Judaism and Jesus

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By

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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.

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[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."

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, *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

[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.

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 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*

[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…"

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 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" (מלכות שמים), 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

[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).

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth 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-supersesssionist 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

[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.

in a brisk, translucent, and absorbing style that often characterizes a good historical novel, this work could appeal to an audience with little knowledge 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 *Geisteisgeschichte*. 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 *ṭĕvîlat miqwâ.* 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 on 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. The 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, *ḥuqqîm* (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 *sunagōgē.*
- 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 ש מ ע ("hear") and *dalet* in א ח ד ("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 University 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 sympathizers, and showing that 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 TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE: RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES, EVALUATION

ZEV GARBER

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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 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

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 Valley[3] could be better served if more courses in Judaica were introduced on campus. There

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 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.

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 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. 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.

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

[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.