upon the Israelites as the written Torah. It is common for any number of my Christian students to imagine Yeshua in strong opposition to this aspect of Pharisee “doctrine,” referencing Yeshua’s supposed denunciation of the “tradition of the elders” (παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) and the “commandments of men” (Matt 15:3, 9).

But if that were the case, I argue, we might find an even greater affinity between Yeshua and another class in ancient Judean society, known for having rejected the whole of the “Oral Torah,” and with it concept of the resurrection of the dead (also heralded by the Pharisees). Indeed, if we assert that Yeshua had some problem with Oral Law, we have just made him one of the second of Josephus’ “four philosophies,” the Sadducees. There is certainly little tolerance for framing Yeshua as an ally of the Sadducees, and at this point the Pharisee comparison becomes even more tantalizing. Students are inclined to point out that Yeshua is repeatedly said to have condemned the Pharisees, lambasting them as “hypocrites.” But what, I ask, are the implications of such a charge vis-à-vis Christian attitudes toward Jews down through the centuries, given that rabbinic Judaism falls in a direct line of descent from ancient Pharisaism? To what extent is the anti-Semitism of the last two millennia rooted in this charge, placed in the mouth of Yeshua and applied with broad strokes to the whole Jewish people?

At this point another segment of ancient Jewish society, akin to the Pharisees but going beyond them in cultivating a unique intimacy with the Divine, comes into focus. Scholars have long noticed an affinity between the teachings attributed to the Nazarene and those of a group of Jewish pietists, known as the Ḥasidim. By now my classes are familiar with the early Hasidim, who were said to have joined the Maccabees in their struggle for liberation from their Seleucid oppressors. The Jesus comparison now affords the opportunity to elucidate the supposed distinction between this

militant expression of ancient Judaism and a later, reorganized Ḥasidic movement, that had eschewed violence in favor of an appeal to divine, supernatural assistance. We think of pre-rabbinic, itinerant sages such as Ḥanina ben Dosa (the first-century miracle worker who could command rain to cease and to fall) and Ḥoni Ha-Ma'agel (who commanded rain to fall in a drought).⁷

The Ḥasidim were known for possessing a certain familiarity with God, whom, like Yeshua, they personally addressed as “Father.” They were also regarded, like Yeshua, as “sons of God.” The identification of Yeshua with the Pious, however, begs another question, inasmuch as the Ḥasidim referenced during the Maccabean Revolt were known to have been militant insurrectionists. This is hardly the way the later heroes of the pietistic movement (Ḥoni Ha-Ma'agel *et al*) were depicted.

We may question whether the stories regarding the later Ḥasidim might have been overwritten by the Tannaitic and Amoraic Sages (*Ḥazal*) so as to deemphasize their militancy and frame them as “pacifistic” pietists. It is well argued, for example, that the Talmudic account of the “miracle” of Hanukkah – the story of the oil in the menorah that burned for eight days – amounted to an attempt to downplay the military triumph of the Maccabees and, in a sense, “de-Hasmonize” history. While some have tried to distinguish the early Ḥasidim from the later pietistic phenomenon, we might equally argue that militancy is the correct lens through which to view both the early Ḥasidim and their later cousins, along with the Galilean sage known as Jesus/ Yeshua.

The discussion regarding piety versus militancy in Second Temple Judaism comes together in what is perhaps the most important source material of the period, the manuscript finds of the Judean Desert, known collectively as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Long considered the literary product of the ancient Jewish sect known as the Essenes, their authorship is nonetheless challenged for a number of reasons, not the least of which has to do with the larger issue of militancy. Modern scholarship has uncovered a good deal of congruency between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the militant behavior of the defenders of Masada, not the pacifistic, Pythagorean paragons of virtue the Essenes are thought to have been. Josephus nonetheless notes that when, during the course of the Great Revolt, the Essenes were taken captive by the Romans, they were racked, twisted, burned and broken, but nonetheless “smiled in

⁷ Flusser, “A New Sensitivity,” 477-78.

their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them” (*War* 2.150). Why, we wonder, would it have been necessary to torture these sectarians if they were pacifists and posed no threat? Hippolytus, moreover, describes the Essenes as “Zealots.” Might it have been, that classical writers of Jewish history (Josephus, Philo and Pliny included) chose to “tone down” the militancy of the Essenes, just as *Hazal* would do with the Maccabees, and, others quite possibly, with Yeshua?⁸

Our discussion of the violent character of the scrolls now segues into the final chapter in the history of the Second Temple period, the Great Revolt against Rome. Historians through the centuries have noted the fanatical character of the revolt, but the inspiration behind the mania takes on a completely new dimension when seen against the backdrop of the Dead Sea materials. Why did the Jewish rebels continue to pursue not only a lost cause, but a militant course they must have known would lead to the ultimate destruction of their people and their land? Might the messages of the scrolls, of supernatural deliverance from heaven, have so permeated the larger Jewish psyche of the day, that the Zealot party was able to co-opt the great bulk of the population into its suicidal course of action?

This discussion leads us in turn to Josephus’ classic description of the so-called “fourth philosophy,” whose ideology is integral to our study of the outbreak of the Great Revolt. Having already noted the correlation between the teachings attributed to Yeshua and those of the Pharisees, we find Josephus’ testimony that the Zealots were in complete agreement with the same. The “fourth sect,” however, has gone beyond the Pharisees in fervor for “liberty,” fused with their conviction that Israel’s God is their sole sovereign. On this level it is indeed difficult to distinguish between the Zealots’ militancy and the sentiments we have already seen expressed in the Dead Sea corpus. There is little wonder that one of the Scrolls, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, was found on the summit of Masada.

When it comes to Josephus’ description of the Zealots as placing no “value” on “dying any kinds of death” (*Antiquities* 18.23) there is Yeshua’s kindred admonition, that “whoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33 MKJV; see also Matt 16:25). While this and similar verses have long been taken to reference religious persecution (prophetically prefiguring the persecution of early

⁸ For another view of “Jesus’ Opinion about the Essenes,” see Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins*, 150-68.

Christians), it can safely be said that the principal endangerment of life in the land of Israel in the first century stemmed from the Roman crackdown on the activity of the Zealots and their compatriots.

On a literary level, Josephus became an apologist for the Romans, to whom he had defected, and from whose graces he owed his life and livelihood. Likewise, the Gospel writers had every reason to exonerate the Romans for what some have called the “court-martial” of Jesus/ Yeshua, given that the new faith seemed destined to spread across the Roman empire.

Slanted Journalism, the Jesus Sources and Anti-Jewish Polemic

Our discussion of Jesus/ Yeshua has at this point opened another pedagogical door, to consider the role of “slanted journalism” among our ancient source material. We must recognize that everything Josephus writes must be read with a discerning eye, considering his obvious political agenda. By the same token every historian of the Second Jewish Commonwealth knows that we would be all but lost without Josephus’ invaluable testimony. The same tension exists when it comes to critical scholarship of the Gospels. While “suspect” in regard to their own religious/ political agenda (including their characterization of Yeshua himself), the snapshot they provide of life, pious faith, and the messianic impulse during the seminal period leading up to the Great Revolt is of immeasurable value.

The pedagogical “minefield” takes on yet another level of complexity as it becomes necessary to evaluate the Christian textual sources to determine the historicity and message of the Jewish Jesus. How much can we learn about Jews from non-Jewish sources? To what extent are the Christian Gospels the product of textual redaction? What can we learn about the tools of literary criticism, common to a wide range of Jewish texts as well, from such analysis?

The great majority of undergraduate students, both Jewish and Christian, cannot be expected to be aware of the intricacies of the “synoptic problem,” or the extent to which the critical examination of source material directly affects our appreciation of the history behind them. It is important to make students mindful that the New Testament is similar to the Hebrew Scriptures and the rabbinic literature in the sense that it was not written as “history,” nor was it ever intended to be read as such, at least according to modern expectations of the same. This is something we deal with whenever

considering biblical texts, as potential “historical” sources for studying ancient Israel.

The New Testament Gospels, however, present a unique set of challenges, inasmuch as they present three separate, yet linked, narratives of Jesus/ Yeshua (Mark, Luke and Matthew), along with a fourth, theologically oriented “biography” (John) that belongs to a completely different “genre.” The scholarly consensus (admittedly problematical for some students of sincere religious conviction) is that all have been heavily redacted to suit the theological and social mindset of the authors/ communities that produced them. The determination of which Gospel relied on which, along with oral traditions and extraneous material (e.g. the so-called “Q” text) is critical in uncovering a truer picture of the Jesus of history, and of ancient Judean politics.

The work of synoptic researchers is critical, not only in finding correlations between Yeshua’s teachings and those of the Jewish sects described by Josephus, but in mitigating some of the troublesome/ anti-Jewish flavor that occasionally comes across in them. The blanket condemnation of the Pharisees is a case in point, which the growth of redaction criticism has indeed addressed. When it comes to the “passion” narrative, students need to be aware of the assertion by modern scholarship that the so-called “trial” of Jesus/ Yeshua before the Jewish Sanhedrin was no trial at all, that the Gospels embellish the account to depict Jewish culpability for Yeshua’s execution, and that the only responsible party was the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Notably, however, the charge of “blasphemy,” present in both Mark and Matthew, is absent in the Lucan account. It might also be argued that Luke is, in this important recounting of the “trial” of Yeshua, more evenhanded and less inflammatory than the other two Synoptic Gospels, which could have significant implications in understanding the genesis of the charge of “deicide” – the murder of God. Not only does it not record a “Jewish conspiracy” to put Jesus/ Yeshua to death, it instead reflects genuine grief and solidarity with Yeshua on the part of the Judeans. The surprise here is obvious, on the part of both my Jewish and Christian young charges.

Then there is the so-called “blood curse,” uttered by a mass of Jerusalemites who had hastily assembled themselves before Pontius Pilate: “Then all the people answered and said, Let His blood be on us and on our children.” (Matt 27:25 MKJV). The Lucan account, by contrast, conveys a very different narrative:

And a great multitude of people were following Him, and of women who also were bewailing and lamenting Him. But turning to them, Jesus said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which did not suckle. (Luke 23:27-29 MKJV)⁹

We should compare these verses with traditional *Jewish* lamentation recorded after the destruction of the Temple:

Blessed is he who was not born
 Or he, who having been born, has died.
 But as for us who live, woe unto us,
 Because we see the afflictions of Zion ...
 And, ye women, pray not that ye may bear...
 Or why, again, should mankind have sons?
 (2 Bar 10:6-16)

It is noteworthy that in Luke, the words “for your children” form part of a tonally Jewish lamentation, whereas in Matthew the words “*on* our children” are imbedded in a different and much more sinister context. The remarks of Yeshua to the women making lamentation are conspicuously absent in Mark as well as Matthew, along with mention of the sympathetic “multitude.” This accords well with the later tendency to blame “the Jews” for their “blindness.” It is a theme that would be echoed by countless ecclesiastical authorities, and arguably responsible for twenty centuries of anti-Semitic bombast.

The importance of discussing such issues in the Gospels themselves cannot be overstated for a classroom (or online environment), given that our course on early Jewish history and culture is regularly followed in the succeeding semester by a course that traces the Jewish Diaspora across a long legacy of persecution, largely spurred by Christian theology and the specific charge that “the Jews” killed Christ. The implications are broad, even affecting Jewish-Christian relations today. By entering “into the trenches” with Jesus and Jesus research, we engage in more than an academic exercise; we help shape the future contour of inter-religious understanding for our young charges. Notwithstanding the understandable skepticism about Jewish-

⁹ Flusser, “The Crucified One and the Jews,” in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 577, 582, 583, 585.

Christian interfaith dialogue, we would be hard pressed as pedagogues to find a more noble endeavor.

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SECTION II

CHAPTER THREE

“ONE IN CHRIST”: THE VIEW FROM TORAH AND SHOAH

ZEV GARBER

This article by Garber appeared in *One in Christ Jesus: Essays on Early Christianity and “All that Jazz,” in Honor of S. Scott Bartchy*, eds. David Lertis Matson and K.C. Richardson. It discusses select Torah teachings related to “oneness in Christ” and Shoah theology.

Key words: eternal Torah, historiosophy, kol ‘isha, Paul matters, Rabbi Jesus, Shoah theology, Godwrestling

S. Scott Bartchy brought Christian Scriptures and early Christian history to UCLA and also founded the Center for the Study of Religion. I have fond memories of speaking at the Center on multiple occasions and found Scott to be a gracious host, perceptive commentator, and excellent coordinator of lecture presentation and Q & A with the audience. Noteworthy was his erudite written response to my remarks on Mel Gibson’s *Passion* and his engagement with the comments I presented at the inaugural Faculty/Student Seminar Series sponsored by the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies (10 October 2011). I spoke on the Synoptic Jesus in the context of history and tradition; seeking ways of understanding Jesus in the religious and cultural milieu of Second Temple Judaism and in the spirit of reconciliation; and encountering the Jewish Jesus in a dialogue between Jews and Christians. Predictably, Scott badgered me with terminology issues, and for a second in Royce Hall 306 I looked at the cover of my *Jewish Jesus* volume displayed on a screen above my head and internally screamed, “Why, Lord, Why”?

Introduction

In an e-mail communication, Bartchy informed me that his deep interest in Jewish-Christian relations began in his teenage years when his father served (for 25 years) as the (Gentile) tenor for the Jewish Temple in Canton, Ohio.¹ A comforting thought which underscores the intent and direction of my essay.

My reasoning for emphasizing the Jewishness of Jesus in Torah and Shoah is straightforward and transforming: dialogue celebrating uniqueness. As a practicing Jew who dialogues with Christians, I have learned to respect a primary belief (“One in Christ”) that Christians understand to be the way of the scriptural Jesus on their confessional lives. Also, Jew and Christian in dialogical encounter with select biblical texts can foster mutual understanding and respect as well as personal change and growth within their faith affirmation. Moreover, the interfaith study of Scriptures respects differences and requires that the participants transcend the objectivity and data driven detachment of standard academic approaches and encourages students at whatever level to enter into an encounter with Torah and Testament without paternalism, parochialism, and prejudice. In this vein, I offer a Jewish perception on “you are one in Christ Jesus” as expression of appreciation and friendship to a collegial friend who welcomes biting Jewish questions and reflections on sacred Christian texts. My essay embraces Torah thoughts, Jewish Jesus, and Shoah theology.

Elsewhere I have written about the historical Jesus.² Here I attempt to make sense of the Christ of faith in the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue and informed by an admonition attributed to the Jewish Jesus, “The scribes and

¹ “Brother Zev” communication, July 1, 2014.

² Zev Garber, “Do Not Hurt Them,” in *Holocaust Scholars Write to the Vatican*, ed. Harry James Cargas (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998), 49-56; Garber, “Partisan’s Imagination,” in *Mel Gibson’s Passion: The Film, the Controversy, and Its Implications*, ed. Zev Garber (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 63-69. Reprinted with slight changes in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011), 13-19. Also, in my edited volume, *Teaching the Historical Jesus*, I contribute a chapter on teaching Jesus in the classroom and content issues related to Jewish Studies.

Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it."³

The Jesus of the classic Christian belief: Is he real to Israel, the people and the religion? Or fulfilled Torah? Is belief in the death and resurrection of Christ reflective of Mosaic monotheism or expressive of the triune God of Christianity? Part of the problem stems from definition and intent. Some want to talk history, others theology. Some dance to Pan's lyre (Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon) and others to David's harp (Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem). Still others want to focus on text in the context of time and clime. Consider the word "Christ" and its corollary, vicarious atonement sacrifice, used so frequently in discussions and depictions of Second Testament theology.

As a Jew, I assess the Easter faith as derived from critical scholarship in search of the historic Jesus, not faith affirmations however insightful. For me, Jesus did not teach the traditional negative teachings about the Jews derived from sentences in the Gospels and Pauline Christology, and Augustine, Aquinas, and Reformation theology, which have influenced acts of cruelty and persecution against them throughout the ages. Also, to say, Jesus our Lord points the way to God, means that the God-man of the hypostatic union is metaphorical and not the ultimate force called God. Christian believers and educators can benefit from Jewish/Hebraic hermeneutics in teaching about Jesus' love and compassion.⁴ That is to say, by focusing on Jesus as a Pharisee, the Christian believer properly recovers the oral traditions preceding and following from the Jesus way. More importantly, associating Jesus with proto-rabbinic (Pharisaic) thought places the moral and spiritual message of Jesus in a sound Jewish context, which underscores a salient message: demythologize the Jewish guilt in the death of Jesus and demystify dogmatic Christology. Anything less than this combined effort would be to assail, not advocate Christ in a post-Shoah cross-cultural world.

³ Matt 23: 2-3a. S. Scott Bartchy's essay ("Jesus, the Pharisees, and Mediterranean Manliness") in *Teaching the Historical Jesus*, portrays Jesus as rejecting pharisaical behavior, dress, teaching, and outward male socialization. New Testament passages are taken either from the RSV or the NRSV translations and Hebrew Bible passages are JPS (1917 translation).

⁴ Cf. Mark 12:29 and Deut 6:4; Matt 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27 and Deut 6:5; Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27b and Lev 19:18.

A basic component of interfacing between Jews and Christians is to respect and understand the revelatory assertions of the other but equality in dialogue does not mean ready acceptance of the other's religious doctrines and theology. For example, the curious story of the Fig Tree. In Mark, it is written: "He was hungry; and seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, 'May no man ever eat fruit from you again' ... and Peter ... said unto him: 'Master, behold the fig tree which you cursed is withered away'." ⁵

Further in the text, the curse is explained to his followers as an admonition of faith in God. Set in the context of the Second Temple period, however, Christian exegetes address Jesus' caustic words to the Temple authorities, which, in the course of Church history, are extended to the whole Jewish nation in Jesus' name. In Christian creedal faith, it is affirmed that Jesus the Christ and God the Father are united "unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably." ⁶ And this "teaching of contempt" ⁷ has contributed to the near total destruction of European Jews in Hitler's Europe. Add human disaster in the aftermath of natural disaster ("acts of God"), and I see no damning message in the curse of a blameless tree ("it was not the right time of year for the figs").⁸

There is no doubt that many Christians accept the proclamation of the Fig Tree as the Word of God as it is. I do not. I see in this enigmatic passage a deviation of "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Pss 24:1) and an aberration of the Lord's word to Adam and Eve's children, not to destroy Earth but "to till and to keep it" (Gen 2:15). And I suspect that the Teacher from Galilee would agree.

Eternal Torah

⁵ Mark 11:12-14, 21 and a shorter parallel in Matt 21:18-19.

⁶ Jesus, truly man and truly God at one and the same time, was proclaimed such at the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.).

⁷ Term is associated with Jules Isaac (1877-1963), French Jewish authority on antisemitism, who, in audience with Pope John XXIII in 1960, persuaded the Holy Father to consider errors of the Church's teachings on the Jews. Isaac's writings were influential in the declaration of *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican Council II (1965).

⁸ Mark 11:13

There is a line of basic continuity between the beliefs and attitudes of Jesus and the Pharisees, between the reasons which led Jesus into conflict with the religious establishment of his day, and those which led his followers into conflict with the Synagogue.

Two of the basic issues were the role of the Torah and the authority of Jesus. Rabbinic Judaism could never accept the Second Testament Christology since the God-man of the “hypostatic union” is foreign to the Torah’s teaching on absolute monotheism. As the promised Messiah,⁹ Jesus did not meet the conditions which the prophetic-rabbinic tradition associated with the coming of the Messiah. For example, there was no harmony, freedom, peace, and amity in Jerusalem, and enmity and struggle abounded elsewhere in the Land. This lack of peace denied the validity of the Christian claim that Jesus fulfilled the Torah and that in his Second Coming the tranquility of the Messianic Age will be realized. As Rabbi Jesus, he taught the divine authority of the Torah and the prophets (Matt 5: 17-20), and respect for its presenters and preservers,¹⁰ but the Gospels claimed that his authority was equally divine and that it stood above the authority of the Torah. The disparity of the Jewish self and the Gentile other in the ancestral faith of Jesus is abolished in the new faith in Jesus: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”¹¹ I see this testimony as a major point of contention between the Jesus way and the way of rabbinic *halakha* (“the Path,” term embraces Torah and Talmud law) that ultimately led to the severance of the Jesus party from the Synagogue. The disparity between them acquired new intensity after the passing of the Jewish Jesus and the success of Pauline Christianity. On the latter, take Paul’s letter to the Galatians, for example. Noteworthy is his position, “a person is justified not by works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16; see too 2:21;3:2;5:2), which is buttressed by Paul’s argument that the Torah is mediated by angels and ensnared in sin and has never played a salvific role (3:19-22), and finalized by the charge that Israel of the flesh is neither the true seed of Abraham (3:16) nor of God (6:16).

⁹ See, among others, Matt. 26:62-64; Mark 14:60-62; Luke 22:60-70.

¹⁰ Matt 23:1-3a. See above footnote 41 and related content.

¹¹ Gal 3:28. Also, 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:11. A capsule note on Jewish and Greek parallels to this defining Christian formula is made by Shaye J. D. Cohen in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine, Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See “Letter of Paul to the Galatians,” 339.

The doctrine of the eternity of the Torah is implicit in verses that speak of individual teachings of the Torah in phrases such as the following: “A perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your (lands of) dwellings” (Lev 3:17) and “throughout the ages as a covenant for all time” (Exod. 3: 16). Biblical (Proverbs, in which Torah equals wisdom), Apocryphal (the wisdom of Ben Sirah), and Aggadic (*Genesis Rabbah*) traditions speak of the preexistence of Torah in Heaven. Though the Talmud acknowledges the pre-revelation existence of Torah in Heaven, which was later revealed to Moses at Sinai, it concentrates more on Torah’s eternal values.

Jewish thinkers from the first century to the nineteenth century have proclaimed the Torah eternal, some in terms of metaphysics, others in terms of theology, and most in defense of Judaism against the political polemics of Christianity and Islam, which taught that aspects of Torah are temporal or have been superseded. In the first century, Philo Judaeus spoke metaphysically of the Torah as the word (*logos*) of God, the beginning of creation. In the tenth century, Saadia Gaon proclaimed that the Jews were unique only by virtue of Torah; if the Jewish nation will endure as long as the heaven and earth, then Torah must also be eternal. Maimonides extolled the perfection (eternity) of Torah, regarding which there is neither addition or deletion. After Maimonides, the issues of the eternity of the Torah became routine; the Torah’s eternity became an undisputed article of belief. The schools of Kabbalah, however, declared that the preexistent form of Torah is eternal but that the words and message of the Torah are recycled every 7,000 years.

In the nineteenth century, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Scientific Study of Judaism) movement, inspired by the scholarship of biblical critics, presented a historical-critical approach to Torah study. As a result, the traditional concept of the eternity of the Torah became a non sequitur and the idea of the Torah as a human book prevailed. By the mid-twentieth century, however, responding to negative trends in higher biblical criticism, which reflected aspects of classical Christian bias and labeled “higher” antisemitism,¹² critical studies by Jewish loyalists helped to reaffirm the Jewishness of the Bible. To conclude, no matter how a Jew views the nature of Torah – as a kind of “mythicizing history” or a product of the people for

¹² Term attributed to Solomon Schechter (1847-1915), chief architect of Conservative Judaism and Catholic (community) Israel, whose reputation began in the recovery of the Cairo *Genizah*.

the people or written (inspired) by God – its inspirational national and religious legacy is eternal.

Paul Matters

Stern halakhic Jews question the sincerity about and applicability of Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue. Their two-point concern: ultimate religious beliefs cannot be communicated or shared, and that dialogue diminishes parochial religious identity and belief. I fully understand this position but repairing not parting of the way is the call I choose to follow. How and why is attempted in this unit on Paul related matters.

Paul, born in Tarsus in Asia Minor to a wealthy and identified Jewish family, traveled to Jerusalem to drink from the wellsprings of Pharisaic thought. His words and psychological drive molded and constrained in the Greco-Roman Diaspora clashed with core beliefs of the Jerusalem Jesus party, and led to bouts of anguish, depression, and discomfort.¹³ Nonetheless, his conversion on the road to Damascus stilled his prolonged sense of guilt-by-persecution of malcontents to the Temple authority and endowed him to proclaim the “Son of God” triumphant among the Gentiles.

Christian Scriptures focus on Paul’s discontent with other Jewish believers in the fledgling Christian movement in how to teach meaningfully God-in-Christ, his teaching *about* Jesus for the different Christian communities in the Mediterranean world, his emphasis on the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection, and his ubiquitous teaching to Jew and Gentile alike that the title “Israel, the Chosen People” is not conscripted by kinship nor land nor sanctuary nor obedience to the Torah but defined by the faith-claim that the risen Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. On the latter, Paul severely departs from thousands of co-believers who attest to the divinity of Jesus while obeying the teaching of Moses and from the elder Apostles James and Peter, who affirmed respectively God’s Spirit in the way of Torah and the centrality of the Temple worship and its purity laws and baptized not pagans but God-fearers.

Paul’s *modus operandi* was to teach biblical covenantal theology by way of the resurrection in order to proclaim that Jesus’ sense of himself as the new Adam, whose death at Cavalry has joined the people of the circumcision and the people of the uncircumcision “to God in one body through the cross”

¹³ My description of Paul of Tarsus is extracted from my review of Chilton.

(Eph 2: 11, 16). To enact his radical Christology and to challenge the Temple obsession of the mother church, Paul trekked to Jerusalem, the heart of the Jesus movement. There, he went to the Temple, the bosom of Judaism, to offer a sacrifice on behalf of Jewish Christians, and by acknowledging that Gentiles live by an abbreviated Noachide tradition, uniting Gentile and Jewish believers in a single spiritual Israel (Acts 21:17-26). Alas, this was not to be. Paul with a large group of Nazarenes in his entourage was met by a riotous mob in the Temple precincts. He was beaten by temple police, charged with profaning the holy place and had to defend his honor before the Sanhedrin. In order to avoid a conspiracy that sought to kill him, for his safety he was handed over to Claudius Lysias, the Roman captain, and later to Felix, the governor in Caesarea. In 62 C.E., the year that James was stoned to death by the order of the High Priest, Ananus – an act that broke the link to the centrality of the Temple – Paul was released and spent his last years unfettered in Rome. Contesting Rome’s imperial ideology, he was executed under Nero in 64 C.E.

New Testament Christianity sets for the Christian reader a difficult but commendable task: to proclaim core Christian dogma (Easter faith) and dicta (Jesus “the living bread that came down from heaven” [John 6:51] heralding a *eucharista*, “the Lord’s death, until he comes” [1 Cor 11:26]) without a hint or utterance of antisemitism. However, the necessary faith in Jesus Christ has bred in Church history a minimalist teaching on the importance of Torah. “The word is near you on your lips and in your heart because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:8-9), suggesting that Christ not Torah is the centrifugal force in confession and belief. Nonetheless, Paul advocates that the circumcised and the uncircumcised share in the oneness of God through faith (Rom 3:27-31).

The Jewish reader should be aware and sensitive to claims of Christian identity that are derived from the Hebrew Scriptures. For the most part, progressive New Testament scholarship penetrates the wall of separation and suspicion of “law and grace” and enables the believer in the Second Testament to appreciate the story of how Jesus was not only God’s Son but the cosmic reality of divine nature itself fully in terms of Israelite religion, that is to say, in accordance with the teaching of Moses but not necessarily in the exegesis of the sages of Israel. Alongside – not in place of – the Jewish insights, the how and why of the Christian relationship to the Sinai covenant is presented in the Christian spirit of scriptural inspiration and tradition, a

strong sign that centuries-old “teaching of contempt”¹⁴ is not desirable nor doable for Christians in dialogue with Jews. Dialogue is where a shared biblical tradition is the surest sign that the stumbling blocks of religious intolerance can be overcome. Ideally, the goal of interfaith scriptural dialogue is that the Gentile Church appreciates its Jewish origins and that Jews understand the importance of the mystery of God’s presence in the “body of Christ.” Furthermore, interfaith dialoguers ought to respect the integration of Sinaitic divine revelation (Written Torah) with rabbinic activity (Oral Torah) and recognize that a Jew named Saul later known as Paul was destined to change Judaism’s mental landscape forever.

Shoah Theology: Neither, Either, Both Jew and Gentile

Questioning God in the face of Evil is as old as the Bible, as the story of Job and the words of Jesus at the Crucifixion attest.¹⁵ But the savagery of the Shoah places the Nazi brutality in a category by itself. For many survivors of the Kingdom of Night, the aching question, “Where was God when Six Million Jews, 1.5 million of them children, and other ethnic (e.g., Sinti and Roma people) and religious groups (Confessing Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.) perish in an indescribable catastrophic evil?” is answered by a deafening silence from Heaven and righteous anger born in frustration on Earth.

How may a Jewish traditionalist and modernist respond to painful questions of divine silence in the murder of millions in the heart of Christian Europe? The traditionalist may say that there are miracles recorded in biblical literature but there are also fundamental principles. The Torah is clear that the staff Moses used to split the Sea of Reeds lost its power soon after the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17). May this not be the Torah’s way of saying that in the face of evil, heavenly intervention is not necessarily determined by Man’s plight. There are catastrophic events in history that Man will have to conquer. The lachrymose history of the Jews in Christian Europe served as a preamble to Hitler’s inferno. And the world in general and Christendom in particular did very little. Thus “where was God?”

¹⁴ See note 45.

¹⁵ The Jesus words at the Cross of Cavalry, “Eli/Elohi, Eli/Elohi, lama sabachtani” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) exemplify the ubiquitous cry of the Jew, “Why, O’ Lord, do you remain silent?”

should be discussed fairly. Emotional retort ought not dismiss defense of God in the face of evil.¹⁶

The modernist rejects the idea that God is a super ally in the sky. In Judaism, every individual is created in God's image (Gen 1:26). In classical rabbinic theology this is understood that Man and God are co-creators and co-responsible. However, the modernist substitutes "godliness" for God. Why? Because wherever God is used as noun He becomes a person, a thing, an object or a Son, and this for the modern rationalist becomes idolatry. Godliness has all the attributes which monotheists ascribed to God, and which Man is obligated to imitate. When humankind is callous, when it turns its back to the predators, when it allows homelessness and brutality to exist, it betrays the Godhood in all of us. Man has to behave in godliness. That God will intervene in times of agony and anguish is an illusion and therefore will end in disillusion. The question is, does the individual have an ethical and sophisticated conception of the God idea to make one understand what the world is and what the world ought to be? The point is that Man must never forget the evil that was committed before and during the Shoah, but we dare not forget the altruistic good done by individuals against all odds. The good is that spark of humanity.¹⁷

My position, however, is to view theodicy and history and "all in Christ," by "historiosophy,"¹⁸ whose importance is demonstrated in biblical and rabbinical literature. The agonizing questions may be anchored in historical events, but the question's religio-historical understanding lies in the paradigmatic value of "faith knowledge." The position is that in responding to God and Shoah, one must move beyond historiography to historiosophy

¹⁶ From an interview with Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, *LA Times*, April 21, 2001.

¹⁷ From an interview with Rabbi Harold M. Schulweiss, then senior rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA, *LA Times*, April 21, 2001.

¹⁸ Seeing events in history as paradigms infused in interpretive explanations. See Zev Garber, "The Ninety-Three Beit Ya'akov Martyrs: Towards the Making of Historiosophy," in *Shoah, The Paradigmatic Genocide: Essays in Exegesis and Eisegesis*, Studies in Shoah 8, ed. Zev Garber (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 97-104. The book's Foreword and Preface, respectfully written by two Christian pioneers of Holocaust Studies in America, Franklin Hamilton Littell (Protestant, Temple University) and Harry James Cargas (Roman Catholic, Webster University), endorse highly my application of historiosophy to dialogue with Torah, Midrash, and Shoah. Also, see Moore, "A Little Historiosophy," 136-139, and Sabbath, "Historiosophy and Zev Garber, a Neologism," 559-362.

if the goal is to maintain a commitment to life and memory and not affixation on death and finality.

In the face of Evil, Godspeech is the language of silence. I believe that was the condition in Deut 30: 11- 20, which states that God brings life and death, curse and blessing. The divine instruction proclaims: choose life so that you and your offspring would live. Having said that, the very same passage says that the command is not in heaven, as the Torah is not in heaven. The text says that the command is very near to you. It is “in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it” (v. 14). That is where you begin with the response to the question of faith after the Shoah. If Judaism’s understanding is a covenant with God, then God is restricted by choice of both Heaven and Earth. Man has free will. For man to have free will means that God is self-restricted when it comes down to Man’s determination, one’s fate, for better or worse. It is one way of suggesting that Judaism is a religion of accomplishment and achievement. The Jew has got to see this as a sign of seeking life under all circumstances, including the Shoah. It is not a question of where was/is God in travesty. The question is, where was/is Man?

In sum, it is acceptable to God-wrestle. That is basic Judaism, and its greatest strength. To ask “where was God?” in the Nazi inferno is permissible. *Both* Jew and Greek/Gentile bear witness to the slaughter of numberless innocents in the lands of Christendom. The response is intuitively conveyed in Exodus 24. Moses read from the Book of the Covenant before the people, and they respond, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do (*na`aseh*), and we will hear (*nishma`*)” (v. 7). I profess (“in your mouth”) therefore I act and by so doing I understand. Providentially, the image of God-as-*Na`aseh* is testified by acts of concentration camp inmates, whose caring, kindness nurturing, sacrifice, and suffering are sacral acts of everyday *keduššha* (holiness) that places God’s presence on the cremated body of Israel.

Mistaken is the teaching that God was absent in Auschwitz. Pitiful is the post-Shoah thinking that is unable or unwilling to reconcile human suffering with the existence of a good and loving God. Acknowledge that God dwells among Israel, in her travels and travails, even if the people cannot sense Him in exilic and genocidal acts. Counter the trope of divine hiddenness by finding Rudolf Otto’s *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in that which attracts and repels even to what is defiled. Sense that the rupture of the Sinaitic covenant is restored by everyday acts of humaneness. Think historiosophically that the covenantal love between God and Israel is sensed

in God's suffering presence in the camps. Know that revelation and redemption were continually retrieved and sustained in the Event by genuine nurturance and close human relationships.

There is neither male nor female but not at the expense of obliteration.. Never forget the sanctified character of the valorous women of the Shoah. Their nobility, efficiency, nurturing, devotion, obedience, truthfulness, sacrifice, and unquestionable suffering, which reveal the female face of God, while always respecting Her male component, is inspiring. From Abraham being acquiescent to offering his beloved son as a holocaust on Moriah to God's permitted crucifixion of his Beloved Son at Cavalry to the murder of His chosen children in Auschwitz, the *kol islah* (woman's voice) has been traditionally neglected, distorted, or worse. For example, in the camps, the male covenantal relationship (circumcision mark, facial hair, fringes, phylacteries, prayer, responsa, Torah-Talmud study, etc.) are ubiquitously expressed and remembered even in death. But the woman is without overt and covert religious signs. Her naked body, analogous to the naked face of God, speaks volumes of indifference, silence, and forgetfulness in Judaism, the patriarchal religion. Yet her last earthly act, caressing a babe, before both are shot by the Nazi murderer, brought Heaven down to Hell. God's presence in the pit and in the fire with woman and child is a stark wake-up call that post-Shoah theology should not continue as usual. This way of correcting masculinist theology does not diminish the paradox of God and the Shoah, but serves to make the issue more significant and inclusive, and therefore also unveil God more completely.¹⁹

Auschwitz Binding: Godwrestling in the Night

*Heaven and earth (is called) to witness that whether it be Gentile or Israelite, man or woman, slave or handmaid, according to the deeds which one does, so will the Holy Spirit rest on him/her.*²⁰

¹⁹ Remarks inspired by Raphael, *Female Face*. See my review.

²⁰ Cited in *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu*. a midrash, consisting of two parts, whose final redaction took place at the end of the tenth century CE. The first part is called "Seder Eliyahu Rabbah" (thirty-one chapters); the second, "Seder Eliyahu Zuṭa" (fifteen chapters). A distinct reference to this midrash occurs in *b. Kett.* 106a: "Elijah used to come to R. Anan, upon which occasions the prophet recited the Seder Eliyahu to him." The Haggadah speaks of six periods of Jewish history divided into three eras: (1) the present world; (2) the messianic period; and (3) the future world. The theme

Midrash, in the Rabbinic mind, is hermeneutics derived from biblical inquiry, an attempt to explain the text in as many ways as seems possible to the inquiring mind of the Jewish sage. In Jewish and Christian dialogue on sacred texts, the term also embraces doctrinal, ethical, religious, and social concerns. The message of Auschwitz then for the Jew and Christian is not survival alone. There is something more important than physical survival, and that is preventing moral bankruptcy. When Auschwitz (survival at any price) contends with Sinai and Cavalry (moral standards), Sinai and Cavalry must prevail. Nazi Germany is an example of what can happen when Auschwitz prevails. On European antisemitism, Sigmund Freud argued that the practitioners were “badly christened,” and were forced into Christianity by bloody compulsion. Their true essence, barbaric polytheists, subliminally rejected the triumphant Church militant. So “(T)he hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German National Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds clear expression in the hostile treatment of both.”²¹

Holy Scriptures teaches that God’s proclivity is with the destiny of Israel. Moses professes that the Children of Israel are eternal and Paul confesses that the foundation of *Heilsgeschichte* is founded in their existence (Rom 9:1-6 and Rom 11), and both acknowledge that their fate testifies to the transcending power of God in history. In Exod 32, Moses defends Israel who is referenced as a stiffnecked people but in whom God’s moral self in history is rooted. Moses argues that however just God’s position is (e.g., the Golden Calf apostasy), His decision to destroy them would be *the sine qua non* factor for the Egyptians (that is to say, the nations of the world) not to expect any notion of heavenly justice. The Torah declares, *tsedek, tsedek tirdof* (“justice, justice shall you pursue,” Deut 16:20), and Moses requests that God must be perceived as doing no less. Also at stake is God’s covenantal promise to the Patriarchs that He will enable their “offspring (to be) as numerous as the stars of heaven ... And the Lord relented and “renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people” (Exod 32: 13-14).

of *derekh ‘erets* (quality life)) made possible by doing proper precepts is a binding thread in this collection of midrashic ethical thought. The cited maxim of divine retribution is illustrative.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (Reprinted, New York: Vintage, 1939), 117.

So what to make of Auschwitz? In the fire of the crematoria, God's Child (Exod 4:23) was cremated. Was this ultimate crime for the sake of the covenant and for the glory of His Name? In Egyptian bondage of yore, God heard the cry of the people, and God remembered His covenant with the Patriarchs, and He redeemed them. The thousands and thousands of Jews from the *shtetlakh* (Jewish villages) of Eastern Europe refused to abandon the yoke of the covenant. Their oath of survival, mixed with dirges of pain, hoped that God would stop the indescribable *churban*. But Heaven shed no tears. The position that the Shoah twins Jewish history and the Jewish conception of God is decisive and stark. Are we to conclude that in the "Flicker of the Jews' last hour, Soon Jewish God, Your eclipse?"²²

The question underscores the perpetual dilemma in covenant theology. Were the *Endlösung* be fully enacted there would be no covenant, since on the altar of Auschwitz, the commitment to the Torah directive, "Choose life" (Deut 30:19) would go up in flames. Were the Jews treated as ordinary victims of Nazi incarceration, this would forsake the ultimate concern of covenantal belief. In Auschwitz, God is challenging Israel's commitment to the covenant. In actuality, the Jew is also challenging God's commitment to the covenant. In the context of covenant theology as played out in the death camps, mutual challenges are expected. Indeed, these challenges do not diminish the paradox of Auschwitz, but serve to make the issue more significant and more troubling, and therefore also more of hope. In the heat of the Nazi inferno, the unconditional commitment of both partners is tested and endures.

And what to say to the post-Shoah Jew and Christian? Respect the difference. To honor the memory of the brutally murdered, we must never forget nor forgive. For the Christian believer, may I suggest that "One in Christ" (Gal 3:28) mandates Christian attentiveness to the fate and faith of the murdered Jews of Europe under the symbol of the "Crooked Cross" (swastika) tragically nurtured by *Adversus Judeo*; and for the practicing Jew, the Torah commands that we restore flesh to bones, personality to numbers, and novelty to *novum* – a doable memorial to those who suffered in the consuming fire and, we believe, were sustained by the supernal light which does not consume nor diminish.

²² Jacob Glatstein. On Jacob Glatstein, the man and his poetry (Yiddish), see my entries in *Reference Guide to Holocaust Literature*, ed. Thomas Riggs (Farmington Hills, MI: St. James, 2002), 110-111 and 466-467.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE JEWISH JESUS: A PARTISAN'S IMAGINATION

ZEV GARBER

Sections of this article by Garber appeared in *Shofar* 23 (Spring 2005). A fuller version appeared in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed., Zev Garber (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011) pp. 13-19. Article raises three points: the role of biblical criticism in understanding the historical Jesus; Jesus as political revolutionary and the ecclesiastical claim that he is the “Prince of Peace”; and reflections on Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). The link for the YouTube video of my interview on WBAA (NPR affiliate) on the launching of *The Jewish Jesus* is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SAOF-4pFzE>

Key words: S.G.F. Brandon, “*The Passion of the Christ*,” Zealot(s)

My own approach to finding the historical Jesus in the text of the New Testament may appear to some as extreme. It seems to me that Mark, the earliest gospel version on the life of Jesus compiled shortly after the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E., contains authentic traces of the historical Jesus shrouded in repeated motifs of secrecy which are intended to obscure the role of Jesus as a political revolutionary sympathizer involved in the Jewish national struggle against Rome. When the Gospel of Mark is analyzed in its own light, without recourse to the special status which canonical tradition confers, it is less history and biography and more historiosophy and parable. It also features an astute polemic against the Jewish Christian believers in Jerusalem, whose influence diminished considerably following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and a clever apology to make early Christianity palatable to Rome by not identifying Jesus with the national aspirations of the Jews. The Markan account on the trial of Jesus and his execution, along with the portrait of a

pacifistic Christ, are for the most part historically questioned by S. G. F. Brandon, who sees in these narratives attempts by the Gentile Church to win Roman favor by exculpating Pontius Pilate from his share in the crucifixion of Jesus.

I agree. Regarding the Synoptic Gospels' (Mathew, Mark, Luke) account of Jesus before the Sanhedrin,¹ the trial before Pilate,² and the sentence of death.³ The question of historical fairness intrudes into these accounts. Jesus is tried three times (the Sanhedrin night-trial which found him guilty of blasphemy, the trial before Herod Antipas, and the dawn-trial before Pilate), and so which court decisively condemned Jesus?⁴ Where in the biblical-talmudic tradition is blasphemy defined by claiming that one is the "Messiah the Son of the Blessed?"⁵ Lev 24:13-23 and Sanhedrin 7.5 proclaim that whoever curses God is guilty of blasphemy.⁶ Rarely recorded are malediction and impious profanity by one who claims to be a messianic figure. True, Josephus reported many messianic pretenders between 6 and 70 C.E., but we have no record of any put to death. Bar-Kochba was called Messiah by Akiba, but tradition does not speak ill of either second-century hero. And no less a personality than Maimonides relegated the messianic doctrine to a secondary position among the articles of faith rendered in his name. Also, one guilty of blasphemy was stoned to death and not killed by crucifixion as recorded by Mark.⁷

That Jesus was sympathetic to the Zealot cause may explain why the charges of sedition were not overtly denied by Jesus when asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?"⁸ Other references support this view. One of the trusted

¹ Matt 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-71.

² Matt 27:11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:5.

³ Matt 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:17-25.

⁴ Cf. "The Trial of Jesus in Light of History: A Symposium," in *Judaism* 20.1 (Winter 1971).

⁵ Matt 26:63-65; Mark 14:61-65; Luke 22:67-70.

⁶ Cf. Acts 6 where Christian tradition records that Stephen was guilty of death since he spoke "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (Acts 6:7). See also Exod 22:27; I Kgs 21:10, 13 ("you have reviled God and king").

⁷ A brief description of the crucifixion is found in Matt 27:33-44; Mark 15:22-32; Luke 23: 33-43.

⁸ Matt 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3. Cf., also, Mark 15:9, 12 and the charge against Jesus inscribed on the cross (Matt 27:37; Mark 15:26; John 19:19).

disciples was Simon the Zealot.⁹ The Zealot Movement, rooted in the tradition of being "zealous for the Lord,"¹⁰ arose in the Galilee in the first decade of the first century. It may be assumed that the child Jesus raised in Nazareth would have listened often to tales of Zealot exploits against the hated Romans and how many of the former died martyrs' deaths in a futile attempt to replace the bondage of Rome with the yoke of the "kingdom of heaven."¹¹

These childhood experiences listened to in earnest and awe caused the adult Jesus to sympathize with the anti-Roman feelings of his people. Thus, the "cleansing of the Temple" pericope is not to be read as anti-Temple but rather as a critique of the Temple functionaries who collaborated with Rome.¹² This episode appears to have coincided with an insurrection in Jerusalem during the period of Gaius Caligula, in which the Zealots appear to have been involved.¹³ The famous question concerning tribute to Caesar has Jesus saying, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's,"¹⁴ thereby implying Jewish support of Roman fiscal and political policy. This is an assimilable position and it is very doubtful that the historical Jesus identified with it. Better to say the Rome-based school of Mark coined Jesus' answer, for it guaranteed that Jesus and his fellowship were loyal to Rome and opposed to Jewish nationalism, a

⁹ Cf. Matt 10:14; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:3. In Matthew and Mark it is written, "Simon the Cananaean" (Zealot). Matthew's Jewish audience can understand the Aramaism, but Mark, who normally translates Aramaisms (e.g., Mark 7:34) into Greek, purposely does not here. The writer of Luke-Acts, writing a generation after Mark, no longer sees the taint of political sedition about Jesus or is simply unaware of Mark's dilemma and unashamedly identifies Simon as a Zealot.

¹⁰ Cf. the roles of Phineas (Num 25:7-10), Matthias (I Macc 2:15ff.), and Elijah (I Kgs 19:19ff) as zealot types.

¹¹ "Blessed be His Name, whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever," recited in the Temple during the Day of Atonement services, was added by the Rabbis to accompany the opening verse of the Shema (Deut 6:4). Since the period of Gaius Caligula (34-41), Roman emperors demanded from their subjects divine respect. The loyalist Jew (religious, nationalist) who refused did so on penalty of death. He submitted to the rule of God alone whom he proclaimed in "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone," and followed by the above doxology.

¹² Mark 11:15-19; Matt 21:21; Luke 19:45-48.

¹³ A reference to Pilate's ruthless suppression of the rebellion may be found in Luke 13:1.

¹⁴ Mark 12:17; Matt 22:21; Luke 20:25.

necessary survivor mandate for Gentile Christians living in Rome during and after the Zealot-inspired Jewish war against Rome.

The *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, recorded in Matt 10:34, namely, "I have not come to bring peace but a sword," supports the militancy in the Jesus party mentioned in the Gethsemane tradition: Luke 22:35-38 portrays Jesus asking his disciples if they are armed and they reply that they are doubly armed. The size and of the arresting party "from the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders,"¹⁵ can be cited as evidence of nationalist loyalty by Jesus. The unknown disciple who draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the High Priest's slave is identified in John's Gospel as Peter.¹⁶

Others say the question of Jesus, "Have you come out against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me?"¹⁷ separates him from the Zealots. But can the parochial Jewish nationalism of Jesus be hidden in the image of the universal image of the Christ of Peace? I think not. Yet Mark's anti-Jewish bias and pro-Roman sentiments inspired him to lay the guilt of Jesus in the hands of Jewish authorities. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus was not an insurrectionist, nor did he commit a crime deserving death by Roman law.¹⁸ Later Church narrative accepts this view without serious emendation and further presents Jesus as the "Prince of Peace." An early source of this tradition is the editorial note in Matt 26:52. Here a post-70 C.E. Jewish Christian evaluating the ill-fated Jewish War declared in Jesus' name: "Put your sword back into its place; For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."¹⁹

A constant motif is the silence of the apostolic writings on matters pertaining to the political situation of the time. The Zealots of the period are essentially overlooked; episodes in which they are involved, as reported by Josephus

¹⁵ The episode of Jesus taken captive is found in Mark 14:43-52; Matt 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53.

¹⁶ Mark 14:46; Matt 26:51; Luke 22:50; John 18:10.

¹⁷ Mark 14:48; Matt 26:55; Luke 22:52.

¹⁸ Matt 27:23; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:22.

¹⁹ Also, Luke 22:50. A similar message is associated with national restoration and rebuilding the Second Temple (515 B.C.E.) in Zech 4:6, which is later linked to the Synagogue service of Chanukkah by the Rabbis in order to play down the militancy of the Maccabean victory and state imitated by the ill-fated revolt against Rome.

and others, are not reported. Luke-Acts is silent about the identity and antecedents of James, Peter, and the other leaders of Jewish Christianity. Mark's theology prejudices the historical situation and declares that Jesus could not have involved himself in political nationalism and other contemporary issues. Later apostolic writers submissively follow the Markan line. How far theology distorts history is further shown by the denigration of the Pharisees as the bitter opponents of Jesus.²⁰

The received gospel tradition appears to suggest that the catastrophe of 70 C.E. and its aftermath was brought about by Jewish leaders who plotted Jesus' death, the Jewish mob who had demanded it, and the stiff-necked Jews who refused to follow the Jesus way. Also, the Jewish disciples do not know Jesus,²¹ and it is the Roman centurion at the crucifixion who recognizes Jesus as the Son of God.²² Our thesis suggests that New Testament belief about "Who do the people say that I am?"²³ is more belief narrative than historicity. In my opinion, the genre of Christian Scriptures on the historical Jesus is expressed in the idiom of Midrash. By Midrash, I mean an existential understanding by man of his environment, history, and being. Its purpose is not to provide objective description of the world nor to relate objective facts, but to convey a particular cultural worldview rooted in a specific setting in the life of the people in a given historical moment (*Sitz im Leben*). Its content is doctrinal and ethical and its form is mythic. The very nature of Midrash is an invitation to "demidrashize," i.e., to decode the original form and make the content more meaningful for different time and clime. Indeed the New Testament shows evidence of this. For example:

Given: Jesus returns in the clouds of Heaven.

²⁰ The word Pharisees occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament (29 times in Matt; 12 times in Mark; 27 times in Luke; 19 times in John; 9 times in Acts; and once in Philippians). There is ample fodder in these references to portray Pharisaism as sanctimonious, self-righteous, hypocritical petrified formalism, and a degraded religious system corroded by casuistry. The bitterest tirade against the Pharisees is found in Matt 23.

²¹ Cf. Mark 8:27-33; Matt 16:13-23; Luke 9:18-22. The Petrine blessing found in Matt 16: 17-19 was added by a Jewish Christian to offset Mark's rebuke of Peter (The Jerusalem Church) as Satan by Jesus (Mark 8:33).

²² Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47.

²³ Matt 16:13; Mark 8:27; Luke 9:18.

Pauline: Shifts the emphasis of the failure of Jesus' return to the believer's present life.

Johanine: Achieves the same Pauline goal with its conception of eternal life here and now present to the faith, and of judgment as already accomplished in the world which Jesus brings.

My Jewish reading of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels puts him in history and not in divinity. The Jesus of different Christologies could never find support in Judaism, since the God-man of the "hypostatic union" is foreign to Judaism's teaching on absolute monotheism. As the promised Messiah,²⁴ he did not meet the conditions which the prophetic-rabbinic tradition associated with the coming of the Messiah. Indeed, there was no harmony, freedom, peace, and unity in the Land of Israel - signs of the Messianic Age - and enmity and strife abounded everywhere. Not a false but failed Redeemer of the Jews, as witnessed by the words of the "King of the Jews" at the cross: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* ("My God, my God, why have You forsaken [italics added] me")?²⁵ Notwithstanding, he was a loyal son of Israel, whose commitment to the Torah²⁶ - albeit radical and reformist - and his remarks about the great commandment²⁷ were steadfast and comparable to Pharasaic Judaism of the day.

Arguably, the great flaw in pre-Vatican II Catholic traditionalism (as depicted in Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*) and Protestant fundamentalism in the teaching of the Easter Faith is the heinous role played by the crowd/people/Jews in the execution of Jesus. The cornerstone of supersessionist Christology is the belief that Israel was spurned by divine fiat for first rejecting and then killing Jesus. This permitted the apostolic and patristic writers and Protestant reformers to attribute to Israel the mark of Cain and the evil of the Sodomites, and more, to assign the worst dire punishment on judgment day. These are not words, just words, but they are links in an uninterrupted chain of antisemitic diatribes that contributed to the murder of the Jews in the heartland of Christianity and still exists in a

²⁴ Cf., among others, Matt 26:62-64; Mark 14:60-62; Luke 22:66-70.

²⁵ Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34.

²⁶ Matt 5:17-20.

²⁷ Matt 22:37 = Mark 12:30 = Luke 10:27 - Deut 6:5; Mark 12:29 - Deut 6:4; Matt 23:39 = Mark 12:31 = Luke 10:27b - Lev 19:18; Mark 12:33 - cf. I Sam 15:22.

number of Christian circles today. How to mend the cycle of pain and the legacy of shame? The key is to separate the crucifixion of Jesus from the *contra Iudaeos* tradition by demystifying the composite Passion narrative as taught and preached in ecclesiastical Christianity.

An illustration is in order. The nefarious words, "His blood be on us and on our children,"²⁸ seen by many as the scriptural flash point to the charge that Gibson's film is antisemitic, were composed in the 90s, a generation after the death of Jesus. And if the words are credible, then may they not be seen as composed by an anti-Zealot Jewish Christian writer who opposed the Jewish revolt against Rome and reflected on the havoc wreaked on the Jewish people because of it? Similarly, to portray Pilate as meek, gentle, kind - a Jesus alter ego - who cannot resist the aggressive demands of the Jewish mob to crucify Christ, is historically unfounded and not true.²⁹

Finally, why the obsessive passion in Mel Gibson to portray endlessly the bloodied body of Jesus? May it not be this traditionalist Catholic's rejection of reforms advocated by Vatican Council II to present tolerantly the Passion of Jesus Christ? Whether conscientious or not, co-writer, director, and producer Gibson revises scriptural anti-Judaism in visual media. He does so by portraying overtly a corrupt Jewish priesthood, and especially the High Priest, Caiaphas, a ferocious blood-thirsty Jewish mob, an effeminate Satan who hovers only among Jews, satanic-like Jewish children, and a complacent Roman leadership that does the bidding of Jews. The subliminal message: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple (the film's climactic and penultimate scene) is sufficient proof for believers in Christ that God has pronounced dire punishment upon Old Israel and that He now dispenses his countenance to the New Israel, who accepts unhesitatingly Jesus as Lord and Savior. Hence, "Christ is the end of the Law,"³⁰ in *whose* flesh [italics added] the law with its commandments and regulations"³¹ are abolished. Thus, to flagellate unceasingly the body of Jesus is to rid Judaism unmercifully from the Body of Christ and provide salvation through the

²⁸ Matt 27:25. In *The Passion*, these words are heard in the original Aramaic but deleted in the English subtitles.

²⁹ Philo Judaeus wrote about Pilate's "endless and intolerable cruelties"; no doubt why he was recalled to Rome in 37 A.D.

³⁰ Rom 10:4a.

³¹ Eph 2:15.

blood of Christ.³² On Gibson's cross, replacement theology is reborn. And Satan/Mammon laughs aloud, a bitter laugh.

³² Adversely, blood fixation by Jews is not associated with suffering, torture, and death but with birth, hope, and life. Consider the Ezekielian verse recited at the Circumcision rite linking the birth of a Jewish male child (potential Messiah) with the birth of Jerusalem; "I (Lord God) said to you: 'In your blood, live.' Yea, I said to you, 'in your blood, live'" (Ezek 16:6).

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS, THE PHARISEES AND THE SAGES: ALLIES, FOES AND STRAW MEN

KENNETH HANSON

Key words: Rabbi Jesus, Pharisees, Oral Torah, the Sages, Hillel and Shammai

The most famous question posed in Christian Gospels is the challenge put forth by Jesus/ Yeshua to Peter, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt 16:13 NKJV). It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the entire New Testament speaks to this question, addressing along the way Yeshua’s friends, disciples, and many foes. The arguments advanced in the texts are of course religious and polemical, especially with respect to those blamed for conspiring against Yeshua, and for turning him over to Roman authorities for execution as an insurrectionist. The real question modern critics should ask is to what extent this agenda obscures Yeshua’s natural religious allies, creating instead straw men, broad brushed with murderous intent.

We are of course captive to the language of the Gospel texts, which exclusively determines how we conceive of the historical Yeshua. What, then, if we reevaluate and even recast this language in a manner consistent with the tools of textual criticism, so as to place Yeshua more accurately within his cultural and historical context? Can we challenge the language of the Greek text, even “excising” certain passages that appear to be later emendations? Does the language of one Gospel help “mitigate” that of another? Can we “look through” the Greek text to Semitic patterns (Hebrew and Aramaic) that likely underlay much of the Gospels, as they have come

down to us?¹ Can we harmonize the words attributed to the historical Yeshua with the teachings of the Sages, as recorded in rabbinic literature? How will this reform our understanding of the relationship of Jesus/ Yeshua with his traditional nemeses, who are also blamed for conspiring to have him executed, namely the Pharisees? What are the implications of such scholarship vis-à-vis Jewish – Christian relations, including the growing movement of “messianic Judaism,” which might be able to contribute important perspectives to this research?

Written and Oral Law

Considering his recorded words, and the flavor of the Hebraic idioms they carry, Jesus/ Yeshua has been described in Jewish terms as a wandering, peripatetic, pre-rabbinic sage, speaking in parables that seem perfectly attuned to the times in which he lived. The precepts behind his teachings, including the concept of resurrection, seem quite consistent with those of the Pharisees and by no means in tension with them. The Gospel narratives reveal Yeshua as intimately acquainted with both the written and the developing Oral Law, and it is extremely difficult to appreciate the Gospels in their totality without a solid familiarity with *halakha* and the Jewish commentaries. Indeed, the sayings of “Jesus the Sage,” including specific language and word choice, may be viewed as an important source for our knowledge of the world of the Sages in the pre-Tannaitic age.² All of this must be grasped if we are to understand one of the most serious misconceptions regarding Yeshua and his relationship with Judaism, namely, that keeping the commandments, especially the Oral Law, was somehow problematical for him. This leads to an even larger issue with respect to his relationship with the Pharisees.

It is certainly true that the New Testament records a number of disputes regarding the keeping of particular commandments, but should they be viewed as pitting Yeshua squarely against the Pharisees? In point of fact such disputes largely center on halakhic precepts that were in flux at this early stage in the development of Oral Law. For example, we are told that

¹ See Robert Geis, *Exegesis and the Synoptics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012), xi, 113. Geis argues that “Semitic underpinnings” in the Gospels provide a basis for earlier dating than the Greek texts.

² See Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 141. Witherington observes, “...the best overall characterization of the man is that he was a sage.”

certain Pharisees criticized Yeshua's disciples for not washing their hands before a meal (Mark 7:1-2; Luke 11:37-39; Matt 15:2). This of course is because a primary concern in the first century was eating food in a state of ritual purity. However, it was only during Yeshua's time that the custom of washing hands was established, and the final ruling had yet to be determined.

In the Lucan account the reference to washing hands is linked to the issue of whether the outside or inside of a cup must be cleaned first: "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness" (Luke 11:39 NKJV). The Mishnah reveals a first century understanding that not only must the food be clean but also the utensils. According to the House of Shammai one must clean the outside first. The House of Hillel declared that one must clean the inside first. Yeshua agrees with the House of Hillel. If the inside is unclean, so is the outside. But if the outside is unclean, the inside (if originally pure) is uncontaminated. If an unclean cup is cleansed from the outside, it is not pure. It must be cleansed on the inside first. Though sparring verbally with the Pharisees, we should by no means see Yeshua rejecting pre-rabbinic Judaism or Oral Law. In fact he tangentially takes a position in the debate over ritual purity that was closer to what became established rabbinic custom.

There is also the question of Jesus/ Yeshua healing people on the Sabbath. Was Yeshua in conflict with Pharisaic dictums on this matter? This could hardly have been the case, when Jewish law declares that healing through speech is permitted even in cases where it is not a matter of life and death, and any healing is always permitted in cases of life and death. The Markan narrative is much more inflammatory, alleging a murderous plot immediately after Yeshua performed a healing: "Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him." (Mark 3:6 NKJV).

Then there is the case of Yeshua's disciples plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath. Was this a violation of Jewish/ Pharisaic law? It was certainly not, according to the Galileans, who held that this was permissible as long as they were rubbed by hand and one did not use one's fingers. A fuller understanding of the issue may be gained by a close examination of the Lucan narrative (6:1-5), which places the incident on "the second Sabbath

after the first.”³ This should be recognized as during the period of the counting of the *Omer* (the “sheaf” offering marking the beginning of the barley harvest). According to Leviticus 23:15, the new crop of barley could not be harvested or eaten until the *Omer* had been offered in the temple on 16 *Nisan* - the second day of Passover. Sometimes it was difficult to find a ripe sheaf because it was not yet harvest time. The poor entered the field immediately after the harvesters left, but did not pick up every last head of grain. Luke relates that the disciples “plucked and rubbed.” Matthew and Mark only say “plucked.” A hypothetical Semitic/ Hebraic undertext might have only read “rubbed.” Most Sages prohibited rubbing, but the Talmud (*Shab.* 128a) states: “One may rub and eat.” In the Mishnah (*M. Peah* 8:1) we find: “When is everyone permitted to collect gleanings? When the last of the poor have left.” Deuteronomy 23:25 says that one may pluck in a neighbor’s field, but the Talmud (*Bab. Metz.* 7:2-5) insists that this refers to the laborer, not the passerby. A reconstruction of Luke 6:1-5 might relate that, passing through an already harvested barley field, the disciples see grain heads still on the ground and rub. Only *some* Pharisees object. The disciples were not poor or about to die, but Yeshua argues the concept of “saving a life” — *pikuakh nefesh*, to justify their behavior.⁴ Such instances are hardly worthy of the claim that Yeshua somehow “relaxed” Jewish law. On the contrary, Yeshua was scrupulous in keeping the commandments, often agreeing with the conservative school of the Pharisee Shammai, when it came to such matters as divorce and the question of proselytism.

On other ideological matters, Jesus/ Yeshua was closer to the house of Hillel, which of course became authoritative in rabbinic Judaism. It was Hillel who in previous century famously declared: “That which is hateful to yourself, do not do to your neighbor” (*Shab.* 31a). Yeshua rephrased the statement from a negative to a positive *mitzvah*: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31).⁵ It can be generalized that Shammai's

³ ἐν σαββάτῳ δευτεροπρώτῳ ... “δευτεροπρώτῳ” was deleted by later copyists, who did not understand the counting of the *Omer*. A Hebrew reconstruction might read: **ביום השבת השנית לספירת העומר**.

⁴ *Seder Eliyahu Rab.* declares: “Not the Torah, but the people of Israel come first.” Simon b. Menasiah (a second century C.E. Ḥasid), taught: “The Sabbath is for you...” See also *Mekh.* to Exod 31:13: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, so that man is Lord over the Sabbath.”

⁵ The combination of Deut 6:4 and Lev 19:18 is found in *Test. Is.* 5:2 and *Test. Dan.* 5:3. In Hebrew the word **אָהַב** followed by the unusual construction **לְ** is found only in a few places, e.g. Lev 19:34 - loving the stranger as yourself; 1 Kgs 5:1,

teaching was motivated by a fear of sin, while Hillel's centered on the love of one's fellow. If we think of Yeshua himself as, at the very least, in the Pharisee "camp," he likely formed a bridge between Shammai and Hillel. He would doubtless have agreed with the Pharisees in regarding the Torah and its every letter as a world complete in itself, on which the existence of the physical world depends. In Yeshua's eyes the smallest commandment weighs as heavily as the greatest. To that extent he shared the worldview of the ancient Sages as well as the pious Ḥasidim. By being stringent in moral matters he sought to develop the humanitarian side of Judaism. He echoed the view of the Pharisees, that one who even glances at a married woman has committed adultery in his heart (Matt 5:28). The sages had noted that the very word adultery in Hebrew (תנאף) contains four letters, going on to comment that a man commits adultery in four ways: with his eyes, hands, heart and feet.⁶ Such sayings of Yeshua are quite consistent with Mishnaic and Talmudic precepts.

Why, then, the supposed animosity between Jesus/ Yeshua and the Pharisees? On this matter we should bear in mind that the Gospel of Matthew (arguably edited later, when the movement of Yeshua was already beginning to separate from traditional Judaism) presents the views of Yeshua as opposed to those of the Sages. Sadly, Christian tradition came to present the Pharisees as "foils" and "straw men" for Yeshua, to the extent that they, and by extension the Jewish faith, became bywords for religious "legalism," hypocrisy and even murderous intentions. The impact of such stereotypes on Jewish Christian relations across the centuries cannot be overstated.

Hypocrites?

15: "Hiram always loved David;" 2 Chron. 19:2: The prophet says to Jehoshaphat: "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?" In this construction, *אָהַב* means "help." Therefore translate, "You should be helpful to our neighbor as you are to yourself." One is not commanded to feel something, but to do something. See *ARN* 2:26: "Neighborly love is a thing on which the whole world depends." *Avot* 2:16: "No man should say, 'Love the Sages but hate the disciples,' or 'Love the disciples' or 'Love the disciples but hate the *Am ha-aretz*.'" On the contrary, love all these, but hate the sectarians."

⁶ Jesus "builds a fence around the Torah" (M. *Avot* 1:1). He takes a stringent position, that anger leads to murder, and lust to adultery. See Mark 9:45.

A case in point is Yeshua's charge against the Pharisees, as "hypocrites." It is notable that in the long list of "woes" recorded by Luke and by Matthew, we find that the latter repeatedly appends the word "hypocrites" to his mention of the Pharisees.⁷ Matthew lays out a total of seven "woes," each time linking the Pharisees with the scribes and charging them with hypocrisy.⁸ Throughout these verses it is fair to argue that we are essentially dealing with a proliferation of the term "scribes and Pharisees," who are broad-brushed as "hypocrites."⁹ It would seem that this linking of the word "hypocrites" (the Greek ὑποκριταί being the direct equivalent of the Hebrew צבואים) with the Pharisees was intentional on Matthew's part, for these scrupulously pious sages served as a convenient literary foil for Yeshua. The harsh censure of the term is not lost on modern translators, many of whom have attempted to soften the implications of referring to the progenitors of rabbinic Judaism as authors of duplicity. Various translations have

⁷ Notably, the formulaic reference to the scribes and Pharisees is found eleven times in Matthew's Gospel (5:20; 12:38; 15:1; 23:2, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). Matthew's redactional castigation of the scribes and Pharisees is found eight times among the "woes" of chapter 23. It is significant that there is only one instance in Matthew that depicts the Sadducees opposing Jesus independently of the scribes, but there are many cases where the scribes alone are cast as opponents (9:3; 16:21; 20:18; 21:15; 26:57; 27:41). See Benno Przybylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Vol. 1*, "Paul and the Gospels," eds. Peter Richardson, David M. Granskou, Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 181-200.

⁸ "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt 23:13); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses..." (Matt 23:14); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte..." (Matt 23:15); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin..." (Matt 23:23); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter..." (Matt 23:25); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres..." (Matt 23:27); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets..." (Matt 23:29).

⁹ See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 618. Nolland points out that the term "hypocrites" assumed the form of an address in Matthew, while Mark employs the phrase "concerning you hypocrites." Other than this, Matthew closely follows Mark. He further observes that Jesus' address to a group of Pharisees and Herodians as hypocrites in Matt 22:18 is distinctive to his Gospel.

employed “over-scrupulous” or “phony pietists” in Matthew 6:2 and “pettifogging” or “impostors” throughout Matthew 23.¹⁰ But such attempts hardly compensate for the underlying and inescapable tone of the text.¹¹

Luke similarly propounds a set of six “woes,” two directed toward the Pharisees alone, one directed at the “scribes and Pharisees,” and three others at the “lawyers.”¹² Only once, however, does Luke employ the term “hypocrites.” The question to be addressed is: Does Matthew or Luke better reproduce a more “original” context of the sayings?

A related issue has to do with attitudes toward the Pharisee party in general during the Second Jewish Commonwealth and the likely attitude of the “historical Jesus” toward the sages of this tradition. Is hypocrisy a charge Yeshua might have levied against the Pharisees? Clearly, the Jesus of the Gospels was deeply concerned with the question of hypocrisy. Undergirding a lengthy discussion regarding oath-taking is his famous statement: “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matt 5:37 NKJV).¹³ It is an attitude equally evinced in the Dead Sea Scrolls and, according to Josephus, was said to have been

¹⁰ See the translation of Albright and Mann; see also the Scholars Translation.

¹¹ J. Galambush addresses the fact that Matthew’s Gospel in particular is shocking to Jewish readers, who find Jesus not only sparring with the Pharisees, but calling them children of hell, blind guides, etc. Linking such language with the cry of the crowd in Matthew 27:25, “His blood be upon us and on our children,” she declares that it is difficult to imagine a more anti-Jewish account. She dates the Gospel to between 85 and 90 C.E., stemming from an urban environment of both Jews and non-Jews. The resulting polemic, wherein Matthew’s community felt “disowned” by other Jews, helps us understand how this Gospel, more than any other, depicts the Pharisees as Jesus’ archenemies. See Julie Galambush, *The Reluctant Parting: How the New Testament’s Jewish Writers Created a Christian Book* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2005), 59-60.

¹² “But woe unto you, Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs...” (Luke 11:42). “Woe unto you, Pharisees! for you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues...” (Luke 11:43). “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*! for you are as graves which appear not...” (Luke 11:44). “Woe unto you also, you lawyers! for you lade men with burdens...” (Luke 11:46). “Woe unto you! for you build the sepulchers of the prophets...” (Luke 11:47). “Woe unto you, lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge...” (Luke 11:52).

¹³ This is paralleled in the letter of James: “But before all things, my brothers, do not swear; neither by the heaven nor by the earth, nor any other oath. But let your yes be yes, and *your* no, no, lest you fall into condemnation” (Jas 5:12).

held by the Essenes.¹⁴ The essential admonition was to guard one's words, to be sure that nothing be communicated that is duplicitous on any level. Likewise, one's actions were to be reliable at all times and consistent with the ethical admonitions of the Torah. But where, other than the Gospels, are the Pharisees called hypocrites?

It is significant that neither the Babylonian nor the Jerusalem Talmud specifically labels the Pharisees as hypocrites, though there is a statement attributed to Alexander Yannai in which he admonishes his wife not to fear either the Pharisees or those who are not Pharisees, but only the "colored ones" (צבואים), i.e. "hypocrites"¹⁵:

Said R. Nahman b. Itz'hak: "That which is hidden (in one's heart) is only so from human beings, but not from heaven; and even visible hypocrisy can only be punished by the Upper Court." Said Janai the king to his wife: "Do not fear of the Pharisees, neither of those who claim to be their opponents; but to do fear the colored ones (who put on false colors), who in reality act like Zimri ... and demand the reward of Phinehas."¹⁶

¹⁴ "[A man must not] swear either by Aleph and Lamedh (Elohim) or by Aleph and Daleth (Adonai), but rather by the oath of those who enter into the covenant vows. He must not make mention of the Law of Moses, because the Name of God is written out fully in it, and if he swears by it, and then commits a sin, he will have defiled the Name" (CD 15:1-3). See also Josephus, *War*, II, 8.6: "Whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury (4) for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned."

¹⁵ Klausner took note of Jesus' harsh criticism of the "hypocrite Pharisees," as recorded in Matt 23, but suggests that this does not represent opposition to Pharisaic teaching, nor an affinity toward Essenism, but stems from the suffering of the Jewish population under the Roman procurators. He noted that the Talmud specifically mentions the "plague of the Pharisees," and suggests that it was not until later times that the Christian evangelists generalized Jesus' words as being aimed at the Pharisees as a whole. See Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 113, 116-17.

¹⁶ *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Section Jurisprudence*, Vol. 1, trans. Michael L. Rodkinson (Boston: The Talmud Society, 1918), 124. It has been noted that Josephus records a dramatic deathbed conversation between Yannai and his wife (A XIII, 399-404) emphasizing the importance of the Pharisees. This account of his posthumous reconciliation with the Pharisees may provide the context for the Talmudic passage. See Joseph Sievers, "The Role of Women in the Hasmonean Dynasty," in *Josephus, the Bible and History*, eds. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Lieden, Brill, 1989), 136.

The Pharisees might have been opponents, as far as Yannai and his Sadducee cohorts were concerned, but it was not really the Pharisees but the hypocrites among them who were to blame for the civil war. The story as recounted in the Talmud doubtless has little or no relation to any historical event or to anything that Yannai may even have uttered, but it does reflect an entire discourse that must have been prevalent in Israel about the nature of hypocrisy.¹⁷ It may well have been that Yannai's defeat at Shechem, due to the "hypocrisy" of his Pharisee opponents, later provided an exegetical link with the biblical tale of Shechem the Canaanite, who accepted circumcision for the insincere purpose of taking Dinah to wife (Gen 33-34).

The Talmud certainly castigates hypocrisy in general, declaring that hypocrites will fall into Gehinnom and that mockers, hypocrites, liars, and slanderers will never receive the face of the Shekhinah (*Sot.* 41b). Seven categories of Pharisees were subsequently delineated in the Talmud, the first of which consisted of Shechemite ("shoulder") Pharisees (*Sot.* 22b). They were said to have carried their religious obligations in an ostentatious manner, upon their shoulders, or perhaps, as suggested elsewhere, laying them on the shoulders of others. The Yerushalmi (*Ber.* ix. 7, 14b) adds: "He lays the burden of the commandments on the shoulder [*shechem*] (i.e., other peoples shoulders)."¹⁸ The link between this context and Yeshua's scurrilous critique in Matthew 23 has not gone unnoticed:

¹⁷ Efron observes that Yannai's statement as represented in the Talmud is in parable form designed to teach a lesson, and therefore devoid of historical significance. Inasmuch as the saying links the Pharisees with "non-Pharisees," it is detached from definitive facts and given abstract form. The excoriation of the "hypocrites" is not bound by any historical distinctions between factions among the Pharisees or within the Hasmonean kingdom. The injunction of Rav Nahman b. Isaac concerns those who wrap themselves in cloaks of piety, in accord with the Baraita's admonition against perverted and deceitful Pharisaism. Moreover, the "deed of Zimri" has no relation to any secret event, but was an expression common among teachers of the period. See Joshua Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period* (Lieden: Brill, 1987), 188.

¹⁸ See also ARN, A, 37; B, 45; Solomon Schechter, ed., *Abot de-rabbi natan: mahadurat shlomo zalman schechter: 'im ziyunim la-makbilot beyn ha-musahim u-latotsafot shebe-mahadorot schechter* (Vienna, 1887); reprint (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 55-62. Notably, other early sages were critical of those who wore *tefillin* but harbored evil intentions. R. Bebai (Pes. R. 22:5) admonished those who lay *tefillin* even while transgressing the Torah, as they signify the wearer taking upon himself God's name. The Mishnah declares that the

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (Matt 23:2-4 NKJV)

We should note, however, that this passage appears only in Matthew, and perhaps represents the increasingly harsh attitude of the Matthean community toward Judaism itself. If it might be possible on any level to reconstruct the "historical Jesus," then we may imagine that his attitude toward the Pharisees was similar to what we find in the Talmudic reference regarding Yannai – officially "neutral."

Allies

Reading through the hyperbole, a truer picture of the Pharisees would depict them as Yeshua's natural allies.¹⁹ How odd, that Mark and Matthew seem persuaded that the Pharisees represent Yeshua's eternal nemeses. In fact we find that Mark and Matthew often depict the Pharisees as Yeshua's opponents at places where the Lucan account does not. A case in point relates to the Pharisees' demand for a supernatural "sign," reported only by Mark and Matthew. Mark relates: "Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him" (Mark 8:11 NKJV). Matthew agrees, but adds "the scribes": "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.'" (Matt 12:38 NKJV).

"blows of the Perushin" are among the things that "wear out the world" (*Sotah* 3:4).

¹⁹ See Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 35. Vermes points out that the historical Jesus seems to have shared the outlook of the Pharisees and won their approval.

Contemporary scholarship has shed much light on the concept of Jesus as one who wanted to reform Judaism from within. See also John Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1985); Gerd Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 2007). The work of J. D. Crossan is also valuable in revealing Jesus as a Jewish reformer in the tradition of the classical prophets; see *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, Harper, 1991). See also John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

Notably, it is Mark who has dropped the “scribes” from the narrative at this point, mentioning only the Pharisees, as if to highlight their opposition to Yeshua. In another instance, regarding divorce, only Mark and Matthew point to the Pharisees as those who “tempted” Yeshua. In Luke we read: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery (Luke 16:18 NKJV).” Mark relates: “The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him.” (Mark 10:2 NKJV). Matthew also names the Pharisees: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying to him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” (Matt 19:3 KJV).

Another example relates to the issue of paying tribute to Caesar. Luke reports that the “chief priests and scribes” sent spies to entrap him in his words, so that they might deliver him to the authorities (Luke 20:19-26). Mark reports that it was “certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians” who sought to “catch him in his words” (Mark 12:13). Yeshua’s response, “Why do you tempt me?” is said to have stemmed from the fact that he knew “their hypocrisy” (Mark 12:15). Matthew, likewise, reports that it was the Pharisees who sought to entrap him, sending “their disciples with the Herodians” (Matt 22:15-22).²⁰ Yeshua is said to have “perceived their wickedness,” responding, “Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites?” (Matt 22:18). In Luke there is neither mention of the Pharisees nor of “hypocrisy” or “hypocrites.” Yeshua merely speaks of their “craftiness” (Gr. *Panourgia*; Luke 20:23). Indeed, it may be no exaggeration to conclude that relying on Luke significantly mitigates the language of both Mark and Matthew.²¹

²⁰ See Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000) 85 n. 79. As Repschinski points out, both Matthew and Mark paint the Pharisees as being hostile to Jesus. Moreover, the Matthean identification of Jesus’ opponents with the Pharisees adds to his controversial character. See also Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 1:113. Gnllka sees Mark’s narrative as a “Mischgebilde” with elements of “controversy dialogue.”

²¹ See R. Steven Notley, “Anti-Jewish Tendencies in the Synoptic Gospels,” *JP* 51 (1996): 20-35, 38. Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 259, argues that the Lucan account is closer to a hypothetical Semitic undertext of the Gospels.

Needed: Critical Scholarship

Further scholarship is surely in order, to reexamine the unfortunate legacy of the Gospels' anti-Pharisee diatribes, including Yeshua's supposed words of "woe." Much remains to be done in order to advance the serious task of recovering the Jesus of history, and reevaluating his relationship with the Pharisees is an excellent place to begin. To be sure, a collaborative effort among multiple faith perspectives (Jews, Christians and Messianic Jews) can do much to alleviate the tensions created by two millennia of misunderstanding. Messianic Jews can be equally involved in this task, but only upon a willingness to engage the gospels themselves, unbounded by the brittle and unflinching doctrine of textual "inerrancy." Unfortunately, coming from fervent "evangelical" Christian roots, the gospels (and especially the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus) are, more often than not, "off limits" in this regard.

The time is ripe for a fresh approach among "believers" in Jesus/ Yeshua, not to belittle the New Testament, but to rescue it from the textual emendations it has surely suffered during the course of its compilation. A Baptist minister, with whom I was acquainted during my residence in Jerusalem, once remarked, "The doctrine of inerrancy is the greatest heresy in Christianity, because it limits God to the pages of this book." To be sure, employing the tools of critical scholarship on religious texts is a demanding and often thankless task. But as Jesus/ Yeshua is quoted as saying, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48 NKJV). Are Yeshua's twenty-first century followers (including Messianic Jews) up to it? Time will proverbially tell.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE SHEMA, THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MESSIANIC JUDAISM

KENNETH HANSON

Sections of this article by Hanson appeared in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48 3, 2018. It deals with the question of whether there is room within the Jewish community for Jews who believe in Jesus of Nazareth, i.e. “Messianic Jews.” While often dismissed, a fresh crop of messianic Jewish scholars are bringing this issue into sharper focus. Mark Kinzer in particular seeks to synthesize what he calls the “enfleshment” of Jesus with the essence of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4); yet, there is a small cadre of Messianic Jews who have gone further, in abandoning Trinitarian concepts altogether. Might that amount to a theological “reformation” that would cast messianic Judaism in an entirely new light?

Keywords: Messianic Judaism, Shema, Historical Jesus, Trinitarian Theology

The movement loosely referred to as messianic Judaism came into being between the 1950s and 1970s, originally in the United States, but later took root in multiple countries worldwide. (Kiev, Ukraine, for example, hosts its own messianic Jewish congregation.¹) In the United States alone there are currently well over four hundred messianic congregations, and in the state of Israel there are over one hundred. The “real world” implications of the growth of messianic Judaism were highlighted by the *Jerusalem Post*, which, toward the end of 2017, pointedly queried: “Will Israel ever accept

¹ <https://kemokiev.org>

Messianic Jews?”² The article points out that according to Israel’s “Law of Return,” Messianic Jews are ineligible to apply for citizenship in the Jewish state, since an amendment to the statute, crafted in 1970, specifically exempts “a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his/her religion.” It additionally quotes the advisor to Israel’s Chief Rabbinate and director of the American Jewish Committee’s Department of Interreligious Affairs, Rabbi David Rosen, as saying: “If people believe Jesus is one of the triune persons of God, then they should be honest as identifying themselves as Christian.” Rosen comments: “The term ‘Jews for Jesus’ – and probably even ‘Messianic Jews’ – is a bit disingenuous.” It is relevant to note, however, that messianic Judaism is currently in flux, with impressive scholarly contributions that seek to redefine the movement’s core tenets. Some messianic Jewish scholars have sought to define the movement as something well beyond the “Jews for Jesus” designation. Given the development and growth of new theological parameters, a new series of questions may well be raised. Is there (or could there be) a place for Messianic Jews (i.e. Jewish believers in Jesus of Nazareth) within the Jewish Community? Why is their movement deemed alien and even dangerous by virtually all modern expressions of Judaism?

The Heart of the Issue

To be sure, the growing number of messianic Jewish scholars and commentators eloquently and with academic rigor defend the contemporary phenomenon of messianic Judaism, contending at the very least that its Jewish adherents be accepted as part of the tapestry of the Jewish faith. Mark Kinzer, along with David Rudolph, Isaac Oliver, Stuart Dauermann and others, exemplify the serious scholarship being undertaken on behalf of messianic Judaism, though they nonetheless reiterate the very theological tenets that have made such acceptance an impossibility for traditional Jews, namely, the “incarnation” of Jesus.³ Kinzer’s approach includes a reasoned

² <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Diaspora-Affairs-Will-Israel-ever-accept-Messianic-Jews-518129>

³ See Stuart Dauermann, *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 184. Dauermann pointedly references “... the foretold ultimate deliverance, through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah in his incarnation...”

exposition of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4), in messianic Jewish terms.⁴ At the same time he makes it clear that he fully accepts traditional Christian Trinitarian theology, recasting the term “incarnation” as what he calls “enfleshment”:

...while the enfleshment of the *Memra* (Word) is a new and unique event, it should nonetheless be viewed in continuity with what precedes it – as a concentrated and intensified form of the Divine Presence that accompanies Israel throughout its historical journey. Thus, contrary to the common Christian canonical narrative, the divinity of Yeshua can be seen... as a continuation and elevation of a process initiated long before.”⁵

Kinzer attempts to distance himself from the long legacy of Christian “supersessionism” by emphasizing that this “enfleshment” (while “elevating” prior notions regarding the divine *Memra*) is congruent with the earliest Hebrew traditions; yet his words underscore a fundamental dilemma for Messianic Jews seeking inclusion in the larger Jewish community. Indeed, the “enfleshment” of divinity in a human being is perfectly compatible with Christian creedal formulas regarding the “centrality of Jesus,” which is wrapped up in the “mystery” of the Trinity and is repeatedly used by both Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians (including Messianic Jews) to suggest that faith in Jesus alone is the ground for “salvation.”⁶ Nonetheless, however Kinzer and others may try to finesse the

⁴ See Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); idem, *Israel's Messiah and the People of God: A Vision for Messianic Jewish Covenant Fidelity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011); idem, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015). See also Dauermann, *Converging Destinies*, 250: “Mark Kinzer is a prime mover in another initiative so delicate as to have neither a name nor public profile. It involves interaction and inquiry between a select group of Messianic Jewish scholars and scholars from the wider Jewish world.”

⁵ Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah*, 104.

⁶ Ilia Delio observes: “... exemplarity refers to the entire Trinity; however the mystery of the Trinity is reflected in the mystery of the Second Person.” See “Theology, Metaphysics, and the Centrality of Christ,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 261. See also Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 40. Boersma, working in the Reformed theological tradition, puts it, “Christ is the origin, stability, and end of the Christian narrative. In him lies our hope, for in him all things heavenly and earthly will be summed up or recapitulated... The Word (or Logos) of God is the key that unlocks the entire Christian message...”

point, the incarnation has always been and will always remain incompatible with the traditional Jewish understanding of the “oneness of God” – encapsulated in the *Shema*.

The “Centrality of Jesus”

Dan Cohn-Sherbok observes:

Orthodox Judaism categorically rejects any form of Jewish Christianity as part of the Jewish tradition. From a theological point of view, messianic Judaism is viewed as fundamentally distinct from traditional Judaism because of the centrality of Jesus.... Messianic Jews embrace many of the central tenets of the Christian faith including the doctrine of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Atonement – for Messianic Jews, the world has been transformed through Jesus’ death and resurrection.⁷

As David Novak puts it:

...the Christhood (incarnation/Trinitarian status) of Jesus of Nazareth is not an option within God’s everlasting covenant with the people of Israel. Jewish Christians are still Jews, but they are no longer practicing a religion Jews regard as part of Judaism.”⁸

Matthew Levering comments on the seeming impossibility that the status of Messianic Jews might be considered differently:

What if Rabbinic Judaism eventually changes its view of Messianic Judaism, and affirms Messianic Judaism as a legitimate form of Judaism? It seems to me that this possibility, which Novak does not consider, would require at least two steps. First, Rabbinic Judaism would need to grant that worshiping Jesus Christ does not contradict Rabbinic Judaism’s understanding of the first commandment of the Decalogue. This seems unlikely. Second,

⁷ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism: A Critical Anthology* (London: Continuum, 2000), 204.

⁸ <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1991/11/005-when-jews-are-christians>; David Novak, “From Supersessionism to Parallelism in Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *Jews and Christians: People of God*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Messianic Judaism would need to affirm that Torah observance remains covenantally obligatory...⁹

It is relevant to ask whether messianic Judaism might, beyond affirming Torah observance, reinterpret its theological moorings with regard to Jesus himself, thereby becoming more compatible with “mainstream” rabbinic Judaism and even Israel’s Law of Return. Put another way, has messianic Judaism evolved to the point that some are going beyond Kinzer and like-minded messianic Jewish leaders, not only in rejecting supersessionism, but the “enfleshment” itself, honoring Jesus the man as “anointed one,” even “Son of God” (a semitic term in origin, used to describe Israel’s ancient kings), while reserving worship itself for the God Jesus/ Yeshua worshipped? Is it conceivable that at least some of today’s Messianic Jews are becoming more centrally devoted to a rabbinic understanding of the touchstone of traditional Judaism, the *Shema*, than their counterparts in the multiple denominations of orthodox Christianity, the implications of which involve the affirmation of God’s oneness, even at the cost of (adopting post-structuralist lingo) “decentering” Jesus?

It is, to be sure, a daunting task to locate any serious writings by non-Trinitarian messianic Jewish leaders, as the overwhelming majority of the messianic Jewish movement adhere to what is essentially evangelical Protestant theology. Small pockets of non-Trinitarian Messianic Jews do, however, exist. One such self-proclaimed “Orthodox Messianic Jewish Congregation” has produced a theological statement, posted on the Internet, which, while not well-written, reflects the conviction that “Y’shua having been born a Jew and raised by Torah observant, Jewish parents would have been immersed in the understanding that G-d is one and is indivisible.”¹⁰ A different example is represented by the former rabbi of a very rare messianic “Unitarian” congregation in Woburn, Massachusetts, who wrote, “Even though the Movement has brilliant thinkers, Messianic ‘Judaism’ I soon realized, is nothing other than a Hebraized expression of Protestantism.”¹¹

⁹ Matthew Levering, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom: Engagements with the Theology of David Novak* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 26.

¹⁰ Aryeh (Louis) Baruch Vos Levitz;
http://www.mikvehyisrael.org/?page_id=103

¹¹ <http://lhim.org/blog/2010/02/20/from-non-practicing-jew-to-messianic-unitarian/>

Thereafter, he left the messianic movement in order to help others "... to find their way out of 'Messianism'." ¹²

Modern "Messianics" in Identity Crisis

One contributor to the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) seems acutely (and painfully) aware of a tendency among some Messianic Jews to back away from the high Christology of orthodox Christian theology:

My fear is that, in search of recognition and acceptance, we will be tempted to give back recognition and approval. We will be tempted to compromise the centrality and the exclusive claims of Messiah in order to achieve acceptance. ¹³

Implicit in this critique is the tacit recognition that at least some within the fabric of messianic Judaism are reconsidering what has been for traditional Christianity an immutable theological tenet. The author continues:

The Messianic Movement has been undergoing an identity crisis. We've seen many of the resulting problems. Why and from where do these problems come? They have arisen precisely because of the failure to recognize the centrality of Jesus in the plan of God and that *all the promises* given to Israel and *all inheritance*, and *all identity*, are found in Messiah alone. ¹⁴

Is the growing phenomenon of messianic Judaism indeed embroiled in an identity crisis, related to variant views of the "centrality" of Jesus, the essence of which is seen by traditional Jews as fundamentally at variance with the core of Israelite monotheism as expressed in the *Shema*? Such an identity crisis would be welcome news for traditional Jews who find themselves targets of proselytism by evangelical Christians (including the LCJE). Mark Kinzer has attempted to address the issue of Christian proselytization of Jews in advancing what he terms a "post-missionary messianic Judaism." However, his adherence to orthodox Christian

¹² https://www.tochnityonah.org/about_us

¹³ Rev. Fred Klett, "The Centrality of Messiah and the Theological Direction of the Messianic Movement," LCJE-NA 2002, www.lcje.net/papers/2002/klett.doc.

¹⁴ Ibid.

theology remains an issue with regard to his acceptance as an observant Jew.¹⁵

If in fact an “identity crisis” were to blossom into a theological “reformation” among Messianic Jews, might the movement itself have to be reconsidered, as a matter of *halakhah*? Indeed, there might be no cogent reason to consider it differently than, for example, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, many of whose adherents ascribe messianic status to the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. While a new “reformation” among the growing ranks of Messianic Jews (regardless of their impressively observant lifestyles) is hardly in the offing, it nonetheless seems apparent that the messianic Judaism of today finds itself on the horns of a considerable dilemma.

The theological approaches of messianic Jewish scholars range from Kinzer’s bold attempt to harmonize post-liberal Barthian and Conservative Jewish thought with the Reformed/ Calvinistic position of Baruch Maoz, but it is undeniable that the movement as a whole has branched off, not from Judaism at all, but from Reformed theology (i.e., the system of belief rooted in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century).¹⁶ As a direct outgrowth of Protestant evangelical Christianity, it stresses faith in Jesus alone as the basis for God’s redemption (not good works in addition to faith, as stressed by Roman Catholicism). *Sola Scriptura* is the historical dogma of Reformed theology, as opposed to Scripture plus Church tradition. Today’s Messianic Jews would doubtless agree with famed English evangelist C.H. Spurgeon, who once said, “Reformed theology is nothing other than biblical Christianity.”¹⁷ Interestingly, while the Messianic Jewish

¹⁵ Mark Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism: Judaism as Genus, Messianic as Species* (West Hartford, CT: Hashivenu Archives, 2000).

¹⁶ For a solid overview of the spectrum of messianic Jewish theologies, see Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009). See also *Luther and the Messianic Jews: Strange Theological Bedfellows*, ed. R. Harvey (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2017). See Baruch Maoz, *Judaism is Not Jewish: A Friendly Critique of the Messianic Movement* (UK: Mentor, 2003).

¹⁷ Messianic Jewish author R. S. Harvey notes, “The cornerstone of Luther’s theology, that we are saved by grace through faith, and not by our own good deeds or works of righteousness, is something with which I heartily concurred.” See Richard S. Harvey, *Luther and the Jews: Putting Right the Lies* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), xi.

Alliance of America (MJAA) declares prominently on its website that it adheres, first and foremost, to the *Shema*, it explains the divine unity as “plural oneness” and goes on to make an unequivocal restatement of Trinitarian theology, including “God the Son”: “The Son is God (Deity), and is worshiped as God, having existed eternally...” It also declares: “Our only hope for redemption (salvation) is through the atonement made by the Messiah...”¹⁸ Understandably, the oft-posed question is: how can Messianic Jews who ascribe to this theology claim to be Jewish at all rather than Christian? Moreover, is it at all possible to be both?

Historically speaking, Reformed theology purports to be rooted in creedal formulas going back to Bishop Athanasius, as propounded in early Roman Catholic tradition.¹⁹ Of course, from a contemporary Jewish perspective, the Trinitarianism that became part and parcel of orthodox Christian theology is incompatible with the very essence of the *Shema*. If, in the interest of “recognition and acceptance,” Messianic Jews were to break with this theology, it would amount to nothing short of cutting off the branch on which they are sitting. They cannot re-interpret their own theology, lest they become outcasts from it. They are therefore compelled to find creative justifications for a mysterious form of Trinitarianism (presumably congruent with the *Shema* and its oneness) residing in ancient Judaism itself and consequently expressed in the Christian gospels as well as other New Testament and early Christian writings.

Kinzer’s Contribution: Resolving the “Crisis”?

Kinzer, in commenting on the Nicene Creed, notes with considerable candor that while the formulaic declaration “carries a positive resonance in the ears of most Christians,” the reaction of Messianic Jews is “ambivalent,” due to “the long history of church-state entanglement that has had such dire consequences for the Jewish people.”²⁰ He goes on, however, to defend the

¹⁸ <https://mjaa.org/statement-of-faith-2/>

¹⁹ Three ecumenical creeds, the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed, are cited in Article 9 of the Belgic Confession as statements of truth which Protestant Reformed churches “do willingly receive.”

²⁰ Mark Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery*, 221-2. See also Kinzer, “Finding our Way through Nicaea: The Deity of Yeshua, Bilateral Ecclesiology, and Redemptive Encounter with the Living God,” *Kesher: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 24 (Summer 2010).

actual content of the Creed, arguing that it authentically derived from ancient Jewish textual traditions. He cites Oskar Skarsaune, who suggests that the creedal phrase describing Jesus as “begotten of his Father before all worlds” reflects an encapsulation of Proverbs 8:22-31, which in turn expresses “the Wisdom Christology that is a central motif of the Nicene Creed.”²¹ Jesus is understood as the manifest wisdom of God, in the same way that Philo’s *logos* represents divine wisdom personified (see below). Kinzer may be attempting to resolve the messianics’ “identity crisis” through sound scholarship, but the critical eye may question whether he has resolved anything at all, given that the Hellenistic Judaism to which Philo appealed presents its own set of problems with respect to traditional Jewish notions of deity. We may well ask whether Kinzer’s assertion that such “elevation” of the messiah (i.e. “elevating” prior notions regarding the divine *Memra*) is indeed consistent with what precedes it, including the *Shema*, rather than fundamentally in tension with it.

It has been observed that for Kinzer, the incarnation of divinity in Jesus/ Yeshua mirrors that of the Divine Presence in the Jewish people as a whole.²² However, while the Divine Presence may rest on Israel, the Israelites are also depicted as a stubborn and rebellious lot, and are far from “divine.” Throughout Israel’s “historical journey” there are endless admonitions against equating the Divine Presence with anything on this earth, presumably including the Israelites themselves, who stand in fear and awe at the foot of Sinai and are unable to look at the splendor on Moses’ face. There is also, of course, the strict prohibition against making any “graven image.”²³ Moreover, the “otherness” of Israel’s deity, repeatedly proclaimed by the prophetic class, became the very essence of ethical monotheism.

In Kinzer’s favor it should be pointed out that the concept of an exalted messiah was argued by David Flusser to have originated in ancient Judaism

²¹ Note Prov 8:23: מְעוֹלָם נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֵרֹאשׁ מִקְדָּמִי אֶרֶץ (“I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth”). See Kinzer, *Searching*, 228; Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 333.

²² Jennifer M. Rosner, *Healing the Schism: Barth, Rosenzweig, and the New Jewish-Christian Encounter* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2015), 255.

²³ Exod 20:3 לא-תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ פֶּסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה

rather than in western Christianity.²⁴ It is well known that the Hebrew Scriptures also contain assorted passages believed by ancient Jews to refer to divine entities, in addition to the messiah.²⁵ Perhaps, as some modern commentators argue, certain “pagan” ideas regarding multiple deities may have been tolerated among ancient Israelites and found expression in various cryptic scriptural references. This, of course, is still a far cry from the doctrinaire Trinitarianism formulated by the patristic fathers and embraced down to the present day by both Catholics and Protestant Christians, including Messianic Jews.

Additional attempts have been made to reconcile Trinitarian concepts with the Gospels themselves, suggesting, for example, that the declaration of Peter that Jesus is the messiah (Luke 9:20) amounts to a “model” confession, akin to the *Shema*. It is argued that in the Lucan account, the Greek Χριστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ (“messiah of God”) parrots a Hebraic construct, משיח אל, an awkward expression, given the formulation appearing in the Hebrew Scriptures, משיח יהוה (“messiah of the Lord”).²⁶ By contrast, the parallel verse in Matthew (Matt 16:16) has Peter simply say “You are the Christ.” The Dead Sea Scrolls frequently combine a noun with the word אל, and the Greek Gospel may well be employing what amounts to a Qumranic syntax. The net effect in Luke’s gospel is to lend the term a specific titular meaning.²⁷ Joseph Fitzmeyer observes:

For Luke the title *christos* used of Jesus designates him as God's anointed agent announcing himself as the bearer of a new form of salvation to mankind and its relation to God's kingdom among them in a new form.²⁸

Of course, the multiple examples in Qumranic literature of a noun in construct with אל (for example, יהד אל / “the *Yahad* of God” and ברית אל / “the covenant of God”) by no means elevate the noun to “divine” status.

²⁴ See Flusser, “Messianism and Christology,” in *Judaism*, 246-279.

²⁵ See Gen 6:2 (*b'nei ha-elohim*/ “sons of God”); Pss 29:1 (*b'nei elim*); Pss 82:1, 6 (*elohim/b'nei elyon*).

²⁶ 1 Sam 24:7; 24:11; 26:9, 11; 26:16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:22; Lam 4:20.

²⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, “Messiah in the New Testament,” in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Richard S. Hess, M. Daniel Carroll (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 118.

²⁸ Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 199.

Kinzer certainly tries to link his view of the messiah with the *Shema* as best he can, writing:

In accordance with the Jewish mystical tradition, messianic Jews ... see the Name of God as a distinct reality, inseparably one with God yet also possessing its own differentiated identity. The numerous references to God's name in this blessing, and in Jewish prayer as a whole, point us again to Messiah Yeshua as the eternal self expression of the ineffable God.²⁹

In appealing to the essential oneness of the *Shema*, he also appeals to the long tradition of Jewish Wisdom literature:

God creates all things through the divine Word and Wisdom that became incarnate in Yeshua. The first blessing before the *Shema* begins by celebrating God's acts of creation in the words of Psalm 104:24: "O Hashem, how magnified are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all (*kulam bechochmah asita*); the earth is full of Your creatures." In accordance with the teaching of the apostles, we see the *Chochmah* of this psalm as the divine wisdom that became flesh in Yeshua.³⁰

The *Shema* and Kabbalistic Conundrums

It has long been noted that the apostle Paul adopts ancient mystical ("kabbalistic") notions of an exalted messiah, which Kinzer is quick to cite:

Messiah is also "the image of the invisible God" – both before and after his incarnation (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4). According to John (12:41), the enthroned human form that Isaiah saw was Yeshua. This may explain the significance of John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; it is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known."

This verse follows a reference to the gift of the Torah through Moses. It implies that the God who Moses encountered in visible form was "God the only Son."³¹

²⁹ Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah*, 79; Jean Danielous, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Darton: Longman & Todd, 1964), 147-63; Richard Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001), 41-46; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 76-191, 239-56.

³⁰ Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah*, 79.

³¹ Ibid.

This is but the beginning of Kinzer's detailed examination of the *Shema* from a messianic Jewish framework, in which he attempts to harmonize its oneness with classical Christian Trinitarianism. It is by anyone's estimation quite an exegetical accomplishment.

Arguably, the high Christology to which messianic Judaism officially adheres (and which Kinzer defends) stems not so much from the synoptic Gospels as from the writings of Paul, who reframes the *Shema* so as to be inclusive of Jesus. Much has been written regarding 1 Corinthians 8:6, as either a restatement of Jewish monotheism or as an expression of ditheism. Richard Bauckham argues that Paul rearranges the words of the Greek version of the *Shema*, arriving at "an affirmation of both one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ."³² He concludes, "The only (!) novel element in Paul's reformulation is the inclusion of Jesus Christ within the unique divine identity so understood."³³ By contrast, Paul A. Rainbow observes that Israelites never included intermediaries within the divine unity expressed in the *Shema*. Andrew Y. Lau adds:

What is most astonishing here is that Paul, a Pharisee who will never relinquish his inherited monotheism, has split the *shema* in an unprecedented manner: by glossing God with the Father and Lord with Jesus Christ, Paul aligns Jesus with the *kurios* of the OT (LXX) and places Jesus within the explicit Jewish monotheistic framework. He therefore has modified the Jewish religion at its most essential point and redefined the *shema* christologically...³⁴

It is also relevant that while Paul's after-the-fact identification of Jesus with the "primordial Adam" (אדם קדמון, 1 Cor 15) recognizes the messiah to be in the "image of God" (צלם אלהים), it by no means explicitly declares him to

³² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Essays on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Crownhill, England: Paternoster, 2008). Bauckham observes: "If Paul were understood as adding the one Lord to the one God of whom the *Shema* speaks ... he would certainly be producing, not christological monotheism, but outright ditheism. Paul is carefully and profoundly faithful to Jewish monotheism's understanding of the *Shema* in both its affirmation the YHWH, the God of Israel, is the one and only God, and in its requirement that this one God's people be exclusively devoted to him."

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Andrew Y. Lau, *Manifest in Flesh: The Epiphany Christology of the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 73-4.

be God, or God's "enfleshment." In any case, the question for messianics is not how Paul conceived of Jesus, but how Jesus conceived of himself.

It is likewise well-known that John's Gospel plays on the Greco-Hellenistic notions of the divine *logos*, and is much more resonant with ideas expressed by Philo Judaeus than by traditional Jewish texts. Though Kinzer explains with consummate expertise how Messianic Jews interpret John, he does not demonstrate how such an interpretation is at its core Jewish. To be sure, it is more an expression of gnosticism than Judaism, and, as has been well argued, the search for the historical Jesus had best begin with the synoptics.

The most that can be said is that various concepts regarding an exalted/ pre-existent messiah are expressed in Jewish pseudepigraphal works.³⁵ However, even if an exalted messianism had once been tolerated within the varied fabric of pre-tannaitic Judaism, it can be countered that the Sages wisely and prudently ruled such views to be inconsistent with both the original intent of the *Shema* and the evolving essence of Jewish monotheism. In traditional Judaism even the Messiah was to be "de-centered."

It is fair to point out that on occasion rabbinic literature does speak of the Messiah in exalted terms. Some Talmudic passages elevate the "anointed one" to a surprising level:

"And God saw the light and it was good." This is the light of the Messiah... to teach you that God saw the generation of Messiah and His works before He created the universe, and He hid the Messiah... under His throne of Glory. Satan asked God, Master of the Universe: "For whom is this light under your throne of Glory?" God answered him, "It is for... [the Messiah] who is to turn you backward and who will put you to scorn with shamefacedness." (*Sanhedrin* 99a; *Berachot* 34b; *Shabbat* 63a)

Elsewhere, the Talmud declares: "Rabbi Yohanan taught that all the world was created for Messiah. What is His name? The school of Shiloh taught; His name is Shiloh as it is written (Gen 49:10)" (*Sanhedrin* 98b). Other

³⁵ Examples are multiple, including 1 Enoch 62:5-9, 48:2-7, Dead Sea Scrolls f.4Q491, f.11Q13, Wisdom of Solomon 2:12-20, 9:17-18, 2 Esdras 13:32-38, 52, 14:8, 3 Enoch 12:1-5, 3 Enoch 48(C) Fragment 3/K, Verses 1-9, 3 Enoch 48(D):1, 3 Enoch 48(D): 5-6, 2 Esdras 7:27-29. See also Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94, no. 3 (July 1, 2001): 243-284.

Jewish commentaries, dating to as late as the ninth century, also proclaim this high view of the Messiah: “The Messiah shall be more exalted than Abraham... more extolled than Moses... and be very high; that is higher than the ministering angels...” (*Midrash Tanhuma* and *Yalkut*, vol. 2, par. 338).

According to *Midrash Rabbah*, Reish Lakish declared that when the spirit of God “hovered upon the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:2), “this alludes to the spirit of the Messiah, as you read, ‘And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him’ (Isa. 11: 2).”³⁶ This suggests that certain early Jewish commentators must have held to an exalted view of the Messiah. However, such interpretations must have remained a small minority concept, and we are told that Reish Lakish was admonished by his fellow rabbis for his insolence in assigning supernatural status to the Messiah. Rabbi Akiva was also said to have referred to the heavenly throne of the Messiah, in “fiery flames.” R. Yosé the Galilean rebuked him, however, as profaning the Presence of God.³⁷ Moreover, when Akiva hinted that the Messiah will be an exalted figure, identified as the “son of man” of Daniel 7, his fellow sages told him to go and study Torah, since the Messiah will be human and not an angel. In general the Sages never faltered in their tenacious devotion to a single God, which meant that divine status must never be attributed to any human being, even the “anointed one.” Anyone who wavered on this point must be corrected. In the Jewish mind there could not be two gods – the divine Father and the Messiah – and there could certainly not be, as in western Christian (including messianic Jewish) formulations, three. Not surprisingly, any texts from Jewish antiquity that advanced the notion of multiplicity within the “Godhead” (or, in Daniel Boyarin’s view, a “binitarian doctrine of God”) were systematically excluded from the Jewish canon and afforded no authority or place in Jewish faith traditions.

Over the course of centuries there were a number of additional Jewish expressions of the “exalted Messiah” concept. The great mystical rabbi of medieval Spain, Moshe ben Nachman (Nachmonides) compared the Messiah to the innermost sanctum of the long-destroyed Temple: “This Holy of Holies is the Messiah who is sanctified more than the sons of

³⁶ *Midrash Rabbah, Third Edition*, eds. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino, 1983), 17.

³⁷ *b. Hag.* 14a.

David.”³⁸ There is also reference, in a twelfth-century Byzantine Jewish source, to the messiah ben Joseph as rebuilding the temple and offering sacrifices.³⁹

Nevertheless, not even these passages go as far as to depict the Messiah as an “enfleshment” of God. They do, however, reveal the intense longing that Jews have harbored over the centuries for God’s representative to set things right on earth and bring about an end to war, bloodshed and human suffering. We should certainly be mindful of the kabbalistic traditions surrounding Isaac Luria, who came to be known as the “divine Rabbi Isaac” and the “holy Ari.” Nonetheless, even if his most devoted disciples ascribed to him a divine “aura” of sorts, they would never have been audacious enough to identify him as the God of Israel.⁴⁰ Only the most “radical” form of kabbalistic messianism, evinced by Shabbetai Zvi and his adherents, identified the “anointed one” with a suggestion of deity.⁴¹ Nathan of Gaza’s circular letter to the Jewish Diaspora, for example, designated Shabbetai as the “first begotten son of God.” Not surprisingly, Zvi was excommunicated by the Jewish community in Salonika in the year 1651.⁴²

³⁸ Samuel R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 19 (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 376. See also Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 97. Idel notes the degree to which apocalyptic messianism was “... concerned with the rebuilding of the Temple by the Messiah.” On the Holy of Holies in Jewish mysticism see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 379 n.9; Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 20-22.

³⁹ Idel, 96.

⁴⁰ The acrostic “Divine Rabbi” was understood as a reference, not to divinity *per-se*, but to divine inspiration. Rabbi Yitzhak Isaac Safrin of Komarno wrote of Luria: “He obtained [a level of] divine inspiration the like of which was not seen in our times. From the divine master, the Besht, until his day there was no revelation like that which he received.” See Morris M. Faierstein, ed., *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 278.

⁴¹ In Salonika, Zvi conducted ceremonies, such as “marrying” the Torah, which appeared to have been designed to indicate both his messianic status and divinity. See Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 150.

⁴² See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 616.

A Messianic Jewish “Reformation”?

In the Judaism that has evolved down to the present it is hardly acceptable for anyone to hide behind the rubric of “Jewish mysticism” as a defense of “binitarianism” or “Trinitarianism,” and this reality is something with which Messianic Jews, however well-intentioned, must deal. Indeed, a new “reformation” *away* from Protestant Reformed theology might go a long way toward resolving the obvious tension between traditional Jews and Messianic Jews.

While Kinzer argues for an emerging “post-missionary messianic Judaism,” his overall theology remains congruent with what other messianic leaders have declared regarding the divine status and centrality of Jesus/ Yeshua. Notwithstanding Kinzer’s “fresh” approach, the messianic Jewish movement as a whole remains committed to a thoroughly “exclusivist” theology:

It is only by recognizing the centrality of Jesus and that he is the sole legitimate heir to all of the Abrahamic promises that ... errors ... can be overturned. If he is central, and there is one plan of God centered in him, and one identity centered in him, then error is forced out and the only true basis for Jewish and Gentile identity is established. There is no separate plan or purpose for national Israel. The only plan for national Israel, or for anyone of any nation, is to receive the gospel and be a part of bringing the message of redemption in the Kingdom of God to the world.⁴³

The defenders of and advocates for messianic Judaism would do well to consider the inflammatory, supersessionist and offensive nature of such language, which utterly denies all “purpose” for “national Israel,” all the while adhering to notions that traditional Jews consider *avodah zarah*.

When it comes to the “historical Jesus/ Yeshua,” it is something of a truism that he affirmed “oneness” of God, as expressed in the *Shema*. While the overwhelming majority of Messianic Jews are devoted to the “centrality of Jesus,” it is worth pointing out that the Jesus of the Gospels just as consistently “decentered” himself. At least when it comes to the synoptic Gospels, both the narratives and the supposed *ipsissima verba* of Jesus reflect the approach of a pre-rabbinic sage, somewhere between the world

⁴³ www.lcje.net/papers/2002/klett.doc

of the Pharisees and the world of the ancient Ḥasidim, who revered to the utmost his divine “Father,” with whom he nurtured a rich and personal relationship.⁴⁴ This, curiously enough, presents a growing dilemma for Messianic Jews, who, while devoted to the message and idea of the *Shema*, find themselves bound to defend the theological tenets of traditional Christianity.

It stands to reason that if messianic Jewish leaders indeed desire that the members of their movement be recognized as practicing, observant Jews, they need entertain a serious “decentering” of the person of Jesus. This might begin with a recognition of the serious contemporary research, revealing the historical Jesus as one who rejected a “cult of personality,” deflecting personal attention, in a traditionally Jewish way, to the performance of *mitzvot*. We find no better example of this than the Lucan pericope of Jesus and Beelzebul, in which a demon is driven out of a mute man. Jesus refers to the source of his power to exorcise as “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), reminiscent of Exodus 8:15, when the Egyptian magicians of Pharaoh were helpless before Moses, declaring, “This is the finger of God.” The final emphasis of Jesus, however, is not on himself, but on the “kingdom of God,” which by these things people will know has come upon them. This is followed by the oft-quoted verse: “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Luke 11:23). While appearing to reflect at the very least an exalted self-conception on the part of Jesus, it is actually reminiscent of Hillel’s famous

⁴⁴ We are told, for example, that the pre-tannaitic sage, Honi ha-M’agel, was one to whom God listened “like a father listens to his son” (m. *Ta’an.* 3:8; b. *Ta’an.* 23a). See also Shmuel Safrai, “Jesus as a Ḥasid,” *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1990, Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies): 1-7. (Heb.); David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (1987, New York: Adama Books), 33-37; idem, “A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message,” in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 469-89. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (1973, London: William Collins Sons), 72-82; idem, “Ḥanina ben Dosa,” *JJS* 23 (1972): 28-50; idem, “Ḥanina ben Dosa,” *JJS* 24 (1973): 51-64; David Levine, “Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity,” in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45-58; Chana Safrai and Zeev Safrai, “Rabbinic Holy Men,” in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 59-78; and Aharon Oppenheimer, *Galilee in the Period of the Mishnah*, (1991, Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center), 128-129 (Heb.).

statement: “In a time when men scatter, gather; when there is no demand, buy then; and in a place where there are no men, be a man.”⁴⁵ Flusser argued that Jesus had a similar sense of self-awareness as Hillel, or the Dead Sea sect’s “Teacher of Righteousness,” neither of whom made pretense of divine status.⁴⁶

In this context we read of a woman in the crowd who calls out: “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.” In Hebraic fashion, Jesus follows her “blessed” with one of his own: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:27-28).⁴⁷ This saying is a literary “doublet” of one we find sandwiched in an earlier Lucan context (8:15), in which Jesus, having been told that his mother and brothers are waiting to see him, declares: “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.” Again and again Jesus decenters himself, emphasizing the Torah and the greatest of the commandments, the *Shema* and the *v’ahavta* (Matt 22:36-37).

Kinzer comments: “As we have seen, the *Shema* expresses Israel’s response to *Hashem*. When we recite it in Yeshua, we concentrate on his fulfillment of that response in his self-offering to God, and we participate in his self-offering through the gift of his Spirit.”⁴⁸ Since when, however, does the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels require any prayer or declaration of faith to recited “in” him? Such a thing would foster the very cult of personality against which he admonished. It is difficult to imagine how Jesus, as an observant Jew, would have tolerated the worship of himself. Nonetheless, Kinzer finds himself in agreement with traditional Christian approaches, such as Keener’s commentary on the Gospel of John: “Christ is greater than Moses as the one whom Moses saw is greater than Moses; in the fourth gospel, the glory witnessed by Israelite prophets was that of Jesus himself.”⁴⁹ It is fair to point out, however, that good scholarship, in looking for the historical Jesus, must look elsewhere than the Gospel of John. When in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus declares, “Something greater than the temple is

⁴⁵ *Sifre Zutta*, Pinchas, 27:1, ed. H.S. Horovitz, Lipsiac 1917 (reprint: Jerusalem 1966).

⁴⁶ Flusser, p. 509.

⁴⁷ See Flusser, 291-2. Flusser notes that the woman’s blessing and Jesus’ sharp rejoinder does not appear to be a “redactional invention.” See also T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 342-3.

⁴⁸ Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 78.

⁴⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. I, 419; cf. Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 79.

here,” and that “a greater than Solomon is here,” it is fair to ask what exactly he means. Is this “something” he references himself, or is it rather the main emphasis of all his teachings – the kingdom of God? We may even see Jesus as the “great decenterer”: decentering the temple, decentering Solomon, and ultimately decentering himself. Even when he is being led away to crucifixion, he addresses the weeping women in the crowd, saying, “Weep not for me but for yourselves...” Might the time come when Messianic Jews realize that ascribing worship to Jesus actually does him a disservice?

Many have observed that Kinzer is correct in asserting that the main problem Jewish religious leaders have with the messianic movement is not with the simple belief in Jesus as Israel’s messiah. Lubavitchers who ascribe messianic status to Schneerson may be regarded as aberrant Jews, but they remain Jews.⁵⁰ The real problem is that Messianic Jews who worship Jesus/ Yeshua as the “enfleshment” of God, while claiming to affirm the *Shema*, in fact undermine it.

The most serious issue with this is not with Christians or with Christian theology, but with Jews who insist on their own fidelity to Judaism while nonetheless adhering to such theology. From the standpoint of *halakhah* the oneness of God as expressed in the *Shema* is the only theological tenet to which every Jew must adhere, and on that ground, Messianic Jews are understandably not considered Jews at all, but Christians. In fact, the term “Messianic Jew” is rightly understood as deceptive, since all Judaism is “messianic,” whether anticipating a personal messiah, or a “messianic age.” What we are dealing with instead is the deeply-rooted historical phenomenon of Jewish converts to Christianity, albeit having chosen to preserve many traditional Jewish traditions and customs. Is there a pathway by which Jewish believers in the messiahship of Jesus/ Yeshua might indeed be accepted as Jewish rather than Christian? That would depend on whether they are willing to undertake a serious “reformation” of the Reformed theology they continue to endorse. Moreover, the sounds of alarm coming from some Trinitarian-minded leaders of the messianic movement appear to indicate that there are indeed Messianic Jews who are in the process of fomenting a genuine theological “reformation.” For better or for worse, the movement’s “identity crisis” is therefore likely to continue.

“Decentering” a Movement

⁵⁰ Fred Klett, “The Centrality of Messiah and the Theological Direction of the Messianic Movement,” LCJE-NA 2002.

It is hardly possible, from a Jewish perspective, to advise those of another faith (Christians, or in this case Messianic Jews) on how to formulate their personal religious precepts. It is clear, however, that up until now the worship of Jesus as divine has prevented any serious dialogue between traditional Jews and Messianic Jews. It does seem reasonable, therefore, to elucidate what would have to be done in order to “reform” messianic Jewish concepts in such a manner that they not be summarily dismissed from the larger tapestry of Jewish thought, life and culture.

At the risk of being, at the very least, presumptuous, a fundamental recommendation might be made to Messianic Jews willing to consider serious theological reform, namely, that messianic Judaism itself needs to be “decentered.” If indeed the historical Jesus/ Yeshua of Nazareth had no use for a cult of personality, then centering the movement on him (rather than the concept about which he was clearly most concerned, the “kingdom of heaven” as an expression of the Divine Presence in the midst of the people of Israel) in a real sense disrespects him.

It also creates a false choice. Either Jesus is “central” and worshiped as divine or cast aside. In fact the opposite is true. Assuming modern scholarship is correct regarding the true self-awareness and self-conception of Jesus, then if Jesus is worshiped as the “enfleshment” of God, he is in fact disrespected, and the *Shema* is disregarded. Are there other options? Indeed, there are. They must derive, however, from an understanding that as long as “messianic Judaism” actively embraces the worship of Jesus as divine, it is not Judaism. Hence, the term itself is misleading. The best advice for Messianic Jews might be to consider themselves to some extent akin to the Chabad Lubavitch movement, whose members neither pray to the Rebbe, nor make any mention of him during services, nor decorate their places of worship with any image of him beyond a framed photograph.

Moreover, while the overwhelming majority of Jews today would be loathe to consider the Menachem Mendel Schneerson as the messiah of Israel, no one can say that those who affirm this marginal ideology are not Jews, not good Jews, or are bad Jews. It has been argued that those who believe that the Rebbe will at some point rise from the dead can no longer legitimately be called Jews.⁵¹ There are of course tales in the Hebrew Bible of people

⁵¹ See David Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Liverpool, England: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 2008.

rising from the dead, namely, the son of a widow in Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17-24), a Shunammite woman's son (2 Kgs 4:18-37), and an Israelite man thrown into Elisha's tomb (2 Kgs 13:20-21).

What is not tolerable, however, is the veneration of the Rebbe to such an extent that he is, to all intents and purposes, worshiped. While the great majority of "moderate" Chabadniks would not go this far, there are some within the movement (a more "radical" variety) who have in fact been accused of "rabbi worship." At the Brooklyn headquarters of the movement there have been signs on display, adorning, among other things, the Ark of the Covenant, prominently proclaiming the Rebbe's messiahship. An empty seat has been exclusively reserved for the Rebbe, to which little children would sometimes point, exclaiming that they actually see him. At the beginning of services, the congregants have formed an aisle through which the Rebbe is said to enter, invisible to some but manifest and perceptible to others. An Israeli rabbi wrote an article in 2003 in which he declared that Chabad-Lubavitch is, spiritually speaking, Jerusalem, and that the Brooklyn headquarters is the Temple. The Rebbe represents the true Ark of the Covenant, resting on the "foundation stone." This holy Ark – the Rebbe himself – is home to the Divine Presence.⁵²

Modern Jewish authorities understandably consider this to be borderline idolatry. One contemporary rabbi notably distinguishes between "tolerable" and "intolerable" deviance from the Jewish faith.⁵³ The acceptance of Trinitarian concepts as well as the messianism of those Chabadniks who cross the line to "rabbi worship," fall into the latter category. In any case, a strong argument can be made that contemporary Chabadniks (at least the "moderate" variety), not "Jews for Jesus," are today's "Messianic Jews." If Jewish believers in Jesus wish to retain their Jewish identity, as their own legitimate version of "messianic Judaism," can they still believe that Jesus is Israel's Messiah? Yes. Can they even believe that he rose from the dead? Yes. Can they believe that he will one day return to judge the world in righteousness? Yes. Can they pray to him and worship him as divine? No. At the point of proclaiming Jesus as God's "enfleshment," Messianic Jews, regardless of their level of Jewish observance, are no longer Jews, at least by faith.

⁵² See "*Ekrnot be-Olam ha-Hasidut*" at <http://www.hageula.com>.

⁵³ Rabbi Donniel Hartman, *The Boundaries of Judaism* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

Summing Up:

In the final analysis, a fresh look by Messianic Jews at the Jesus of history might well pave the way for an expression of their faith that would in no way be in tension with the essence of Jewish monotheism. Traditional Jews would doubtless still be troubled by the movement, but would be hard-pressed to deny its legitimacy as a matter of *halakhah*. Moreover, the High Court of Israel might even be obliged to rethink its position regarding Messianic Jews (at least the non-Trinitarian variety) and the Law of Return. On the part of many if not most Messianic Jews, that would certainly require an enormous leap of faith, but it would be a leap toward the heart of the Torah, embracing the message, meaning an essence of the *Shema*.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

“THREADING THE NEEDLE”: THE NAZARENE, THE ḤASIDIM, AND ANCIENT “ZEALOTRY”

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Key words: Rabbi Jesus, Pharisees, Oral Torah, the Sages, Hillel and Shammai

One of the most enigmatic of all the sectarian movements known to have existed in the second Jewish Commonwealth is often referred to as the “pious” – known in textual sources from the period as the Ḥasidim. The reconstruction of this group is a daunting task, but one that has significant implications with respect to serious research of Second Temple Judaism, as well as the historical Jesus of Nazareth - Yeshua. Indeed, the reasons to suppose that Jesus/ Yeshua had more than a moderate association with the ancient Ḥasidim are multiple. If the Gospel accounts can at all be trusted, Yeshua, like the Ḥasidim, betrayed a genuine “intimacy” with the God of Israel which, in the opinion of many kindred sages of his day, amounted to an audacity bordering on blasphemy. Additionally, the Nazarene is said to have effectuated many miraculous deeds, including divine healing, reminiscent of miracles attributed to the Ḥasidim. Yeshua’s attitude toward the performance of good deeds as superior to Torah study equally reminds us of the perspective of the ancient Ḥasidim. The questions regarding Yeshua’s relationship to the Ḥasidim with respect to matters of ritual purity, as well as messianism, national deliverance and militancy in the face of Roman occupation and oppression, are much more nuanced, though I contend that there is ample room even on such issues to find common ground between the illustrious Galilean and the “pious” sectarians/ “Ḥasideans” of Second Temple Judaism.

Reconstructing the Ḥasidim: A Case of Identity

Who were the early Ḥasidim and when do we first encounter them in ancient Israelite society? Notably, the term *ḥasid*, as it appears in the Scriptures, seems to be a generic reference to people of piety and upright character, especially individuals considered consecrated and set apart from others (as in Pss 37:28; 79:2; 89:5; 97:10).¹ Some speculate that during the time when the book of Psalms was composed, groups of pious individuals came together for the sake of defending their faith.² Psalm 85:9 declares that God "...will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints (*ḥasidim*)" (JPS). It has been suggested that these "saints" may have comprised a specific sect of Israelites within the larger community, though identifying these as a unique cultic group is a tenuous assertion at best.

In any case, we might ask: if such a group of pietists existed (whether or not they are mentioned in the Psalms), might they have become the core of those who formally came to be known as the Ḥasidim, the first recorded mention of whom is found in the book of 1 Maccabees?³ Those Ḥasidim, presumed to have galvanized at a time concurrent with the Maccabean Revolt, are said to have been "exceedingly forceful," i.e. of staunchly militant character, taking up arms in the ultimate liberation of Jerusalem from Seleucid tyranny. Connecting the historical Jesus/ Yeshua with a later incarnation of such a group, or its remnants, would go a long way toward casting him in the light of anti-Roman zealotry.

A possible reference to those early "freedom fighters" may be found in Psalm 149, which praises a group of fighting "saints":

Let the saints (*ḥasidim*) exult in glory; let them sing for joy upon their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;
To execute vengeance upon the nations, and chastisements upon the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

¹ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1946), 151-2; see also Isa 66:2, 5. Burrows went as far as to speculate that there was a diffuse pietistic/ ascetic tendency that expressed itself as early as the Rechabite sect of Jeremiah 35:6-7 and surfacing again in the later psalms, as the "poor" who trust God for their salvation.

² Louis Jacobs, *Holy Living: Saints and Saintliness in Judaism* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1990), 4.

³ Daniel R. Schwartz, "Ḥasidim in 1 Maccabees 2:24?" *SCI* 13 (1994): 7-18.

To execute upon them the judgment written; He is the glory of all His saints (*ḥasidim*). (Pss 149:6-9, JPS)⁴

This passage would certainly befit the second century BCE struggle against Seleucid oppression. Some scholars argue that these *ḥasidim*, along with certain other references in the book of Psalms, in fact represent those who fought alongside the Maccabees from 168 to 164 BCE. The assumption, as well as the difficulty with this line of reasoning, is that this and other such psalms were indeed the product of the mid-second century BCE.⁵ That of course is far from certain.

Some have speculated (Pfeiffer in particular) that the book of Daniel, almost universally considered a pseudepigraphal work dating to the approximate time of the Maccabean revolt, may have been the literary product of the Ḥasidim.⁶ While this identification has been seriously challenged, Daniel does contain some oblique references to Jewish pietists, such as the cryptic visionary account of “the fourth beast” (symbolic of the Seleucid dynasty of Antiochus IV) who “made war with the saints” (Dan 7:21). However, the term used here is not “Hasidim” but the Aramaic *kaddishin*. Elsewhere, in a passage that appears to relate to the Maccabean rebels in the midst of the Antiochan persecution, we read: “Now when they shall stumble, they shall be helped with a little help...” (Dan 11:34, JPS). It has long been observed that the “little help” is likely a reference to the Ḥasidim, who joined the revolt and battled with the Maccabees until the liberation of Jerusalem.

Early Militants and Later Pacifists?

Importantly, one passage makes direct mention of the Ḥasidim (referred to by the Greek term *Assidaioi*), with respect to their decision to join Mattathias and his company in their struggle against Seleucid domination of the land of Israel.⁷

⁴ The “humble” are also referenced in Pss 149:4 in a manner reminiscent of Isa 66:2, 5.

⁵ See Lazar Gulkovitsch, “Die Entwicklung des Begriffes *hasid* im Alten Testament,” *Acta et commentationes Universitatis tartuenss Dorpatensis* 32 (1934): 22; idem, *Die Bildung des Begriffes Hasid* (Tartu: K. Mattiesen, 1935).

⁶ Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), 13-14; see also Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 22-3.

⁷ Philip R. Davies, “Ḥasidim in the Maccabean Period,” *JJS* 28 (1977): 127-40.

Then was assembled to them the congregation of the Assideans, the stoutest of Israel, every one that had a good will for the law. And all they that fled from the evils, joined themselves to them, and were a support to them. And they gathered an army, and slew the sinners in their wrath, and the wicked men in their indignation: and the rest fled to the nations for safety. (1 Macc 2:42-44, DRA)

What strikes us immediately is the militancy of the passage, and the fact that these pietists were said to be capable of assembling a sizable military force. That idea is bolstered by a separate account of the same events, in 2 Maccabees, which goes as far as to declare Judah Maccabee as their “captain”:

They among the Jews that are called Assideans, of whom Judas Machabeus is captain, nourish wars, and raise seditions, and will not suffer the realm to be in peace (2 Macc 14:6, DRA).

It is therefore assumed that these early Ḥasidim were of an exceptionally violent character. However, it is noteworthy that references to the Ḥasidim in the books of Maccabees do not indicate that they arose for the purpose of battling the Seleucids under Antiochus IV, but rather suggest that they were already in existence, having galvanized for some other reason.⁸ Militant warfare was therefore not their *raison d'être*, at least at the outset. Accordingly, we might well argue that to call these early Ḥasidim militant by nature amounts to an overgeneralization. They may simply have turned to violence in the face of the Antiochan persecution.

This observation is particularly relevant, given the notion, advanced by a number of scholars, that the militant Ḥasidim of the Maccabean revolt are to be distinguished from a later, non-militant group of pietists. These later Ḥasidim were presumably akin to the world of the Sages, who reference them as men of such reverent character that one would be hard pressed to imagine them taking up the sword under any circumstances. Shmuel Safrai, in contrasting the violent Ḥasidim who joined the cause of the Maccabees with those of a fundamentally different character who came along subsequently, went as far as to make a direct link between the later,

⁸ Louis Jacobs, “The Concept of Ḥasid in the Biblical and Rabbinic Literatures,” *JJS* 8 (1957): 143-54.

presumably non-militant Ḥasidim, and the historical Jesus.⁹ Safrai, as well as David Flusser and Geza Vermes, linked the Jesus of the New Testament in tone and substance with this “reorganized” group of Ḥasidim.¹⁰

Some point out that this particular movement of Ḥasidim were known for having fused religious zeal with the working of miracles.¹¹ Others question whether these “Ḥasidim” ever existed at all, due to a paucity of reliable sources. I will argue that this later crop of miracle workers, including Yeshua, were indeed Ḥasidim, perhaps the direct offshoots of the Maccabean Ḥasidim, but I will suggest that while they might have adopted different attitudes than their forebears with regard to various matters (including ritual purity), they were not necessarily less militant or “zealous” with regard to national liberation.

Assuming that such individuals comprised an authentic pietistic movement, the tension between these particular Ḥasidim (Yeshua arguably included) and other pre-rabbinic Sages is exemplified in Ḥoni ha-M’agel (generally considered a Ḥasid), who, during a long drought, audaciously drew a circle in the dust, stood in the center, and declared that he would not move until

⁹ See Shmuel Safrai, “The Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature,” *JJS* 16 (1965): 27–31; *idem*, “Ḥasidim and Men of Deeds,” *Zion* 50 (1985): 133–54 (Heb.); *idem*, “Mishnat Ḥasidim in the Literature of the Tannaim,” in *In Times of Temple and Mishnah: Studies in Jewish History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996), 2:501–17 (Heb.); *idem*, “The Pharisees and the Ḥasidim,” *Sidic* 10 (1977): 12–16 (Heb.); David Levine, “Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity,” in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45–58; Chana Safrai and Zeev Safrai, “Rabbinic Holy Men,” in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 59–78; Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina ben Dosa,” *JJS* 23 (1972): 28–50; *idem*, “Ḥanina ben Dosa,” *JJS* 24 (1973): 51–64; and Aharon Oppenheimer, *Galilee in the Period of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1991), 128–291.

¹⁰ Shmuel Safrai, “Jesus as a Ḥasid,” *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1990), 1–7. (Heb.); David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York: Adama Books, 1987), 33–37; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: William Collins Sons, 1973), 72–82.

¹¹ See *y Dem* 1.3 (21d–22a), *b Taan* 24b–25a, *y Dem* 1.2 (22a). *y Sheq* 5.2 (48d); *Dev R* 3.3, *b Yeb* 121b par. *bBQ* 50a, cf. Michael Becker, *Wunder und Wundertäter im frührabbinischen Judentum* (WUNT, IL.144; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 363–64.

the Almighty sent rain. We are told that the pre-tannaitic sage, Shimon ben Shetach, would have excommunicated Ḥoni for such disrespectful behavior, were it not for the fact that God listened to him “like a father listens to his son.”¹²

The manner of the Circle-Drawer’s death is even more telling when it comes to distinguishing between early militant and later pacifistic Ḥasidim. Josephus records that around 63 BCE, during the internecine warfare between Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II, Ḥoni was taken prisoner by the latter and asked to offer prayer on his behalf and against his foe. Ḥoni’s response typifies the non-violent approach of the later “reorganized” Ḥasidim: “Lord of the universe, as the besieged and the besiegers both belong to Your people, I beseech You not to answer the evil prayers of either.” Josephus continues: “He was thereupon stoned to death.”¹³ It is certainly tempting to compare the much-vaunted nonviolent approach of Yeshua with that of the Circle-Drawer, and view them both as Ḥasidim of the post-Maccabean variety. We even find allusion to Ḥoni’s death in the mouth of Yeshua, as he stands upon the Mount of Olives and laments Jerusalem’s coming destruction: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!” (Matt 23:37 NKJV). In any case, such characters are never called “Ḥasidim” *per-se*. Some prefer to characterize them as “charismatic solitaires,” at the margins of the early rabbinic movement.¹⁴

But however tempting to compare Yeshua with Ḥoni ha-M’agel, and to see them both as non-militant, pacifistic pietists, it is equally important to recognize the dramatic difference between the events driving the Maccabean revolt and those involving two brothers squabbling for succession to the throne of Queen Shlomzion. We need see no contradiction between the full-throated support of the Maccabean freedom fighters by the early Ḥasidim and the seemingly pacifistic response of at least one of their spiritual descendants to the fratricidal conduct of Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II.

¹² *m. Ta’an* 3:8; *b. Ta’an* 23a.

¹³ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.2.1, 21.

¹⁴ Michael Becker, “Miracles in Early Rabbinic Literature: Some Questions on their Pragmatics,” in *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, eds. Michael Labahn, L. J. Lietaert (Peerbolte; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 63.

The Ḥasidim in Rabbinic Literature

As with the story of Ḥoni, much of our analysis depends upon rabbinic literature, which specifically mentions a group of pietists known as *ḥasidim ha-rishonim* (the “pious men of old” or “first Ḥasidim”), who were said to be rigorous in observing the Torah, even beyond its literal sense. The Mishnah (*Ber* 5:1) and the Babylonian Talmud (*Ber* 32b) depict them as emptying their minds and directing their hearts to God an hour prior to prayer. Other scrupulous conduct is said to have involved attaching fringes to the corners of their garments after only three handbreadths had been woven, consorting with their wives only on Wednesdays in the hope that a child would not be born on the Sabbath, and burying thorns and broken glass at three handbreadths to avoid the possibility of doing harm to others (*B K* 30a). It was even said, according to a late post-talmudic tractate (*Sem* 3:10) that some perished as a result of purging themselves, so as to enter the world to come in a state of ritual purity. But which Ḥasidim were these, those of the Maccabean era, or those to whom Ḥoni ha-M’agel belonged?

While such accounts were composed long after the fact, they are at the very least evidence that although such pietists (*ha-rishonim*) no longer existed as a distinct group by the time the Mishnah was redacted, they were nonetheless believed to have been extremely zealous for the law. The lingering question is whether both groups of Ḥasidim (the allies of the Maccabees and their reorganized counterparts) were equally zealous in the pursuit of peace.

Safrai argued that while the early Ḥasidim were indeed extremely concerned with ritual purity and were among those who held that the purity laws were incumbent upon all Israelites, not just the priesthood, the latter group were, like Yeshua, not particularly scrupulous regarding such strictures. Consequently, while the Talmud recounts the stringency of the early Ḥasidim with regard to ritual purity, it arguably references the later pietists as having cultivated a more relaxed attitude toward purity laws than the Sages. This (in a manner reminiscent of Yeshua) endeared them to the poor and downtrodden.¹⁵ They were nonetheless particularly scrupulous when it came to ethical laws regarding behavior toward one’s fellow. Beyond frequent prayer, they were said to have embraced poverty as an exemplary

¹⁵ Safrai and Safrai, “Holy Men and Rabbis,” 62-63.

religious archetype. Their particular piety is said to have been expressed in such terms as *derekh erez* (“the way of the world”), and “sin fearers.”¹⁶

It is specifically argued that Talmudic examples of the later, non-militant class of Ḥasidim include the Galilean disciple of Yohanan ben Zakkai (famously non-militant in his own right), Ḥanina ben Dosa, who was recounted in the Mishnah as praying over the sick (as Yeshua was said to do in the Christian Gospels), announcing who would live and who would die. When asked how he could be certain, he would reply that if his prayer was “fluent” in his mouth, he knew it had been received; otherwise it was rejected.¹⁷ Some have also found parallels with the worldview of the Ḥasidim in certain parables appearing in rabbinic literature. A case in point relates to the issue of whether study took precedence over good deeds or vice versa. The later Ḥasidim stressed the redemptive role of action, as expressed, not surprisingly, by Ḥanina ben Dosa:

He in whom the fear of sin takes precedence of wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but he in whom wisdom takes precedence of his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure (*m. Avot* 3:11)¹⁸

This theme is also prominent in the teaching of Yeshua: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works...” (Matt 5:16 NKJV).¹⁹ This was also the position of Shimon ben Gamaliel (though later overturned by the Sages in 120 CE), who classically declared: “Not learning but doing is the chief thing” (*m. Avot* 1:17). Elsewhere, it is said that the man whose deeds exceed his wisdom is blessed.²⁰ The “Torah” of Jesus

¹⁶ Shmuel Safrai, “The Term *Derekh Eretz*,” *Tarbiz* 60 (1991): 147-62 (Heb.); David Flusser, “Which is the Straight Way that a Man Should Choose for Himself? (*M Ab* 2.1),” in *Judaism in the Second Temple Period 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 232-47. *Derekh erez* also came to denote one’s worldly occupation; as in *m. Avot* 2:2.

¹⁷ *b. Ber* 34b.

¹⁸ See Marc Turnage, “The Linguistic Ethos of the Galilee in the First Century, CE,” in *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea*, eds. Randall Buth, R. Steven Notley (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 175.

¹⁹ This theme is also emphasized in Pss 97:11 - אור נִרְעַ לְעַדִּיק.

²⁰ *Tanna debe Eliyahu Rabbah* 17; see Meir Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu Rabba and Seder Eliahu Zuta (Tanna d’be Eliahu)*, (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1969). See also Steven Notley and Zeev Safrai, *Parables of the Sages: Jewish Wisdom from Jesus to Rav Ashi*, (Jerusalem: Carta, 2013), 26, 245.

therefore appears to coincide closely with that of the Ḥasidim, leading not the few scholars to conclude that the Nazarene was himself a Ḥasid.

A Question of Sources

One obvious difficulty with regard to reconstructing the worldview of the Ḥasidim is that the main source material for such reconstruction is the literature of the Sages, set to writing centuries after the fact.²¹ It is most important, before accepting at face value the account of the Ḥasidim in rabbinic literature, to recognize the overall agenda of the Sages, who had every reason to deemphasize the militancy of their own forebears. Having suffered the catastrophic consequences of two failed revolts against Rome (the Great Revolt, 66-70 CE and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, 128-135 CE), it was very much in the interest of the tannaitic and amoraic Sages to recast the face of Judaism with a fundamentally peaceful profile. With the growth of the Babylonian Diaspora, along with the continuing presence of Jews in the Greco-Roman west, they found it essential to redefine Judaism as a non-confrontational, nonviolent faith.²² To impress upon their overlords their pacifist ways, they coined the Talmudic dictum, *dina d'malkhuta dina* ("the law of the kingdom is the law").²³ Jews were to submit to the ruling authorities, not challenge them, and certainly not to rebel against them. With this in mind, the Sages may well have rewritten history, in order to depict the whole of Israelite society (save the despised Zealots) as lovers of peace and "pursuers of peace" (in rabbinic parlance *rodfei shalom*). Their motive was doubtless for internal consumption as well, to discourage the kind of rebelliousness among the people that had brought on these catastrophes in the first place. Indeed, rabbinic literature is largely void of

²¹ Some modern scholars contend, however, that written notes did exist, at least in the tannaitic period (pre-200 CE) and that the Mishnah was edited from these notes and not orally.

²² For more on the non-violent aspects of rabbinic Judaism see Yehuda Mirsky, "The Political Morality of Pacifism and Nonviolence: One Jewish View," in *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions* (J. Patout Burns ed.; Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 47-66; see also Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do the Right and the Good: A Jewish Approach to Modern Social Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002): 161.

²³ The statement appears four times in the Babylonian Talmud, emphasizing Jewish acquiescence to Gentile authority. See Mark Washofsky, "Halakhah and Political Theory: A Study in Jewish Legal Response to Modernity," *Modern Judaism* 9 3 (Oct., 1989): 293.

references to the Zealot faction, almost as if they never existed.²⁴ In the few places where they are mentioned, the Zealots are depicted as being non-religious and disobedient to Jewish religious leaders, who counseled that they seek treaties of peace. They are dubbed “*biryonim*,” i.e. “boorish,” or “wild” ruffians. They are reviled for being blindly militant and aggressive and for refusing to compromise, or to rescue the survivors of Jerusalem. They are viewed as having brought about the destruction of the Temple, along with the retribution of Rome against the people of Judea.

The violent aspects of other societal currents would be downplayed by the Sages, while emphasizing, in the case of the Ḥasidim, only their piety. The overarching non-violent approach of the Talmud is of course well-known, declaring that the purpose of the whole Torah is the promotion of peace.²⁵ Moreover, when it came to the desire for independence or autonomy for the land of Israel from foreign domination, the Talmud recounts (in response to the persecutions of the second century, CE) that the people literally took an oath mandating pacifism.²⁶ The explanation given is that pacifism is often the best response to complete political defeat, and that survival is frequently best insured through renouncing the use of force. It has also been noted that while traditional Judaism rejected complete pacifism, it affirmed a pragmatic, selective pacifism as a more morally upright approach.²⁷ Such a “tactical pacifism” is preferable to cooperating with evil or even the active

²⁴ The scant references in the Talmud to the “Sicarii” are fused with the period of the Great Revolt itself. See *m. Maksh* 1:6: “It once happened that the men of Jerusalem hid their fig-cakes in the water because of the Sicarii, and the sages declared them not susceptible [to ritual uncleanness].” Another reference is found in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* (7 p. 20, version B, ed. Schechter, 1945): “When Vespasian came and surrounded Jerusalem ... the Sicarii took the initiative and set fire to all the granaries.” There is also mention of Ben Batiah, as “the head of the Sicarii in Jerusalem,” along with the account of Abba Sikra, the son of the sister of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai, and leader of the *Biryonim*. The Talmud records (*bGit* 56b) that the *Biryonim* destroyed vast quantities of firewood and food during the siege of Jerusalem, in order to compel the defenders to engage the Romans out of sheer desperation. This in turn brought about the flight of Yohanan ben Zakkai from the city and the ultimate founding of the academy at Yavne.

²⁵ *b. Git.* 59b.

²⁶ *b. Ket.* 111a.

²⁷ See Maurice Lamm, “After the War – Another Look at Pacifism and Selective Conscientious Objection,” in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics* (M. Kellner, ed.; New York, 1978), 221-38.

attempt to separate oneself from evil.²⁸ The Talmud elsewhere affirms only three criteria that may bring about an “authorized war” (*milkhemet r’shut*): the consent of the Sanhedrin, the presence of a king or ruler, and consultation with the *urim v’tumim*.²⁹ Clearly, the coincidence of these prerequisites would be most unlikely, indeed ruling out warfare in all but rare instances.

Returning to the Maccabean revolt, we can take serious issue with the assumption that the militancy of the early Ḥasidim should be contrasted with the supposed pacifism of their descendants. While it is common to look at 1 Maccabees (2:42-44) as evidence of the Ḥasidim as militants, a later passage presents a very different image, describing how the Ḥasidim left the ongoing revolt. Having been appeased by the Hellenistic Greek general Bacchides, who appointed a legitimate Aaronic high priest (Alcimus), they were subsequently murdered in droves.³⁰ In contrast with the earlier image of a group of zealous religious warriors, we now see the Ḥasidim laying down their arms.

It is equally significant that according to 1 Maccabees 2:42 one thousand Jews were slaughtered for refusing to defend themselves on the Sabbath day.³¹ It must of course be recognized that this verse nowhere specifically identifies the martyrs as Ḥasidim and that their refusal to fight may have had more to do with strict observance of the law than with pacifism. Nonetheless, it is hardly unreasonable to assume that the martyrs and the Ḥasidim were one and the same.³² Nor does it strain reason to assert that a

²⁸ J. Patout Burns, *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1996), 18.

²⁹ See *b. San.* 16b; see also Shelomoh Yosef Zevin, *Le-Or ha-Halakhah* (Jerusalem: Kol Mevasser, 2004), 65.

³⁰ “Then there assembled to Alcimus and Bacchides a company of the scribes to require things that are just: And first the Assideans that were among the children of Israel, and they sought peace of them. For they said: One that is a priest of the seed of Aaron is come, he will not deceive us. And he spoke to them peaceably: and he swore to them, saying: We will do you no harm nor your friends. And they believed him. And he took threescore of them, and slew them in one day...” (1 Macc 7:12-16, DRA).

³¹ For an overview of the Ḥasidim as pacifists, see Joshua Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period*, *SJLA* 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 13-14.

³² John Kampen, *The Hasideans and the Origin of Pharisaism: A Study in 1 and 2 Maccabees*, *SCS* 24 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 67-81.

nonviolent group of pietists would take up the sword if they came to consider such action as consistent with a liberationist or even an “apocalyptic” worldview.³³

Josephus on the Ḥasidim

Josephus, in constructing his own version of the events of late antiquity, is presented with a number of challenges as to how he approaches the Ḥasidim and their participation in the Maccabean revolt. For one thing, the Zealot faction, whom Josephus clearly despised, appear to have been the philosophic descendants of the Maccabees/Hasmoneans, who are depicted by the historian as having engaged in a “just war” (*AgAp* 2.272) – in contrast with the unjust war against Rome from 66-70 CE. Josephus’ source material (1 Maccabees) distinguishes between the Ḥasidim, described as “the stoutest of Israel”/ “exceedingly forceful” (*iskuroi dunamei*, 1 Macc 2:42), and the Ḥasmoneans, the former having joined the “just war” at the outset, only to withdraw once the religious objective (retaking Jerusalem and the Temple) had been accomplished and a peace offer made. Josephus, it would seem, identified with the perspective of the Ḥasidim, whose aspiration was not an independent state, but religious autonomy. While they may have been “exceedingly forceful,” they were certainly not as militant in orientation as the Maccabees/Hasmoneans, and were willing to withdraw from the fight if the situation so dictated.

The attitude of the Hasmoneans was picked up by the Zealots of Josephus’ day, and that of the Ḥasidim was inherited by the Pharisees.³⁴ Josephus chooses to sidestep the schism between the two by not even mentioning the Ḥasidim by name. He describes Mattathias’ son Judah as having admitted “the righteous and pious” into his ranks, and the peace offer of Bacchides as being accepted by “some of the citizens” (*Ant* 12.395).³⁵

Is the language of 1 Maccabees – “exceedingly forceful” – inconsistent with depictions of the later Ḥasidim as pious men of peace? Josephus himself may exemplify how best to understand this later pietistic current. On the one hand Josephus was the military commander of the Galilean forces during

³³ C. Marvin Pate, *The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom, and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 93, n. 30.

³⁴ John Kampen, *The Hasideans*.

³⁵ Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 144-5.

the Great Revolt. Are we therefore entitled to call him “exceedingly forceful” as well? On the other hand, his withdrawal from the revolt might incline us to view him as a pacifist of sorts. It is difficult to imagine that Josephus would have disapproved of the revolt at the outset. Why else would he have accepted a military command? By the same token, is it not likely that a good many of the later Ḥasidim (perhaps including Yeshua) felt similarly, agreeing at least in principle with the Zealot cause?³⁶ It all comes down to understanding what may or may not be conceived as a “just war.” I would therefore argue that to draw such a distinction between early and later Ḥasidim based on their militancy or lack thereof is over-simplistic at best.

The Essene Angle

The same question is pertinent when it comes to one of the “four philosophies” described in some detail by Josephus – the Essenes.³⁷ It has long been suggested that the word “Essene” derives from a Greek rendering of the term *ḥasidim*, a tenuous link to be sure, but helpful in considering how a sect or sects might be considered at the same time militant and piously peaceful.³⁸ Philo paints the Essene sect with a pacifistic brush, insisting that there were no makers of weapons or armor among them:

³⁶ Richard A. Horsley, “The Zealots: Their Origin, Relationships and Importance,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 156-92; Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston-Seabody, 1985); David Rhoads, “Zealots,” *ABD* 6 (1992):1043-54.

³⁷ Morton Smith, “The Description of the Essenes in Josephus and the Philosophumena,” *HUCA* 29 (1958): 273-313; John Strugnell, “Flavius Josephus and the Essenes: Antiquities 18:18-22,” *JBL* (1958): 106-15. See also Alfred Adam, *Antike Berichte über die Essener* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), for a collection of ancient material regarding the Essenes; Todd S. Beall, “Essenes,” *EDSS* (2000): 1:262-70, idem., *Josephus’ Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls SNTSMS* 58 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988).

³⁸ Regarding the notion that the Essenes and the Ḥasidim were one and the same, see Harold Louis Ginsberg, “The Hebrew University Scrolls from the Sectarian Cache,” *BASOR* 112 (1948): 30; Solomon Zeitlin, “The Essenes and Messianic Expectations,” *JQR* XIV (1954-55): 83-119. See also Adolf Buchler, *Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 BCE to 70 CE: The Ancient Pious Men* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), 83-7; see also Louis Jacobs, *Holy Living*, 5.

Among those men you will find no makers of arrows, or javelins, or swords, or helmets, or breastplates, or shields; no makers of arms or of military engines; no one, in short, attending to any employment whatever connected with war, or even to any of those occupations even in peace which are easily perverted to wicked purposes...³⁹

Pliny the Elder also references the Essenes, depicting them as celibate hermits:

Lying on the west of Asphaltites, and sufficiently distant to escape its noxious exhalations, are the Esseni, a people that live apart from the world, and marvelous beyond all others throughout the whole earth, for they have no women among them; to sexual desire they are strangers; money they have none; the palm-trees are their only companions.⁴⁰

While Pliny never addresses whether the “Esseni” possessed weapons, his description hardly befits a sect that had any inclination toward militancy. Josephus, for his part, admits that the Essenes would indeed carry weapons with them while traveling:

For which reason they carry nothing with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves.⁴¹

Josephus goes on to observe:

And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment...⁴²

Whether or not the Essenes took an active part in the Great Revolt, the Romans certainly dealt with them as if they had. Moreover, the suffering of the Essenes at the hands of the Romans appears rather odd, if the sect were in fact known to be peaceful and pacifistic. We must of course recognize that Essene authorship of the Dead Sea Scrolls remains very much in debate, but it is undeniable that the Qumran corpus contains elements that are

³⁹ *Quod Omnis Probus Liber* (Every Good Man is Free), 12.78.

⁴⁰ Plin. *Nat* 5. 15.

⁴¹ Josephus, *War* II.8.4; Whiston trans.

⁴² Josephus, *War* II.8.10.

tonally violent in multiple passages, and this fact may provide a solution to the seeming disparity between the early Ḥasidim and the supposedly non-violent later variety of pietists. Not only do the Scrolls justify bloodshed, but it is difficult to avoid the observation that they glory in it. While a militant tone pervades the Qumran corpus, the clearest expression of militancy fused with apocalypticism is found in the *Dead Sea War Scroll*:⁴³

Truly the battle is Yours, and by the strength of Your hand their corpses have been dashed to pieces so that no one can bury them. (1QM 11:1)⁴⁴

You have told us about the ti[m]es of the wars of Your hands in order that You may {fight} glorify Yourself among our enemies, to bring down the hordes of Belial. (1QM 11:8)

... for You will do battle against them from the heave[ns ...] (1QM 11:17)

Given the prominence of such passages in the Qumranic materials, and assuming that the Scrolls represent the product of the Essene sect, I would argue that we might understand the Ḥasidim, like the Essenes (though not identical with them), as being capable of militarism and warfare (when done in the context of religious zeal) while at the same time being “pursuers of peace,” even naively so, as in the case of 1 Maccabees 7. Such an ideology – torn between militancy and pacifism – is not as incongruous as we might imagine.

Demilitarizing Jesus

Considering the clear reluctance of the Sages to endorse warfare, I would suggest that pacifistic portrayals of pious individuals such as Ḥoni may on

⁴³ See Russell Gmirkin, “The War Scroll, the Ḥasidim, and the Maccabean Conflict,” in *Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after Their Discovery*, ed. Lawrence Schiffman, et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 486-96; George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Social Aspects of Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 641-54.

⁴⁴ This and succeeding translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls by M. O. Wise, M. G. Abegg Jr, and E. M. Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996). This apocalyptic theme may be prefigured in Isa 66:16, 24 and other prophetic statements.

some levels amount to anachronistic reinterpretations. John Dominic Crossan agrees that Talmudic portraits suffer from anachronism, asserting that Ḥoni should be identified not as a charismatically gifted Ḥasid but as a magician operating outside establishment religious circles, especially since such individuals do not appear to have been defined by their strict observance of the law. Crossan, in the same vein as Geza Vermes, sees Jesus/ Yeshua in the context of the same miracle-working tradition, rooted in the stories of Elijah and Elisha.⁴⁵ He further points out that these same individuals are said to have been guided by unmitigated divine power, unmediated by and independent of normative rituals and institutions. The magician appears as a personal or individual power, in opposition to any priest or communal leader, or to the Temple itself. The work of the magician, as Crossan sees it, amounted to religious “banditry.”⁴⁶

If Crossan is right in this regard, should the identification of Jesus with the Ḥasidim also be abandoned? Were there no “Ḥasidim” at all, only “magicians”? In the final analysis, a great deal depends on the veracity we attach to the rabbinic material, considering that the precise period of the *ḥasidim ha-rishonim* is impossible to determine. A more cogent argument is that the concept of the *ḥasid* evolved through various stages, from the biblical description of the righteous person, to the pietists of the Maccabean period, who joined the revolution against the Seleucids, to those of unique sanctity and holiness, combined with mystical and ascetic characteristics, of the tannaitic and later periods.⁴⁷

Some of the details regarding the Ḥasidim may have been skewed by the agenda of the Sages, but I would argue that it is unwarranted to assume that the later Ḥasidim (to whom Ḥoni and possibly Yeshua belonged) did not exist. Those referenced in rabbinic sources as the *ḥasidim ha-rishonim* may no longer have existed in the later tannaitic age, but a reorganized group of

⁴⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 303-53; see also Markus Cromhout, *Jesus and Identity: Reconstructing Judean Ethnicity in Q* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 47.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 157-58; 305.

⁴⁷ Louis Jacobs, “The Concept of Ḥasid in the Biblical and Rabbinic Literatures,” *JJS* 8 (1957): 143-54.

pietists must certainly have come together by the first century BCE.⁴⁸ Were they “magicians” as well as “pietists”? Perhaps. Were they quasi-“Zealots” as well? Jewish nationalism was certainly an ever-present reality in the land of Israel, especially in the Galilee. The Sages, living after the destruction of the Second Temple, likely felt compelled to distinguish such “Hasidim” from the nationalist fervor that had convulsed the land and resulted in the disastrous revolt against Rome.⁴⁹ It is not surprising that, in the telling of the Sages, their nationalism would be submerged in their piety.

In a different context, when it comes to the attitude of Yeshua and his followers toward militancy, a careful review of early Christian sources seems to suggest a similar skewed portrait. Just as the Sages were determined to recast Judaism as a religion of peace, a similar process of “demilitarizing” a textual tradition is likely to have taken place among those who recorded the “Torah of Jesus,” as expressed in the Christian Gospels. The Christian patriarchs (following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul) were just as determined to avoid the impression that they represented any threat to Roman rule. In an environment in which Roman authorities needed to be convinced of the peaceful intentions of the growing sect of “Judeo-Christians,” it would have been essential to strike from the record any expression of militancy on the part of Yeshua or his followers.⁵⁰ It is

⁴⁸ See Y. F. Baer, in “The Ancient Hassidim in Philo's Writings and in Hebrew Tradition” (Heb.), *Zion* 18 (1953): 91–108.

⁴⁹ Regarding the attitudes of the later Sages toward Rome, Glatzer noted that rabbinic eschatology evolved “from activist and militant into passivist and peaceful; from an urgent expectation of change into a distant, quiet hope; from a history-centered doctrine into a meta-historical one.” See Norman Glatzer, “The Attitudes toward Rome in Third-Century Judaism,” in *Essays in Jewish Thought* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 3, 11–12. It is important to recognize that rabbinic Judaism developed during a time in which it was not in political control of its national destiny, hence, adopting a quietistic approach. It should nonetheless be recognized that there were currents within rabbinic Judaism that remained more or less politically active. See Reuven Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 72–3.

⁵⁰ Jesus himself is said to have “demilitarized” the mythology of first-century Judaism by speaking of the “reign” of God, but never of God as “King.” But the underlying question is whether Jesus’ “pacifism” is the result of later editorial hands. See David Gowler, *What They Are Saying about the Historical Jesus* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 2007), 130–1. See also Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 23–4. Brandon argued

therefore theorized that the militant aspects of Yeshua's message of "deliverance" were written out of the Christian Gospels, save for a few vestigial traces.

The Marcan account in particular was designed with the Christian sect in Rome in mind, its main focus being to demonstrate Yeshua's loyalty to the Roman government. After the disappearance of the Jerusalem Church in the destruction of 70 CE, this approach (abandoning the notion of the political restoration of Israel) became the pattern for both Matthew and Luke.⁵¹ The end result of all the editorializing was a Jesus who shared with the ancient Ḥasidim their piety and familiarity with God, while downplaying the kind of militancy that caused their ancestors to throw in with the Maccabees. The same pacifist picture, depicted by both Jewish sages and Christian patriarchs, would therefore have been arrived at from entirely different vantage points, one from the Babylonian East, the other from the Roman West.

With regard to Jesus research as a whole, I would argue that the main problem is the attempt to cast the Nazarene in one mold or another. As with many historical figures (assuming Jesus to be historical), a truthful picture is much more complex. To dismiss any hint of militant nationalism in the narratives and/or teachings of Yeshua is at best naïve, but it is equally mistaken to claim that he was a full-throated Zealot, who was executed for his subversive, anti-Roman agitation. It is often asserted that it was the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, who was alone responsible for Yeshua's execution, and that the Gospel narratives falsely displace the blame on a multitude of Jews, shouting, "Crucify him!"⁵² David Flusser to the contrary

that, thanks to Paul and the growth of the Judeo-Christian sect among Hellenistic Jews, the movement became a mystery cult, welcoming Gentiles and presenting Jesus in non-political, "pacifist" terms, as a divine savior. See S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Univ. of Manchester, 1967), 283-322.

⁵¹ See B. H. Streeter, *Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 157-79.

⁵² See Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 561-5. Gundry points out that the Gospels virtually "Christianize" both Pilate and his wife, making them foils to the Jewish leaders, whose guilt is all the more striking. By contrast, Josephus (*Ant.* 18.89) assigns the blame to Pilate in a manner consistent with Philo. The latter Philo catalogs Pilate's "venality, his violence, his

argued that Pilate recognized Jesus (as a Ḥasid) as being no particular threat to Roman authority. I would argue that a much more nuanced approach is in order.

It is difficult to imagine that Yeshua, a pious Galilean, did not have some considerable sense of sympathy for the Zealot faction. H. Graetz classically declared that “the greater part of the populace were Zealots.”⁵³ There is of course the oft-cited statement attributed to Yeshua: “I have come not to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34).⁵⁴ Add to this the detail that at least one of his disciples carried a sword, and we have a considerably less than pacifistic Jesus.⁵⁵ Many have noted the identification of one of the twelve disciples as Simon the Zealot. Additionally, it is tempting to consider the name of the disciple known in infamy as Judas Iscariot. Does “Iscariot” refer to the town where Judas was born? Or is it a cryptic reference to the most radical of all revolutionary groups of those days, the *Sicarii*, or “dagger men” (Latin, *sicarius*) – named after the *sicae* – the short dagger concealed within a man’s cloak?⁵⁶ Indeed, almost every Jewish interpreter of Jesus/ Yeshua sees Judas as having either been a Zealot or having had unmistakable Zealot leanings.⁵⁷ In short the Galileans were determined that

thefts, his assaults, his abusive behavior, his frequent executions of untried prisoners, and his endless savage ferocity” (*Gaium* 302).

⁵³ Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1891-1982), 2:274-293.

⁵⁴ See Zev Garber, “The Jewish Jesus: A Partisan’s Imagination,” in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 2011), 14. This, along with the “Gethsemane tradition,” supports the militancy in Jesus’ party.

⁵⁵ *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, eds. Seán Freyne, Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton, Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 452-3.

⁵⁶ Agron Belica, *The Crucifixion: John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2009), 56; Ekkehard W. Stegemann, Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995), 178-82.

⁵⁷ See William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer Or Friend of Jesus?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2005), 198. See also Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992). Maccoby sees the figure of Judas as “almost entirely fictitious,” but finds great significance in disentangling the historical from the fictional elements.

no temporal authority would be recognized until the establishment of divine rule over all of Israel.

Pilate, however, had neither the inclination nor the manpower to execute the entire population of Galilee. Yeshua's offense was against the Sadducees and to some extent the Temple, as evidenced by his act of overturning the tables of the moneychangers. This by itself did not make him a Zealot, and hardly amounted to an offense against Rome or Roman rule. Moreover, Yeshua's connection with the Ḥasidim would have been of no interest to Pilate. While I suggest that the Ḥasidim of this period (including Jesus) were, like their Maccabean forebears and like the Essenes, capable of violent militarism, this would not have been readily apparent to an outside observer, including a Roman procurator. It is therefore quite possible that when the Gospels record Pilate's original intention to release Yeshua, they are correct.

Why, then, did he sentence Yeshua to be crucified? Valuable insight is at this point gained from David Flusser's analysis of Pilate's character, as a mixture of cruelty and weakness.⁵⁸ This is evidenced by the incident at Caesarea, recorded by Josephus, in which a delegation of Jews from Jerusalem demanded the removal of offending Roman military standards, deemed to be idolatrous.⁵⁹ Pilate unleashed his troops on the crowd, threatening to slaughter them all. The response of the Jewish delegation, however, was to stretch out their necks to their persecutors, daring them to fulfill their grizzly task. At that point, Pilate, recognizing the religious zeal of these Jewish subjects, immediately backed down, ordering that the offending standards be removed from the holy city and transferred to Caesarea. This single incident reveals the extent to which the procurator was capable of being swayed by a determined crowd. This was the "cowardly" element in his personality, which Flusser references in order to support the notion, advanced by the Gospels, that Pilate was cowed by a Sadducee-dominated crowd to have Yeshua executed, when his own better judgment would have considered him only as a charismatic preacher/prophet who perhaps deserved a lashing, but nothing more. Those who see Yeshua's crucifixion as evidence that he was a Zealot insurrectionist should perhaps rethink their position. However, we should not misconstrue Flusser's argument as "proof" that Jesus was unfriendly to the Zealot cause. We are,

⁵⁸ David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 588-92.

⁵⁹ *Ant.* 18.55-59; *War* 2.169-174.

after all, left with Yeshua's haunting directive: "He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Luke 22:36 NKJV). When the disciples declare: "Lord, look, here *are* two swords," Yeshua replies, "It is enough" (Luke 22:38 NKJV).

Conclusion

In sum, I have attempted to "thread the needle" in terms of how we are to understand the Ḥasidim (and Jesus/ Yeshua of Nazareth) in relation to their attitudes toward violent militarism. It seems clear enough, Crossan notwithstanding, that the illustrious Nazarene was too much linked to the pre-tannaitic Judaism of his day to be categorized merely as a "magician." But it is equally misleading to cast him in radically insurrectionist, Zealot tones, as if he were one with Hezekiah the Galilean, whom Herod had murdered, as a threat to Roman hegemony. Nowhere does Yeshua mention Hezekiah or his ilk, but his oblique reference to Ḥoni the "Ḥasid" is telling. However, we must not misconstrue this affinity with the Ḥasidim as "pacifism."

Moreover, thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have a vivid example of how a sectarian movement could be devoted to strict piety while at the same time imploring divine aid in the cause of liberation from the Roman yoke. Interpretations of this piety would be expected to differ, especially with regard to matters concerning ritual purity, in which certain Ḥasidim, including Ḥoni ha-M'agel, Ḥanina ben Dosa, and Jesus of Nazareth, appear to have been more lax than the Dead Sea sectarians. Nonetheless, what they shared in common were values consistent with the early Maccabean Ḥasidim, namely, a sense of familiarity with the divine presence, coupled with a religious zeal that was more than capable of taking up the sword in pursuit of a holy and righteous cause. It is likely in the end that the Dead Sea sectarians did indeed join the Great Revolt against Rome, given the archaeological evidence of scroll fragments discovered on Masada. In their minds this must have been the apocalyptic war they had expected, and their participation in it is by no means inconsistent with their earlier "pacifism." Had Yeshua lived three decades later might he too have joined the Great Revolt? This question deserves some serious reflection.

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SECTION III

CHAPTER EIGHT

PERPETUAL DILEMMA

ZEV GARBER

Key words: Adversus Judaeos, Stuart Dauermann, David Rudolph, Gent ile Christianity, Mark Kinzer, Edith Stein, Hinêni and Bênonî, Messianic Jews, Messianic Judaism, Kiddush HaShem, rabbinic halakha

*My reasoning for engaging in a scholarly discussion the beliefs and practices of Messianic Judaism is straightforward and transforming: learn what they teach before you respond approval and/or disapproval, recognize differences in religious sancta, and express acceptance or non-acceptance, in a non-polemical and respectful way. As a practicing Jew who dialogues with Christians, I have learned to respect the covenantal role that Gentile Christians understand to be the way of the scriptural Jesus on their confessional lives. But I have serious difficulty in applying the same criteria to affirmed Jewish believers in Torah and Christ Jesus. Why so? They are not Gentiles but they are Trinitarians not Unitarians in their acceptance of Yēšū`a ha-Māšīah. A serious ethnic Jewish (religious) problem which appears unresolvable until yēmê Māšīah. The article appeared in a “Symposium on Messianic Judaism” published in *Hebrew Studies* LVII, 2016. See my interview and discussion with Messianic Rabbi Dr. David Rudolph at The King’s University [Professor Zev Garber March 2018](#).*

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TKU Messianic Jewish Studies Program

The 2014 Annual Meeting of NAPH was held in San Diego, California, during the annual meeting of AAR-SBL, November 22–25. An NAPH session was devoted to recently published *Introduction to Messianic*

Judaism. Panelists reflected on historical and contemporary concerns related to the biblical foundations and ecclesiastical context of the diverse and controversial Messianic Jewish movement. The volume's co-editors, Cambridge-trained David Rudolph (a Jew) and Joel Willitts (a Gentile), spoke on the makeup and intent of this pioneering work on the history, philosophy, sociology, and theology of Messianic Jews. Their post-supersessionist hermeneutical presentation suggested theological divisions within the movement. Mark S. Kinzer, a key theologian and pacesetter of the non-Evangelical Messianic Jewish involvement and outreach, projected the face of twenty-first century Evangelical and post-Evangelical Messianic Judaism. Isaac Oliver delved into the nexus of Messianic Judaism: early Jewish followers of Jesus. Yaakov Ariel, an Israeli scholar working in the United States, talked on the intellectual and theological coming of age of Messianic Judaism at the turn of the twenty-first century. Finally, I served as convener and offered alternate views on the legitimacy and acceptance of Messianic Judaism within a Torah-centered *halakhically* observant Jewish community. My thoughts on how God, Torah, and Jesus talk are used, misused, and confused are published in "Symposium on Messianic Judaism," *Hebrew Studies* LVII (2016) 353-401; particularly, 393-401.

First Encounter

The Society of Biblical Literature, founded in 1880, is recognized in Academia as the primary scholarly address for the study of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Certainly, its longevity is a telling sign of its mandate and success. That is to say, interpret the Holy Writ objectively, insightfully, critically, creatively, theologically, and respectfully. For better, not for worst, controversy permeates the rooms and conferences of the SBL annual meetings (and its publications) as divergent positions and persuasions are Solomonically argued. And for the most part harmony in diversity prevails under the tent of Sinai and Calvary.

In the summer of 2010, however, a tearing occurred. Prof. Ronald S. Hendel (UC Berkeley) published an opinion piece, "Farewell to SBL: Faith and Reason in Biblical Studies" (*Biblical Archaeology Review* 36.4 [July-August 2010] pp. 28 and 74), where he critiqued the inability of SBL to separate effectively faith and reason from its current direction and affiliate organizations and thus falling into "dissension and hypocrisy." SBL responded to this charge (and others, including, covert proselytizing activity and supersessionist scholarship) that to the best of its knowledge and ability,

it stimulates the critical investigation of biblical literature and encourages critical biblical scholarship, inquiry and discussion. Further, it welcomes confessional-based affiliates that endorse humanities-based scholarship. SBL has referenced Hendel's article and discussion on faith and reason on its web site. Go to www.sbl-site.org, and link to Society archives.

For years I have organized and coordinated the sessions of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH) at the SBL annual meetings. An affiliate of SBL, NAPH has not been affected by the *brew* at SBL. Revelation and Reason are not an issue. NAPH sessions at SBL focus on Biblical Hebrew, linguistics and methodology. Thought sessions permeated by traditional exegesis benefit by encountering rationalist thinking and modernist categories of thought. When biblical exegesis and rabbinic eisegesis encounter Western modes of thought, holistic learning transpires. And isn't that what it is all about? Nonetheless, in the vineyard of NAPH, a fissure of geographical, seasonal, thematic, and human proportions is detected. For the most part, Fall NAPH Annual Meetings relate to Scriptures cum Rabbis, with American and European scholars presenting in English. Spring NAPH Language and Literature Conference is primarily conducted in Hebrew with many Israelis presenting and in attendance, *Yesh va-Yesh*: frustration of the non-Israeli among the Israelis. A *He-brew* in the making?

For more than a biblical generation, I have attended annual and regional meetings of SBL (and AAR, NAPH) and can frankly say that parochial ecclesiastical rules are broken at the annual meeting. Not unusual to see the religious without their outward religious garment or faith attitude walking into forbidden places, eating forbidden foods, and drinking forbidden drinks. Party not prayer is the norm at the conference hotel. Of course, all done with *derekh 'erets*, civility and respect. Is not social interaction, meeting old and new friends under relaxed conditions not an attraction – some would say, an axiom – at the conferences? Simply put, relax, dress down, schmooze and choose, and if this is not your cup of tea or brew (beer, liquor, smoke), go forth to another crew or return home to campus, community, and church.

I am no prude nor am I an ostrich with his head in the sand. After all, colleagues across academia have labeled the Festschrift in my honor, *Maven*

in *Blue Jeans* (Purdue University Press, 2009).¹ Under the aegis of SBL, sessions of scholarship are to live up to its mandate – scholarly presentations without limitations for the advancement of biblical knowledge and its related disciplines. I endorse this policy and I understand and accept the restrictions that are found at gatherings sponsored by university and seminary for affiliate alumnae and friends, publishing houses, and denominational groups. Grace at church sponsored breakfast sessions, lack of grace but kosher food at Jewish seminary evening receptions, and neither grace nor dietary supervision at the NAPH annual breakfast and business meeting. So why the shock, disappointment, and sadness at the “MJTI Center for Jewish-Christian Relations” reception at the SBL 2010 Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA (Nov. 21) ?

The invitation to attend in the SBL Program Book reads:

The MJTI Center for Jewish-Christian Relations was established in 2009 to facilitate a Messianic Jewish contribution to Jewish-Christian relations. Our center seeks to (1) build relationships with scholars and leaders in the Jewish and Christian worlds, and (2) sponsor events that model a new conversation between Jews and Christians in which the Messianic Jewish presence plays a constructive role. Our SBL reception is an opportunity to learn more about the vision of the center and the activities we have planned for 2010-2011.

I lecture and write on matters of Christian Scriptures – for example, my chapters in my edited *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation* (Purdue University Press, 2011) reviewed favorably in RBL and in other academic journals² – and I participate actively in post-Shoah Christian-Jewish dialogue; and so I anxiously looked forward to attend the aforementioned Jewish-Christian reception. The confessional based Messianic Jewish sponsorship did not sink in until I *crossed* the threshold of the Hong Kong room at the Hyatt Regency. On a table at the entrance, I noticed books and other literature advocating Jewish life in Yeshua and advancing Messianic Judaism. Attendees and announced events advocated Messianic Jewish outreach and also projected dialogue encounter with practicing Christians and Jews. Indeed the reception was enmeshed with

¹ See “Symposium on the Work of Zev Garber: Reviews of *Maven in Blue Jeans*” in *Hebrew Studies* LI (2010): 351-383.

² See Walter Brueggemann, review of *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://bookreviews.org>] (2011) and J. Edward Wright, review of *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://bookreviews.org>] (2014). Also, an online interview with Garber on WBAA, Purdue University, NPR affiliate, can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAOF-4pFzE.

Jewish messianic advocacy; however, by the virtual absence of the Talmud Jew and Conventional Christian, I was baffled in how the Trialogue would begin. After a while, emotively, I felt uncomfortable. Why so? I came to a reception at a scholarly conference looking for friendship and learning in a new place and I walked from the gathering disappointed and sad. In a converse way, I felt like Paul reverting to Saul, walking from the table of Messianic Jewish Christians in righteous conflict.

Overkill, underplay, backbiting, misrepresentation, polemics, unfortunately, are staples at annual meetings. More than most of my Jewish colleagues, I can understand Messianic Jews attempting a foothold at the SBL conference. And that is why the sponsors ought to be very concerned about the state of the empathetic visitor who felt as the stranger in their midst. Opportunity lost.

Jewish Ethnicity and Religion: The Saga of Blessed Edith Stein³

Edith Stein was born in 1891 to a wealthy Jewish family in Breslau (now a part of Poland and known as Wroclaw). She studied philosophy at the University of Gottingen and earned a doctorate in 1916. She became an atheist, but in 1922, inspired by a biography of St. Teresa of Avila, she was baptized as a Catholic, and eleven years later, she joined the Cologne convent as Sister Teresa Bernedicta of the Cross. In the same year she started her autobiography entitled *Life in a Jewish Family*. In 1938, she wrote to the Pope and urged him to condemn the Nazis for the attacks on the Jewish synagogues and Jewish business places in an event known as Kristallnacht, “Night of the Broken Glass.” Not long after, her order sent her to Echt, in the Netherlands, where it was thought she would be safer than in Germany. In the early morning of May 10, 1940 the Germans marched into Holland, and ushered in the period of occupation. Two years later, the Dutch Catholic Bishops protested the Nazi authorities’ transportation of Jews to concentration camps in Eastern Europe. In reprisal, the Germans ruled that Jewish converts to Catholicism were to be seized and sent to the camps. On August 2, 1942, Sister Teresa was arrested at the Carmelite

³ Part of this section is drawn from my review of Palmisano, Joseph Redfield, *Beyond the Walls: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Edith Stein on the Significance of Empathy for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews (June, 2013). URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/shortrev.php?id=37386>.

convent at Echt, along with her sister Rosa. A week later, they were both dead, gassed at Auschwitz.

Catholic authorities say that Edith Stein “died as a daughter of Israel, ‘for the glorification of the most holy name (of God)’ and at the same time as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.”⁴ There is no doubt that she died as a Christian, but can a “baptized Jew” qualify as a Jew? Eugene J. Fisher, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (Catholic-Jewish Relations) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), believes so and he points out that “there does exist Orthodox *halakhic* opinion that one who is born Jewish does not cease to be a Jew, albeit an apostate Jew, simply by conversion to another faith, even Christianity.”⁵ However, a careful reading of the *halakha* in the name of R. Avda bar Zavda (*b.Sanh.* 44a) says otherwise. For it is said, “Israel has sinned” (Josh 7:11), meaning that even though *he has sinned* (italics added) he is still an Israelite. This applies in the case of all these forced converts who at heart are still loyal to God and Torah acceptance. Forced converts to Christianity during the days of the First Crusade (1096-1105) and during the period of persecution in Spain qualify. Their historic experience, sooner or later, permitted them, some secretly and some openly, to renounce the vows imposed upon them by persecution and by the Inquisition. When they returned to Judaism, they are seen as Jews *who have sinned*, past experience and not present reality. The decision of Edith Stein to leave Judaism cannot be considered as an act of forced abandonment from her ancestral faith. Her apostasy is one of essence and not accidental. Pope John Paul II confirmed it at the mass for her beatification in Cologne on May 1, 1987.

The Six Million, including thousands who are outside the pale of *halakhic* recognition, are revered as the exemplar of the meaning and glory of *Kiddush HaShem*. It is suggested by Eugene Fisher that Edith Stein was “simply one more Jew to be murdered with bureaucratic efficiency”; her Catholic tradition was not able to save her.⁶ Thus, may her sin of apostasy be considered as null and void in light of her victimization and martyrdom? Perhaps, but unfortunately this does not nullify her decision to abandon Judaism (by choosing Catholicism), an affront to the *locus classicus* of *Kiddush HaShem*: “You shall keep my commandments and do them, I am

⁴ John Paul II, *On the Holocaust*, selected and introduced by Eugene Fisher (NCCB, Washington, D.C., 1988): 8.

⁵ Eugene Fisher, *Ecumenical Trends* (February 1988): 25.

⁶ Ibid.

the Lord. You shall not profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among their children of Israel; I am the Lord who hallows you” (Lev 22:31-32). Judaism’s regard for human life (*pikuah nefesh*) permits under circumstances of pain or death violations of most commandments. Under no circumstances, however, may the three cardinal sins be willingly entertained: idolatry (apostasy), unchastity (incest, adultery) and murder. The dispensation of sins brought about by acts of Jewish martyrdom embrace “normal” transgressions (Sabbath ordinances, dietary laws, rites of passage, etc.) and do not contain the serious offenses against man and God.

Some authorities permit forced apostasy in private, i.e., less than ten Jews (male and/or female) in order to save one’s life. But Edith Stein’s choice of Christianity was not coerced, nor did she celebrate her conversion privately. In a prayer, she confesses to her savior, “that it is his cross, which now be imposed on the Jewish people.⁷ Also, on the way to Auschwitz, she is reported to have said to her sister, a convert to Catholicism, “Let us go, we will go *for* our people” (*italics added*). The words of Edith Stein bear testimony to her Christian advocacy: expiatory sacrificial offering, imitating his “Heilig Blut,” for the atonement of the Jewish people. By the most lenient stretch of Jewish compassion, Edith Stein, an individual, is a martyred Jewish victim. Ironically the Church’s beatification makes her a blessed symbol of the Cross, thereby declaring that she *was* (and not *is*) a Jew. Unlike living “baptized” Jews, who are potential returnees to Judaism, Sister Teresa’s faith as a Christian and fate as a martyr are sealed by Auschwitz and the Vatican.

Messianic Judaism

Presentations by Willitts, Rudolph, and Kinzer suggest diverse opinions, trends, and separations in the greater Messianic Jewish movement. These include a brief history of Messianic Judaism from Second Temple Judaism to current time, self-definition, ethnic identity and religious belief articles, relationship between the Jewish believers and Gentile Christians, and finally, acceptance, participation, and recognition in the greater Jewish world. My response to the written (*Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, [IMJ]) and oral Messianic Torah (session papers) is a respectful attempt to

⁷ *NC News Service*, May 4, 1987:23, excerpted from the 3,100 word homily in German given by Pope John Paul II at the mass for the beatification of Stein in Cologne, May 1, 1987.

explain mainstream Jewish reaction and rejection (for the most part) of Messianic Judaism as an acceptable *halakhic* movement.⁸

Rabbinic *Halakha* (“The Path”)

Contemporary Jews and denominational Judaism view Messianic Judaism as a farce and at worst a scam. They see Messianics as believers in Jesus, who is venerated as God, Son of God, Holy Spirit and Messiah all in one. This Christian belief rooted in Christian Scriptures (Old and New) diametrically opposes Judaism’s basic belief in the one absolutely eternal and singular HaShem who revealed the Torah (Written and conditions of the Oral) to Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai millennia ago.⁹ Postmissionary Messianic Jews and the missionary Jews for Jesus often try to Judaicise Jesus to attract and convert Jews, and so why legitimize their ideology at an NAPH session?

Messianic Jewish ideologues Kinzer and Rudolph as well as the leaders of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute and Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations vociferously oppose the Jewish screed against their creed. Messianic Jews are undeniably committed to Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah of Israel, foretold by the prophets of the *Tanakh*, renewed and applied in the *Brith HaHadaSha* which requires them to be Torah observant, and to be part of the Jewish people and loyal to it. They affirm the historicity, and see themselves as a continuation, of a legitimate branch of Second Temple Judaism – the Jewish Jesus movement. That is to say, Torah oriented Jewish believers in Jesus who declares, “*Think not that I came to abolish the law and the prophets: I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them*” (Matt 5:17). Further they are the Torah presence in Gentile Churches speaking against supersessionist replacement theology and its pivotal anti-Jewish view of the life and death of Jesus which was accepted in Christian Europe for centuries, fueling expulsions, crusades, inquisition, pogroms and ultimately, the Shoah. Finally, the preferred response of Messianic Jews to the issues of self-identity and as followers of Yeshua is that they are doubly blessed. Their prophetic calling is to be “a light to the nations” (*’or la-goyim*, Isa 42:6; 49:5; cf. Isa 60:3) as Jews and “the light of the world” (John

⁸ *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, eds. D. Rudolph and J. Willits (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

⁹ My view of revelation is expressed in “Torah Thoughts, Rabbinic Mind, and Academic Freedom,” available online at <http://thetorah.com/torah-thoughts-and-academic-freedom>, accessed January 17, 2014.

8:12) as followers of Yeshua, a sincere heartfelt prayer for the ingathering and redemption of the lost sheep of Israel into the bosom of Christ.

I accept and respect the commitment of Messianic Jewish scholars to tackle the danger involved when longstanding Christian theology replaces the historical Jew with the “hermeneutical Jew” thus continuing the horrific *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. Subliminally this may explain the desire of Hashivenu and other traditional Messianic Jews desire to separate from Christian Gentile churches that inadvertently is supported by *responsa* of influential Israeli Sephardic Rabbis Hayyim David Halevi and Ovadia Yosef concerning the relationship between Jews and Christians related to issues of ideology, theology, and visitation to scared spaces.¹⁰ Joel Willits believes that Gentile Christians ought to learn and respect Scriptural Jewish obligation (circumcision, Shabbat, food laws, festivals, and on) necessary for the Jewish believer, so that Jew and Gentile together can usher in the Messiah and the Kingdom of God (gospel). There are dividends in contemporary Jews and Christians repairing their faith in self and in visions of the other. Attempt at interconnectedness between Messianic Jews and the Jewish people by way of the *Tanakh* and tradition is a doable challenge but the completeness of the Jewish Spirit in the Christology of New Testament and related Christian beliefs and rites, and the Shoah catastrophe in the murder fields of Christian Europe raise major questions on the practicality and lasting impact of said interrelationship.

Also, there is the parallel confusion within *Halakha* and Roman Catholic and Protestant churches regarding compatibility of Messianic Jewish behavior with Christian belief. Rabbinic law teaches that *halakhically*, a Jew is defined (by birth or by choice) irrespective of that person’s commitment, or lack thereof, to the tenets of Judaism. Nonetheless, knowingly the observant Jewish believer is not counted by the Synagogue in a prayer quorum, nor given a Torah honor, nor accepted as a prayer leader, nor lead table grace, and on. Likewise, Christian orthodoxy unquestionably teaches that Baptism and Communion/Eucharist are the exclusive way for Jew and Gentile to embrace Jesus the Christ in life, death, resurrection, and salvation. For the Messianic Jew, following the Jewish Jesus of history mandates covenantal Torah observance, which can provide an alternative to or

¹⁰ See David Ellenson, “Rabbi Hayim David Halevi on Christianity and Christians: An Analysis of Selected Legal Writings of an Israeli Authority,” in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians Throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer*, ed. F. T. Harkins (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 340-362.

rejection of the Eucharist as the sole (soul?) means for the Lord's communion. Further, it enables the argument that Petrine and Pauline branches of the Jesus Movement intended to spread Judaism among the Gentiles. If so, Gentiles then should revert to Torah-observant lifestyle and exorcize Church doctrine from the Jewish New Testament. This would hardly be acceptable for any contemporary Christian denomination. A perplexing dilemma.

Hinêni and Bênonî

Where I stand on the current acceptance of Messianic Jews within contemporary Judaism is clearly stated in my above discussion on Edith Stein. The Jewish heritage of Messianic Judaism is *not* the issue, nor are elements in the Jewish Jesus movement in the period of Second Temple Judaism who accepted Jesus as Teacher, King, Lord (Master), Messiah but *not* as God. *As an observant Jew, I practice the faith of Jesus and do not believe by faith in Jesus.* I dance to David's harp (Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem) and Jewish Christian believers to Pan's lyre (Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon). If Messianic Jewish believers choose to live under the authority at all times and in all things of the Triune God proclaimed as the Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit then *`amkha* (God's People) is broken at the *Crossroads*. *Hinêni* (Here I am) in the spirit of the Patriarch (Abraham at the *`Akedah*, Genesis 22), Lawgiver (Moses beholding the burning bush, Exodus 3, and receiving the Decalogue, Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), and Prophet (Isaiah 3, Micah 4, Zechariah 14, proclaiming end of days), bearing witness to Israelite religion in two stages: Monolatry (the recognition of many gods for other nations but the exclusive worship of the One God for Israel) to Monotheism (the same One God of Israel for all humankind). The inclusive testimony: God as God is God *not* God the Father made of none, whose Son is begotten, and whose Holy Spirit is proceeding. Take the recitation of the *Shêma*: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deut 6:4). A Messianic Jew hears thrice reference to the deity, ergo the composite unity of the Three Persons of the Godhead. I (following Rabbinic Judaism) hear an inclusive unity of God ("the Lord is our God, the Lord is one") and I bear witness that there is no other.¹¹ By choice and belief, Jewish Trinitarians are enshrined (ensnared

¹¹ *'ēd* ("witness) formatted from the *`ayin* and *dālet* written large as the last letters of "hear" and "one" respectfully. See Deut 6:4.

by their opponents) in the dialectic of *bēnonī* “in-between”, dangling between *synagoga* and *ekklesia*. A perpetual dilemma.

Diverging Destinies

Respecting theological differences at the core of intra-Jewish disbelief is what I see to be my insight/incite in Messianic-Rabbinate dialogue. My review on American Academy of Religion, Reading Religion, readingreligion.org READINGRELIGION.ORG, appeared on July 27, 2017. Dauermann’s response followed. Unsolicited but appreciated.

Stuart Dauermann. *Converging Destinies Jews: Christians, and the Mission of God*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books March, 2017. 326 pages. Paperback. ISBN 9781625646149.

In *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God*, Stuart Dauermann examination’s of the pivotal role of the Jewish followers of Jesus in defending Jewish revelation and practice – at the dawn of nascent Christianity, and those in effect today – is distinguished in three respects. First, Dauermann, the founder of the Messianic think tank *Hashivenu* and director of Interfaithfulness, offers biblical textual readings along with commentary of key passages in the Testaments that engage Jewish concepts as a system of revealed legislation, affirming the Torah as a covenantal religion. Second, Dauermann affirms the role of scriptures, theology, and religion in his view that historical consciousness, not blind faith, proclaims the pivotal role of Yeshua (Jesus) as the promised redeemer of Israel and the Gentiles (*Goy-im*). Third, Dauermann presents the diversity in post-Enlightenment Jewish messianic movement. He elucidates the historical evolution and religio-philosophical differences between a variety of Jewish messianic missions to the Jews, including, their Yeshua-bounded view of Sinai revelation, rabbinic *halachah* (Jewish Law), Church-Synagogue engagement, and others. Dauermann argues that divine revelation – Triune God, divine providence, earthly resurrection, immortality of the soul – as well as commanded behavior are key to understanding ecclesiology and missiology, the rudders of the Fisherman’s craft, and used for effecting the changes in an unredeemed world on way to the (territorial, eschatological) Promised Land.

The intent of *Converging Destinies* is to seek the best way forward for both Jews and Christians to understand their scriptural beginnings and calling, conflate honestly their conflicted history to self and other, and converge to

best serve the mission of God. But there is a serious identity question if the “Jews” in book title as well as their intent are mainstream, and not marginal. Jewish personhood – more than religion – unites denominational and secular Jews of all persuasions. However, in the broader Jewish community, serious questions of identity and loyalty prevail when related to adverse groups from exclusionist Charedi Orthodox anti-Zionist Satmar Chassidim to assimilationist Jews for Jesus. Messianic Jews across the spectrum affirm that the infallible, unerring Word of God is Holy Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, and believe in the Creator of heaven and earth, who is eternally existent in the plural unity revealed in the *Shema*: “Hear O Israel, the LORD (*Yahweh*) is our God (*Elohim*), the LORD (*Yahweh*) is one” (Deut 6:4). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in God (*Elohim*). In rabbinic *halakha*, reading the Trinity into the *Shema* is unprecedented; further, divine unity is sufficiently expressed, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One.” Hence, the *Shema* verse in the context of Israelite monolatry asserts the First and Second Commandments of *bein ‘adam la-Makom* (“man’s/one’s duties towards God”) noted in the Decalogue: recognition of the sovereignty, unity, and spirituality of God (“I am *Yahweh* your *Elohim* [God] who brought you out of the land of Egypt ... you shall have no other *Elohim* [gods] before Me ... nor bow down nor serve them”) (Exod 20:2, 3-6; Deut 5:6, 7-10). And eisegesis of the exaggerated *‘ayin* in א י ה ו (“hear”) and *dalet* in ד א ה ו (“one”) spell *‘ed* (“witness”) to the absolute unity of God; hence Yeshua, worshipped as truly God and Man (and other Messianic belief articles) is totally unacceptable and incompatible to (Rabbinic) Judaism.

The volume is divided into three parts and multiple subunits. Dauermann approaches his subject matter in a novel way, combining intricacies of Jewish belief and practice derived from the Hebrew Bible – referenced as Older Testament (not Tanakh) – set and taught in a traditional Judeo-Christian belief pattern. His analysis reflects an evolving and complex portrait of Jewish believers created through generational levels of interpretation. The Christian missions to the Jews, Hebrew Christians/Jews for Jesus who affiliated (and sponsored) with “Bible-believing churches,” as well as Messianic Jews, who choose not to lose their cultural identity in Gentile Christianity. His scholarly approach daubed in pastoral caring and down to earth empathy demonstrates knowledge of the cultural differences, the faults of Christian supersessionism, and no-nonsense apologetics. His thesis, to return “Jewish-style” believers from the wider Christian community to Jewish life aligned to faith in Yeshua, and related sociological and theological issues (*Hashivenu* paradigm) well serve the Messianic

Jewish perspective on the destiny of Israel and Gentile together in Yeshua HaMashiah for the redemption of Israel and the world.

This work suggests rejection of Jewish stereotypes and a proper depiction of Torah Judaism in the molding of the scriptural Jesus. Pivotal discussion points include purifying nineteenth and early twentieth-century stereotypes of Jews depicted in New Testament Kerygma; showing that Christianity is not anti-Semitic at its core; distancing Christ seekers from complicity in the Shoah; applying a more positive, post-1967 Christian attitude towards Israel and Judaism; and the evolving post-Shoah theology. Additional points include joyful commitment to the Land of Israel, Jewish unity, spiritual renewal, Yeshua the Messiah, Rabbinic Teachings and Torah Living. Nonetheless, Messianic Judaism's core Gospel belief, missiology, and eschatology embrace marginality, separation, exclusion from the religionhood of mainstream Judaism, *self-imposed not other-designed*.

The Messianic Jewish agenda distinctly emphasizes the glorious news to humanity—salvation and victory over sin and death—that God offers to all people through the person and accomplished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as proven by his resurrection, ascension, and position at the right hand of God. Gospel derived soteriology and eschatology are eons removed from Judaism's centrifugal teaching of *tikkun `olam* (repairing the world). That is to say, sensing the presence of God in the world '*asher bara`* (Creation); sensing the divine presence in the words, events, encounters in the Tanakh; and sensing the Holy Presence in doing the *mitzvot* (obligatory and voluntary commandments or sacred acts). Theology draws from biblical, rabbinic, and mystical tradition that sprout forth the message that the earth is full of God's glory and that every place conceivably is a gateway to Heaven's door. His Creation-Bible-Deeds interplay parallels the inalienable importance of the Torah (Teaching) to Israel, transmitted by written and oral tradition and sustained by the Mosaic rallying cry, *Na`aseh ve-Nishma* ('We shall do and we shall hear [reason]' [Exod 24:7], in *this* world. Christological death and resurrection are *yenner welt*.

In sum, Messianic and Rabbanite Jews are united by God, the Torah, Israel – both the people and the land. They differ in biblical exegesis, understanding and application of *halakha*, fulfillment of prophecy, the role of the Messiah, the messianic age, resurrection of the dead, and life immortal. Christology and/or Jesuolatry testify to the conflicting *not* converging forms of Judaism. And Christians are extra *sunagōgē*.

– Zev Garber

Stuart Dauermann's Response

Stuart Dauermann is Director of Interfaithfulness. He specializes in developing new paradigms and tools to assist those navigating the intersection of the Christian and Jewish worlds, with special attention to the intermarried. Having participated in both the missions and congregational worlds, he is now engaged in serving a network of havurot, especially for Jews and intermarrieds. Response received during the trei wochen (three weeks of mourning from 17th Day of Tammuz to 9th of 'Av):

Shalom To You, *Especially* during these days of 'Av,
I awoke in three ways today. First, I had a nightmare about a professional trajectory I am seeking to pursue. I saw myself driving a car up a steep mountain road, the engine laboring badly, and the steering wheel came off in my hands. Not good news.

Having awakened, I picked up my iPhone and awakened a second time, to the fact that you had published your promised review, which you sent to Mark Kinzer. And what a review it is! As I told Mark, I was amazed at your intensity of engagement, and also, Prof. Garber, at your integrity. A lesser man would simply take the opportunity as occasion to impugn the integrity of "those deceitful Messianics." I know you know it's true, and you've seen it done. But not by you. Sir, you are a very special man. As I told Mark, had I attended LA Valley College I would have taken every one of your classes. I am sure you were and are a master teacher, and you are self-aware enough with a strong enough ego to know it's true. You are one of those individualist geniuses that we encounter too seldom in life. Mark Kinzer had such a mentor in his friend Haskell Stone. You are another. I am so glad we met.

My third awakening was that I needed to arise from my travels and distractions and get down already to processing your proposal for a Yom Limmud. As Parshat Mattot should have reminded me, יָדַעַל סְטַאטִּיקָם אֲשֶׁר
תִּמְצָא אֶתְכֶם:

Well, my sin did find me out . . . I had dragged my feet, a sin since rectified. We will see where all of this leads. I do know of one donor who would surely help to underwrite such a proposal. Perhaps it will happen! But forward, in these days *bein hametzarim*, may this joy sustain you – that you have brought distinction to your parents, your family, and your people.

I am sure I am only one of the most recent of a legion of students and associates who know this to be true and who like your style. *`Ad mei'ah v'esrim*

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CHAPTER NINE

SITTING AT A COMMON TABLE

KENNETH HANSON

Key words: Messianic Judaism, Jewish Christian collaboration, David Flusser, Robert Lindsey, Mark Kinzer, David Rudolph

The Lord's Supper

In an era of societal polarization, there is hardly a more important objective than fostering positive interfaith relations. To that end, an expanding circle of scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have seated themselves at a common table. When it comes to the world of textual criticism, we may without hyperbole perceive such collaboration, not merely as an exercise of academic erudition, but as a banquet fit for the most discriminating of scholarly gourmets. The promises of fresh insight are the appetizers, and the texts themselves comprise the main course. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of this “banquet” of interfaith scholarship (including the participation, albeit controversial, of Messianic Jews) is what we may liken to the “dessert.” At the Passover seder there is of course the *afikoman* (namely, “that which comes after”), in this case comprising not only the unique perspectives derived from inter-religious dialogue, but the impact of those perspectives on communities of faith. We might well refer to such impact as “trickle down” scholarship. To be sure, a case can be made that the fresh insight originating in interdisciplinary scholarship and comparative religion inevitably permeates into the general culture, in turn promoting new levels of understanding and tolerance.

With that in mind, Prof. Zev Garber, at a seminar at King's College (March, 2018), in the company of messianic Jewish scholar and professor, David Rudolph, stressed that both Jews and Christians have much to learn about Yeshua. As Garber observed, Christians must still come to grips with the fact that “Jesus lived, died, suffered as a Jew”; nor can there be a Christian-Jewish connection or messianic Jewish tradition without appreciating the

Jewish element in Jesus himself. This is what Jews can communicate to Christians and what Christians are beginning to discover.¹ By the same token, the Jewish world needs to understand the degree to which faithful Christians are stalwart supporters of Israel. Jews must overcome their fears, rooted in centuries of Christian antisemitism, that they will forever be targeted for conversion to Christianity.

At the outset we should recognize that collaboration, more often than not, grows out of a common challenge, in this instance coming to grips with the widely varied and conflicted currents of Second Temple Judaism, which are as inscrutable today as they were two millennia ago. Contemporary scholarship, both Jewish and Christian, is saddled, not only with the considerable burden of understanding and appreciating the incomplete source material that has come down to us, but avoiding a host of anachronistic interpretations, colored by centuries of religious and theological dogma which invariably manifest as the cultural baggage of even the most independent-minded of researchers. That said, it is undeniable that Jesus/ Yeshua of Nazareth and his considerable following were at the intersection of multiple trends in ancient Jewish culture, ranging from Enochic and “Essene” Judaism to the pre-rabbinic sages of the Hellenistic/Roman period, and Jewish scholars cannot afford to skirt past him. Moreover, it is clear that how we understand Yeshua is directly linked to our understanding of the larger society in which he traveled and the multiple “Judaisms” of the day. As difficult as it is to sift through the religious sensibilities of those who to this day revere and worship him, there is no question that good scholarship indeed provides a common table at which Jews, Christians and, notwithstanding significant controversy, Messianic Jews may together feast.

Nonetheless, when it comes to Jesus research, the banquet hall is often more rancorous than we might expect, given the inevitable religious “baggage” in the minds of many attendees. Some would doubtless like to imagine Yeshua himself mystically present at the table. For devout Christian scholars and for the emerging crop of messianic Jewish scholars, the Nazarene is an ever-present reality, whose divine stature is not subject to dispute. In any case, might Yeshua’s “seder table” be conceived as a meeting place for scholars

¹ See Rabbi Yeschiel Eckstein’s important apologetic, *What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984). See also Rabbi Evan Moffic, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Jewishness of Jesus: A New Way of Seeing the Most Influential Rabbi in History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982).

of diverse religious and academic persuasion to collaborate on serious and productive research into ancient Judaism's many currents? And should not all be accepted at the table (even Messianic Jews)?

The Genesis of Collaboration

In the middle of the last century, Hebrew University professor David Flusser began researching early Christianity, his interest having been stimulated by Gershom Scholem, who had helped him secure an academic position. As Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion, he later observed that serious research of the New Testament and early Christianity can only lead to fragmentary and inaccurate results unless accompanied by a deep knowledge of Jewish sources. He asserted that scholars must have full access to all available Jewish sources as well as a well-founded and solid understanding of the various movements and trends within ancient Judaism. As he put it, "a researcher of early Christianity also must be a creative scholar in Judaism."² Elsewhere Flusser noted that in order to recognize Jesus' powerful influence on those around him, we should consider him in the context of his Jewish background, including the world of the Sages. The historical Jesus was in fact part and parcel of this world. Far from being an ignorant peasant, he was deeply acquainted with both the Written and Oral Torah. In truth, declared Flusser, there is no distinction between the worldview of Jesus and authentic Jewish tradition, and only by appreciating such nuances can we accurately understand how Christianity came into being.³

Over time, a lively partnership developed between two guests at the table of scholarship, David Flusser and the leader of the Southern Baptist Convention in Israel, Dr. Robert Lindsey (both of whom I was privileged to know on a personal level). Lindsey, who had learned Hebrew in his capacity as a pastor in Jerusalem, was startled by his realization that the texts of the synoptic Gospels read better (and more smoothly) in Hebrew than in Greek. (This was the same experience I had independently, in the late 1970s, as a young student living in Jerusalem and studying Hebrew in an Israeli *ulpan*.)

² David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), xii.

³ David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York: Adama Books, 1987), 19, 20, 25.

Flusser was intrigued by Lindsey's work on the Gospel of Mark, which led him to the conclusion that a Hebrew undertext lay beneath the synoptic Gospels.⁴ Lindsey later wrote in his own work of popular scholarship: "The Gospel of Mark shows evidence of having descended from a Greek story of Jesus which in turn had been translated from a Hebrew original."⁵ He continued, "As far as we know no native Greek ever wrote Greek with Hebrew word order, but the Jews about two hundred years before Jesus translated the entire Old Testament to Greek and they made the translation bear *the same word order found in Hebrew*."⁶ Flusser was equally intrigued by Lindsey's theory of Lucan priority. As Lindsey explained it, "Actually, it is easier to translate the text of Luke back to Hebrew than that of Mark."⁷ A lifelong collaboration between the two developed. Flusser observed that Hebrew, Aramaic, and to some degree, Greek were utilized as spoken languages of the Jews of this period. He acknowledged that Jesus may have made use of Aramaic on occasion and that Mark's Gospel does contain a few Aramaisms. He argued, however, that this only served to mislead many scholars into assuming that the spoken idiom of Jesus and his disciples must have been Aramaic. Flusser insisted, by contrast, that during this period, Hebrew was both the daily language as well as the language of study.⁸

In due course a new and dynamic picture of the Jewish Jesus emerged, informed by a range of ancient source material, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, pseudepigraphal sources, the Didache, and rabbinic literature. An expanding circle of scholars, well-versed in such material, both Jewish and Christian, seated themselves at the same table, including Shmuel Safrai, also of Hebrew University. Safrai became a founding member of a compendium of scholars known as the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, who nourished a growing conviction that Hebrew was most likely the language in which a biographical "Life of Jesus" (a theoretical source that may have resembled a Dead Sea Scroll) was initially composed. Safrai, on consideration of Lindsey and Flusser's theories, concluded that they were fundamentally sound, but that the original Hebrew "Life of Jesus" was

⁴ See Robert Lindsey, "A Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence," *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 239-63.

⁵ Robert Lindsey, *Jesus Rabbi & Lord: the Hebrew Story of Jesus Behind our Gospel* (Philadelphia: Cornerstone, 1989), 18.

⁶ Lindsey, *Jesus*, 19.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Flusser, *Jewish Sources*, 11.

probably an oral rather than a written account.⁹ This would follow the pattern of preservation of the teachings of the great rabbis of the pre-Tannaitic period (200 BCE - 10 CE) – first as an oral tradition, later a written formulation. Christian scholars working in tandem with Jewish scholars in Jerusalem have been in the forefront of developing the evidence for what remains a novel and avant-garde approach to synoptic research, which would never have arisen without the conscious decision of scholars of different faith traditions to participate in this textual “eucharist.”

Flusser, for his part, faced some degree of criticism for engaging too closely with Christians, as if the table were indeed Yeshua’s, and as if he were somehow giving personal assent to the Christian faith. In response he argued (as an observant/ “Orthodox” Jew) that his work with the New Testament and early Christian sources could do much in the way of correcting the innumerable anti-Jewish stereotypes that have arisen over the centuries due to largely distorted views of the Jewish Jesus. He wrote, “...like Erasmus I also believe that sound scholarship removes obstacles and paves the way for truth and for mutual understanding.” However, he added an important caveat: “In my opinion the easy way of friendly confrontation between opposite sides is less honest and less durable than the search for truth.”¹⁰

The Next Generation

One protégé of Flusser, Prof. Brad Young (another member of the Jerusalem School, whom I personally knew during my residence in Israel) took his own seat at the table. Representing a new generation of collaborative research, he noted that while attacks of the church against the synagogue have all but stripped Jesus of his religious heritage, the historical Jesus may only be understood as a Jewish theologian, his theology being Jewish to the core. Christians, he observed, have been taught prejudice regarding Jews and Judaism, with historical hatred for the Jewish people becoming a barrier separating Jesus from his theology. By contrast, the historical Jesus is

⁹ Shmuel Safrai, “Literary Languages in the Time of Jesus,” *Jerusalem Perspective* 31 (March-April 1991): 3-8. See also Yaakov Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 173-4.

¹⁰ Flusser, *Judaism*, xii.

Jewish not only by his ethnicity, but in his religious thought and practice.¹¹ Young also noted that since the rabbinic parables are always written in Hebrew, it is highly likely that Jesus likewise transmitted his story illustrations in the holy tongue.¹² He elsewhere noted that unless one considers their rabbinic parallels, the Gospels will always be viewed through the filter of Western culture. The historical Jesus will thus be either seriously misunderstood or lost sight of entirely. Unfortunately, many outstanding scholars and ecclesiastical leaders alike have often missed Jesus. Only via serious study of the original Jewish environment of his life may a new image of Jesus and his message emerge.¹³

However, notwithstanding the quality of its research and scholarship, the work of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research remains largely marginalized. By and large, Christian scholars are hampered by a lack of fluency in Hebrew and a lack of familiarity with Jewish source material, especially rabbinic literature, while Jewish scholars (with only a modest number of exceptions) have little interest in New Testament research. Clearly, if interfaith dialogue is of value (a proposition generally agreed upon in contemporary society), then (*kal v'khomer*) inter-scholarly dialogue is potentially of even greater value, given that new concepts and fresh understanding hatched in the academy inevitably make their way into general currency.

Thankfully, another guest at the scholarly table, Prof. Marvin Wilson, did much to share with the general public the Jewishness of Jesus, coediting several important books on the dialogue between evangelical Christians and Jews. He noted that in recent years, both Jewish and Christian scholars have, almost without exception, embraced the Jewish roots of the life and teaching of Jesus. Exemplifying this, he pointed to Rabbi Harvey Falk, who affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth would never have countenanced his fellow Jews altering or modifying the slightest precept of their traditional faith.¹⁴

The Messianic *Mechitza*

¹¹ Brad Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), xxxiv.

¹² B. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 31.

¹³ Young, *Jesus*, xxxvi.

¹⁴ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 116.

An additional issue has to do with a *mechitza* of sorts that has divided the table of scholarship, concerning an independent stream of research that has in recent years begun to flow from messianic Jewish scholars and their personal contributions to the larger realm of interfaith dialogue. Mark Kinzer, among others, is a prominent example of a messianic Jewish scholarly voice, who has written extensively regarding the theological constructs of messianic Judaism. He exemplifies what contemporary scholarship can contribute, to constructively change deeply ingrained attitudes on both sides of the *mekhitzta* of Yeshua. He has broken new ground in discussing an alternate approach to the movement, that does not espouse proselytizing fellow Jews. More recently he has written on the subject of Yeshua as a prefiguring of the fate of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, suffering defeat, occupation, exile and rebirth/ resurrection. To the extent that his scholarship makes its way into the psyche of the adherents of the movement, he will have done a great service in proverbially “preparing the way” for inter-religious understanding and tolerance. For when Jews need not fear being looked on as targets for conversion, the doors of bilateral communication will be opened as never before in the last two millennia of Jewish-Christian relations.

At the Atlanta conference of the Society of Biblical Literature in November, 2015, a session sponsored by NAPH (National Association of Professors of Hebrew) was devoted to the tenth anniversary of Kinzer’s *Post-missionary Messianic Judaism*. Subtitled, “Assessing the value and viability of Kinzer’s proposal for the role of Jewish followers of Jesus in the Jewish-Christian relationship,” the session in many ways epitomized the vision of the common table at which Jewish and Christian scholars may share insightful repast. David Rudolph, himself a messianic Jew, read a paper describing Kinzer’s book as a “watershed in the Messianic Jewish movement,” introducing new concepts and vocabulary that have trickled down from Messianic Jewish rabbinical assemblies to the bimah to the Shabbat table.”¹⁵ Zev Farber, who also presented at the session, was less inclined to recognize messianics as fellow Jews, arguing that the very closeness between Judaism and Christianity is the source of the sense of distrust expressed among traditional Jews for those who have become followers of Yeshua/ Jesus.¹⁶

¹⁵ David Rudolph, “The Impact of Postmissionary Messianic Judaism on the Messianic Jewish Movement,” <https://bit.ly/2SJ5bYL>.

¹⁶ See Zev Farber, “Messianic Judaism and Jewish Christianity” (*The Times of Israel*, Nov. 4, 2018): <https://bit.ly/2tnjdRu>. Following the Pittsburgh Synagogue

A poignant moment was reached when Christian theologian R. Kendall Soulen asked the question, “Did God want Jesus to be the last Jew?” A pregnant silence ensued, allowing him to elucidate the historical and theological depth of Christian “anti-Judaism.” Answering his own question, he declared, “No, God did not want Jesus to be the last Jew, and when we tell Jews to turn away from Judaism as Jesus’ followers, we are forcing them to make a choice that God has not presented to them.”

Thankfully, that which was hatched in the scholarly conference has planted seeds that have taken root in the larger faith community. As David Rudolph pointed out, the theological interchange revolving around post-missionary messianic Judaism (PMJ) gave rise to the Church and Messianic Judaism Working Group, which was catalyzed by a collaborative effort among messianic Jewish and mainline protestant scholars, coming together annually at Southern Methodist University. Another outcome was the birth of the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Messiah, which has pursued continuing dialogue among Jesus-believing scholars of assorted faith traditions, including, in addition to Messianic Jews, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Lutherans. As Rudolph noted, “PMJ has made it possible for the Messianic Jewish movement to have a voice at this table, something for which many of us are deeply grateful.”¹⁷

Where Do We Go from Here?

There are many reasons for scholarly inquiry and collaboration on the subject of the Jewish Jesus to continue, and for such collaboration to be broad and inclusive, not to the exclusion of Messianic Jews. Sitting at the table of scholarship, sans *mechitza*, holds the promise of being, far from threatening, an aspirational experience. It is precisely at the academic *seder* table that centuries of mistrust, stereotyping and prejudice may best and finally be resolved. Moreover the significant “trickle down” from such collaboration is of equally significant value to the lay community. As the “woman of Canaan,” whose daughter was afflicted with a demon, implored

massacre and the choice of a messianic rabbi to recite a prayer for the victims, Farber opined, “Messianic Judaism’s attempt to recreate Paul’s vision of a Jewish Jesus movement actually achieves the reverse: not a Jesus-worshipping form of Judaism but a Jewish form of Christianity.”

¹⁷ Ibid.

Yeshua/ Jesus, “Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” (Matt 15:27, NKJV).

It has been well argued, based on the gospel texts themselves, that Yeshua was loathe even to speak with non-Jews: “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel... It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (Matt 15:26,28 NKJV). In this case, however, Yeshua is duly impressed by the woman’s rejoinder, declaring, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire” (Matt 15:28). It is likely that this non-Jewish woman was one of a multitude of “God fearers,” who loosely aligned themselves with the Jewish faith during the first few centuries before the Common Era and maintained this alliance throughout the Greco-Roman period of late antiquity.¹⁸ As a category or class of individuals, these God-fearers vanished after Rome became officially Christian. However, among their modern spiritual step-children might well be included not only the Noachide, or Benei Noach movement (non-Jews who feel spiritually connected to Judaism), but the sizable non-Jewish component of modern messianic Judaism. Today, such individuals comprise an intriguing rebirth of what in antiquity represented an important alliance between Jews and non-Jews. Importantly, many of today’s “God-fearers” may be considered serious allies in the larger Jewish struggle for tolerance and acceptance in a world still plagued by antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment. Many non-Jewish congregants of messianic synagogues, like their ancient “God-fearing” counterparts, regularly observe the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, keep some form of kosher, study Hebrew and learn Hebrew prayers.

Prof. Garber advocates bringing scholars together in an open setting for what he terms a *yom limmud* - a “day of learning,” involving and engaging the public in concepts and ideas shared in common, as well as divergences of faith perspectives. What it still needed is the active participation of Jewish, Christian, and messianic Jewish scholars (including congregational leaders) in a joint setting without mutual suspicion or fear of one another.

¹⁸ See Benjamin Mazar, “The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers,” *BAR* 12, no. 5 (Sep.-Oct. 1986): 58-69; see also Benjamin Mazar, “Josephus Flavius and the Archaeological Excavations in Jerusalem,” in *Josephus, the Bible, and History*, eds. Louis H. Feldman, Gábor Hata (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 416; Kirsopp Lake, “Proselytes and God-Fearers,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part 1: The Acts of the Apostles*, eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake (London: Macmillan, 1933), 85, cf. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 266.

As David Rudolph observed in one such setting: “Most Jewish Studies professors would not be willing to speak at a public event sponsored by a messianic Jewish Studies program, out of concern that it would damage their reputation in the wider academic Jewish and Jewish-Christian relations world, where Messianic Jews are often considered persona non-grata because they existentially challenge the view that Judaism and Christianity are separate and distinct religions, by God’s design.”

Yet, the time is ripe for collaborative effort and the free interchange of ideas, from the academic world to the general public. For example, Jewish New Testament scholar Mark Nanos delivered a lecture at a public events sponsored by the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, at the Skirbal Center in Los Angeles.¹⁹ Additionally, Amy-Jill Levine, an orthodox Jewish New Testament scholar, spoke at an international conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.²⁰ Doubtless, headway is being made, and the “trickle down” effect of inter-religious scholarship is yielding impressive results. The table of scholarship can certainly be open to all, and the dividends will be beyond all expectation. Perhaps it is time for the scholarly world to espouse the declaration of the Apostle Paul: “He... has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Eph 2:14). It is an aspiration well worth embracing. To echo Prof. Garber’s words, “Let the learning begin!”

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¹⁹ See Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism: Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, vol. 1* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017).

²⁰ See Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: Harper One, 2006); idem, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014); see also *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine, Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *The Historical Jesus in Context*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., John Dominic Crossan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

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