

*Jesus - Yeshua ...
What's in the Name?*

MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 59/ 2009*



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

ISSUE 59 / 2009

General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen

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Mishkan's editorial policy is openly evangelical, committed to the New Testament proclamation that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah is "to the Jew first."

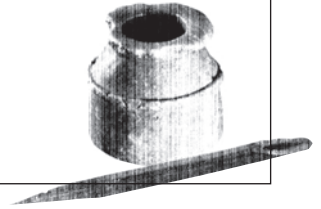
Mishkan is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies, or Criswell College.

Mishkan is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds . . .

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



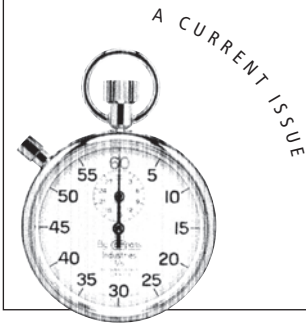
The name of Jesus of Nazareth has an attraction for believers today, whether or not they know the etymological meaning of Jesus' Hebrew name, Yeshua. Formally it is the short form of Yehoshua/Yoshua – or "Joshua" – which name's first bearer was Joshua ben Nun. Etymologically it means something like "the one by whom the Lord saves." Philo gives a philologically imprecise but objectively correct translation when he says that the name means "the salvation of the Lord."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" – indeed, but note the following words: "in a *believer's* ear"! What Jesus has done influences the believer's attitude to the name – whether you say "Yeshua" or "Jesus." History has also influenced the Jewish people's attitude to the name of Jesus, but negatively. This is not least due to the church's crimes against Jewish people – often perpetrated in the name of Jesus.

Instead of saying Yeshua, Jews often say Yeshu, deleting the final letter, *ayin*. While most Israelis today do not know the meaning of Yeshu, it is still known among orthodox Jews: *yimach sh'mo v'zichro*, "may his name and memory be blotted out."

In this issue of *Mishkan*, we print the results of a survey on Israeli knowledge of and attitudes toward Jesus, his person, and name(s) – a survey conducted by a professional company in Israel for Jews for Jesus. Following this are theological and historical articles about the person and name of Jesus.

His name in Hebrew, Yeshua, is not only a reminder of the fact that salvation is from the Lord of Israel. He himself – the Jew with the common name and the unique ministry – personifies salvation.



Resolution on Christian Zionism and Jewish Evangelism*

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

The following resolution was passed at the 26th annual meeting of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism – North America, held in Phoenix, Arizona, March 2–4, 2009. It reads as follows:

Resolution on Christian Zionism and Jewish Evangelism

The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism – North America affirms those Christians who have a love for the Jewish people and wish to bless Israel. We affirm those Christians who stand as friends of Israel and recognize her rightful place in the Land. We also affirm the many Christian ministries that bless Israel without compromising a clear proclamation of the gospel.

We believe that calling the Jewish people to accept Jesus (Y’shua) as the Messiah both of Israel and all nations is the biblical mandate and natural loving response to the belief that there is salvation only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, we recognize that some aspects of Christian Zionism, as practiced today, work to the detriment of the Jewish people inasmuch as they undermine Jewish evangelism. We believe they can dilute the gospel message by offering comfort apart from Christ, discourage evangelical Christians from witnessing to their Jewish friends and divert gospel resources which could be channeled toward Jewish evangelism.

Therefore, we call on the leading proponents of Christian Zionism today to be transparent with Christians on whether Jewish evangelism is present in their theology. We also call on the evangelical Christian press to provide informative reports on those Christian Zionist organizations, who identify as representatives of evangelical Christianity, yet work to discourage Christians from bringing the gospel to Jewish people. We also call on all those who count themselves as evangelicals to demonstrate their love for the Jewish people by bringing the good news of Y’shua the Messiah to them.

* The resolution sprang from a paper that David Brickner, Executive Director of Jews for Jesus, presented at the LCJE conference in Phoenix. Brickner’s paper, “How Christian is Christian Zionism? An Update on Its Uneasy Interaction with Jewish Mission and Evangelism,” will appear in the next issue of *Mishkan*.

Eschatology and Moral Considerations

A similar resolution, issued by LCJE Israel in 1989, was entitled “A Statement on Christian Zionism” (published in, e.g., *Mishkan* 12 [1990]: 6–7). After these twenty years, the frontiers are still sharp. The LCJE Israel 1989 statement concludes with these words:

We therefore call upon the Church throughout the world not to abandon its central calling to preach Christ. Political support for Israel must not come in place of preaching the gospel to all nations, to the Jew first and also to the gentile.

When the 1989 statement was published in *Mishkan*, it was accompanied by an introduction by Baruch Maoz, then coordinator of LCJE Israel, with the headline “The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem,” cf. *Mishkan* 12 (1990): 1–5. In it he contends, among other things:

It is readily acknowledged that not all evangelical bodies must be involved in evangelism. Indeed, some such bodies definitely should not. Their callings are different, and should be conducted accordingly. There would be no difficulty if the Embassy issued a statement to the effect that, while it believed in the necessity of evangelism per se, it did not itself engage in such activity.

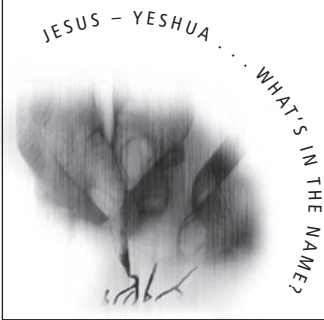
About his own relationship to Zionism, Maoz says in the same context:

I am an adamant Zionist, committed to the support of Zionism and convinced of the basic morality of its position. I am further convinced that the land of Israel was promised to the people of Israel and that we have every right – moral, political, and legal – to have a state of our own in this land. I am prepared to defend that state with my life.

But the Christian Faith is not equal to Zionism and those who oppose my Zionist conviction are not necessarily poorer Christians than those who support it. It is distressing to see how an originally secular political platform (albeit, not without its religious origins) has come to be identified in the midst of some with the very basics of the gospel. Zionism stands and falls on the merits by which all and any political views must be tried. An Arab Palestinian who opposes a Jewish State, or who wishes to create a Palestinian entity alongside Israel, is not one whit lesser a Christian because of his aspirations. I may disagree with him (and I do), but he and I shall have to discuss our differences on more than eschatological grounds. Nor can eschatology be allowed to replace moral considerations. Morality and the fear of God are major issues in eschatology.

Not all will agree with Baruch Maoz on these viewpoints. His main point, that our differences in these matters should be discussed “on more than eschatological grounds,” is a salutary challenge. I must admit that I share it.





A Survey of Israeli Knowledge and Attitudes toward Jesus

by **Stephen Katz**

Introduction: The Need for a Survey

In May of 2008, the ministry of Jews for Jesus embarked on a series of twelve evangelism campaigns throughout Israel. It was a continuation of our worldwide effort called "Operation Behold Your God," during which we had conducted evangelism campaigns in 56 cities on six continents, each of which has a Jewish population of 25,000 or more. While taking six years to complete that project, we knew we were learning lessons that we could employ as we took "Operation Behold Your God" into phase two: a multi-year approach to reaching every geographic area and population center in Israel with the gospel of Messiah Yeshua. Though we have been ministering in Israel since the 1980s with short-term teams and since 1994 with a permanent office in Tel Aviv, we sensed that we needed a better grasp of what Israelis actually think about Yeshua. We wanted to know what Israelis know about him and his message, and what attitudes they share about him. We needed to know what the name "Yeshua" means to the average Israeli, what they think of the person Yeshua himself, and finally, what they think of Israelis who believe in him. In order to achieve these objectives, in the fall of 2007, our Tel Aviv branch office employed a professional marketing company to take a survey of the Israeli public.

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted using two complementary research methods: a telephone poll according to the standard format and a face-to-face poll among various population groups in a number of places where people congregate. The face-to-face poll was conducted in public places in the Greater Tel-Aviv metropolitan area and in city centers, commercial centers, main streets, and other central locations. The pollsters approached people from various segments of the population, including members of the Haredi (ultra-orthodox) community, and they conducted a short interview based on a pre-written questionnaire. The poll was conducted in the evenings as well as during the day. Prior to the interview, the subject was given a token gift for participating in the poll, which is standard Israeli practice when engaging the public in opinion polls. The telephone poll was done

in a random manner based on a predetermined geographical division of people living in the Greater Tel-Aviv metropolitan area and in adjacent areas who more closely fit the potential segment of the population. It was also conducted in the evening and during the day. Though it was recommended that for a valid statistical correlation we would need 250 subjects to be interviewed by phone and 250 face-to-face, we decided to double these figures for a total sample population size of 1,000.

Initial Considerations and Limitations

Since no public opinion poll on Israeli attitudes and knowledge of Jesus had ever been taken before this – nor any such poll among Jewish people in other countries – it was difficult to settle on the proper approach and to compose survey questions that would provide the kind of insights we were hoping to gain. We went round and round for several months until we agreed upon a final format, which in the end included input from a variety of sources: our Israel and U.S. staff, congregational leaders in Israel, and the director of the marketing company itself.

In developing the survey, it was easy to lose focus and tempting to want to include questions on a number of related issues. We went through at least eight revisions before agreeing on the final format. Questions that in the end we rejected covered everything from Israeli attitudes toward Christian lovers of Israel, Messianic Jews, whether or not subjects own a New Testament, and whether or not they've read the Tanakh. We settled on the final questions (see below) because the first twelve maintained our primary focus on the name and person of Yeshua – the area we most wanted to explore. We added in the final three questions, thinking that it would be useful to at least get some understanding of how Israelis view our organization – Jews for Jesus – and Israeli believers in Jesus. With only one survey planned at the time, we didn't want to lose the opportunity to gain this additional information.

While one purpose of the survey was to help us know how we can most effectively bring the knowledge of Yeshua to Israelis, the survey itself was not to be used as an evangelistic tool. It was not constructed to engage people in spiritual conversations nor to get their contact information for follow-up. It was to be administered by trained employees of the marketing company and not by our staff members.

While we were told that the survey should take about eight to ten weeks to complete, it actually took three to four months. There were several reasons for this delay. The director of the marketing company, a well-known university lecturer and former government advisor, selects and trains students to take his company's surveys. While this is usually no problem, in his final report he told us, "We had much difficulty in recruitment of survey-

"We had much difficulty in recruitment of surveyors. Quite a large number of workers refused to execute the survey in question."



ors. Quite a large number of workers refused to execute the survey in question." In addition to this, he told us that when students experienced hostility over and over again from subjects, they often walked out and refused to return to the project. For a while it seemed to us that our survey would never be completed. We helped solve the problem by referring Israeli believers to be hired by the company. While this could have affected the neutrality of the poll, it is unlikely that this occurred since they were paid by the marketing company and instructed to carefully follow the training they received. It was because these believers were accustomed to receiving negative responses to their own faith that they were able to endure the hostility of subjects.

Another reason that the poll took so long is that the response rate was much lower than normal. The director told us that his company's normal response rate is six completed surveys per hour, but in our case they were only able to achieve a completed survey rate of two per hour – just one third of the normal rate. In his final report he stated, "There was great difficulty in executing the survey, since we came across a very great percentage of those questioned who refused to answer the questions when they realized we were talking about Yeshu/Yeshua."

This discovery of the survey's subject matter would normally be made by the subject as early as question number one or two. A humorous anecdote related to this fact is that when we asked whether he would be interested to work with us in the future, the director quickly remarked, "Only if I need the business; and then only if I charged you three times the amount I charged this time!" We ended our working relationship on very friendly

terms, but without hesitation he let us know that he didn't make any money after having to pay people for so many extra hours of survey-taking.

This non-response factor created one more limitation that should be noted. As stated in the director's report, "[The low rate of response] should be taken into

consideration, with the understanding that the people who responded to the survey are specifically those who are aware of the name Yeshu/Yeshua and are more open to the idea. That is to say, there is a certain skew of the sampling group in a positive direction toward Yeshu as compared to the general public."

While there is no way to quantify this positive skew, it must be taken into account when trying to understand the data. When we look at the percentages of the Israeli public who express favorable views toward Yeshu/Yeshua and Israelis who believe in him, we must remember that these percentages would likely be lower if we had survey results from those who possess such negative views toward Yeshu/Yeshua that they refused to engage in a survey on this subject. Conversely, the percentages of Israelis who expressed negative views toward Yeshu/Yeshua and Israelis who believe in him would likely be higher if their views were included in the overall

The people who responded to the survey are specifically those who are aware of the name Yeshu/Yeshua and are more open to the idea.

survey results.¹

Finally, let it be noted that the name used to refer to Jesus in the survey is the Hebrew name “Yeshu.” While this is objectionable to the Israeli Messianic community, it is the name most commonly used to refer to Jesus through all sectors of Israeli society.² We agreed with the marketing research company that this is the name we must use in order that our questions be readily understood by the public. By using that name, no theological statement was being made.

The Survey Questionnaire

What follows is an English translation of the questionnaire that was used, including the verbal introduction that pollsters were required to read.

[Name removed] Marketing Research Company is formulating a survey of the position of the Israeli public. We’d be grateful if you can give us 2–3 minutes for a short interview. We are happy to give you this opportunity to receive a small gift in appreciation for your time. This questionnaire is anonymous, without the interviewee’s name.

1. To your knowledge, what is the name for the Christian Messiah?
2. In your opinion, the man known as Yeshu was (circle all answers that fit)
 - the Christian Messiah
 - the Jewish Messiah
 - a false messiah
 - a Jew that started his own religion
 - a prophet
 - a false prophet
 - other (please specify)
3. To your knowledge, what is the meaning of the name Yeshu?
4. Have you ever heard Yeshu used as the name for the Christian Messiah?
5. Do you know a miracle that Yeshu performed? If so, what miracle?
6. In your opinion, what was the central message of Yeshu?

1 Understanding survey non-response bias is a phenomenon that needs careful analysis, which we did not attempt to do, other than to note the conclusion made by the researcher. For those wishing to read further on this subject, the discussion contained in the guidelines of the Statistical Standards Program of the National Center for Education Statistics is a good place to start (“Statistical Standards: Processing and Editing of Data,” IES National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/StatProg/2002/std4_4.asp [accessed May 1, 2009]). An interesting article on the influence of religion on survey non-response bias may be found in the March 22, 2007, copy of the journal *Sociology of Religion* (Darren E. Sherkat, “Religion and Survey Non-response Bias: Toward Explaining the Moral Votes Gap between Surveys and Voting,” Access My Library, http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-34190220_ITM [accessed May 1, 2009]). A final resource, *The Gallup Europe Journal* (Dec 2007), provides a clear discussion of the significance of non-response bias on the overall quality of survey data (“Response Rates as Quality Criteria for Survey Data,” *The Gallup Europe Journal*, http://www.gallup-europe.be/newsletter/articles/1207_18.htm [accessed May 1, 2009]).

2 This is clear to those who have spent time in Israel, but has been well-documented by Kai Kjær-Hansen in “An Introduction to the Names Yehoshua/Joshua, Yeshua, Jesus and Yeshu,” *Jews for Jesus*, <http://jewsforjesus.org/answers/jesus/names> [accessed May 1, 2009].



7. In your day to day life, what would you characterize as something that troubles you?
Please tell how you feel in response to each of the following statements by circling the number that most closely matches your opinion.

8. Yeshua and Yeshu are names for the same person.

Don't Agree at All	Don't Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

9. Yeshua is another name for Joshua ben Nun.

Don't Agree at All	Don't Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

10. The message of Yeshu is about atonement.

Don't Agree at All	Don't Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

11. Have you heard of the movement *Yehudim L'ma'an Yeshua* [Jews for Jesus]?
Yes / No If "Yes," what have you heard?

[Read by pollster before asking question #12] An Israeli organization called *Yehudim L'ma'an Yeshua* transmits a message that Yeshua is the Messiah. While the organization is respectful of other religious views, it provides resources to Israelis who want to know about Yeshua.

12. How do you feel about the activities of this non-profit organization, *Yehudim L'ma'an Yeshua*, in Israel?

Definitely Against	Against	Neutral	In Favor	Definitely in Favor
1	2	3	4	5

13. How do you feel about Israelis who believe in or sympathize with Yeshua?

Definitely Against	Against	Neutral	In Favor	Definitely in Favor
1	2	3	4	5

Part 2 – Personal data for statistical purposes only

Gender of the subject: Male ____ Female ____

Age: ____ Country of parents' origin: _____

City of residence: _____

Educational level: Elementary ____ High School ____ Academic ____

Job/Profession: _____

Do you define yourself as religious/traditional/secular/other? _____

Discussion and Analysis of Results

General Demographics

A total of 1064 surveys were taken, but after screening out incomplete and unusable questionnaires the final number of completed surveys for analysis was 981. The female/male ratio is 54% to 46%, which is close to the true ratio of 52% to 48% in the population. Females are overrepresented in Israeli society because it is more common for men to leave the country or

to die in automobile accidents.

The youngest subject was 14 and the oldest was 91, with the average age being 39.5, which is close to the average age of the Israeli population. Subjects between the ages of 19 and 45 represent 63% of the survey. Those above age 45 represent 33%, and those ages 14–18 represent just 4% of our sample. While our sample size for ages 19–64 is higher than the national average (87% compared to the actual 56% of Israeli society), this is explained by the fact that we did not engage a significant percentage (31%) of the population – children aged 0–18.

Regarding the country of parents' origin, which is a measure of cultural background, there was a nice spread, generally reflective of Israeli society.³ It must be remembered that many of these subjects may have been born and raised in Israel, but with differing values and worldviews influenced by their parents.

• Israel	34%
• Europe	27%
• North Africa & Near East	22%
• Former Soviet Union	15%
• United States	2%

While most subjects live in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, which may be considered more cosmopolitan and liberal than other regions of Israel, the area also includes B'nei B'rak, one of the most homogeneous ultra-orthodox cities in Israel. Pollsters also called small towns in the area, which represent people with a more provincial worldview. In fact, the research director did tell us that the highest non-response rate (refusal to complete the survey) was from areas outside of Tel Aviv.

The educational levels of the sample subjects were surprising. While 20% of the Israeli public are university graduates⁴ and around 75% are high school graduates, 43% of our subjects have graduated from university or college and 47% are high school grads. Clearly, those willing to complete our survey represent a more highly educated group than the average Israeli. This may be an important factor in trying to determine who is more likely to be open to engaging in a conversation about Jesus. It appears that the more highly educated the person is, the more willing he or she is to discuss Jesus.

Regarding people's occupations, there was a wide variety represented and nothing worthy of special note.

The final demographic factor we inquired about is religion. We gave subjects three common terms in Israeli society that they could choose to iden-

3 Our results closely mirror those documented in "*Israel: Fast Facts for the Busy Reader* (Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 2003)," Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/origingraph.html [accessed May 1, 2009].

4 "Israel: IT Workforce," ICT in Israel, <http://www.american.edu/initeb/as5415a/Israel ICT/itWork.html> [accessed May 1, 2009].



tify with: religious, traditional, and secular. Subjects also had the choice to define their religious preference by using “other” and supplying their own terminology. The results we received are fairly typical of Israeli society.

- Secular 63%
- Traditional 30%
- Religious 7%

The marketing researcher had this to say regarding those who described themselves as religious or traditional: “We discovered a high number of people who define themselves as religious and traditional who agreed to interview and express their opinion. Together about 37%. It should be noted that the definition ‘traditional’ is very unclear and is very individual, and it can be assumed that a large number of them are liberals.”

His earlier note about the extremely high non-response rate – which was unexpected and frustrating to him and his employees – is mildly balanced by this seeming expression of gratification that they were able to find a reasonable number of religious and traditional people to complete the survey. His note about the ambiguity of the term “traditional” is well worth noting. Those defining themselves with that term might be nominally orthodox, but if they go to synagogue or wear *kippot*, it is often for cultural rather than religious reasons. They wouldn’t call themselves atheists or agnostics like secular Israelis often do.

What Is the Name of the Christian Messiah?

The term “Christian Messiah” was coined by the research company. This was a completely open question with no prompts provided to subjects. It was no surprise that when asked this question 72% of subjects said “Yeshu.” However, it’s significant that 8% of subjects identified “Yeshua” as the correct name of the Messiah whom Christians follow. To some, that figure may seem low, but those familiar with Israeli society may see that figure as high, since “Yeshua” is not in common Israeli usage as a name for Jesus. The remaining 20% of subjects showed ignorance, indifference, or antipathy for the subject by giving responses such as “they don’t have a messiah,” “not important,” “don’t know,” or “don’t want to know.” Upon examining the cross-sectional analyses of the data, one additional fact becomes clear: those who identify themselves as religious seem to have less knowledge about Christianity and its founder than the general public does. Only 54% of religious subjects identify “Yeshu” as the Christian Messiah, and 29% say they do not know the Christian Messiah’s name.

The Man Known as Yeshu Was . . .

Subjects were asked to choose between six answers that were provided to them to complete this sentence (in addition to “other”). The highest percentage of those surveyed (35%) view Yeshu as the founder of a new religion rather than the Christian Messiah (21%). This is even more pronounced among the secular, 48% of whom said he is the founder of a

new religion. It is striking to note the difference in responses between those above the age of 40 and those below the age of 40. Among those in the younger group, 44% think Yeshu started a new religion and only 4% chose to define him as simply "a Jew." But in the older group 27% said he founded a new religion and 20% said he was "a Jew." This may indicate that the younger generation is less aware of the Jewishness of Jesus and perceive him to be the starter of a new religion. Equally fascinating is the response from the religious. While they are nearly twice as likely than the general public to have labeled Yeshu a Jew, they are also twice as likely to have labeled him a false messiah or false prophet.

What Is the Meaning of the Name Yeshu?

To this open ended question, 39% of the Israeli public say they do not know the meaning of the name. Though a majority of Israeli and Jewish believers in Jesus see "Yeshu" as an acronym for the curse *yimach sh'mo v'zichro*, only 2% of the general Israeli public made this identification. However, 8.9% of the religious community did answer this way.

Have You Ever Heard the Name Yeshu Used as the Name for the Christian Messiah?

Eighty percent of the Israelis polled answered affirmatively and 20% negatively. This confirms the findings from the open ended question (#1), in which 72% said that the name of the Christian Messiah is Yeshu. Among the religious the figures are significantly different, in that only 60% associate the name Yeshu with the Christian Messiah and 40% do not. The latter figure is twice that of the general population and seems to reflect the overall greater lack of knowledge about Jesus and Christianity in religious communities. This is consistent with the finding reported above, where 29% of the religious said they do not know the name of the Christian Messiah.

Do You Know a Miracle That Yeshu Performed? If So, What Miracle?

Sixty-two percent of the subjects said they do know a miracle that Yeshu performed, while 32% said they do not. These figures are exactly the opposite among the religious. Among those who do know a miracle of Yeshu, 59% point to his walking on water. In the younger group (under 40) only 21% mentioned this miracle, while 27% pointed to his healing the sick. So there is a clear difference of knowledge about Jesus that is related to the age of the subject. What is also interesting is that only 5% of the Israeli public mentioned the resurrection. It is unclear whether there is a general lack of knowledge about the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, or whether people didn't consider this as a miracle that he performed, but view it as something else.

What Is the Central Message of Yeshu?

The central message of Yeshu is unknown to many Israelis (26%). This question seems to have uncovered some sort of psychological barrier because



many of those surveyed did not want to answer (16%). We did not get that type of response to any other question. A total of 42% of those surveyed didn't want to, or didn't know how to, answer this question. Of those that did respond, 15% gave some type of religious answer (e.g. "God is one," "faith," "I am king of the Christians," etc.), and a full 42% provided positive answers such as brotherly love, compassion, peace, humility, forgiveness, patience, healing, freedom, and equality. The fact that only 1% of Israelis mentioned "salvation" as Yeshu's central message reveals much about their perception of him and his mission. It is also worth noting that 5% of the religious subjects answered that Yeshu's central message was "to kill Jews." These responses all utilized the exact same phraseology, and they indicate that at least in some religious groups this very distorted view of Jesus and his message is commonplace.

What Troubles You in Your Daily Life?

This question came out of our discussions with Israeli congregational leaders and provided a helpful glimpse into the hearts of the subjects that were interviewed. Whereas our Israeli staff members would have guessed that the economy would be in the forefront of people's minds, that response was in third place with 13% of subjects answering that way. By far the most frequent response was "security" (29%), meaning an absence of danger and a confidence in the overall welfare of Israeli citizens. The second highest response (14%) was health. Other responses include "violence" (6%), which seems related to "security" and might be added together with it to give an even higher percentage (35%) of the Israeli public that is concerned with the same issue. After that, subjects said "intolerance" (6%) and "corruption" (5%), followed by an array of other issues that represent smaller percentages of the sample. The religious community differed once again from the general population in that 13% of these subjects pointed to "corruption" as being what bothered them most in their daily lives.

Are Yeshu and Yeshua the Same Person?

This question began to probe Israeli understanding of the name Yeshua to see if they know it as an alternative name for the one they call Yeshu and know as the Christian Messiah. Though we gave subjects four options (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree), it is helpful for our purposes to eliminate the distinctions between subjects' perceived strength of agreement or disagreement and to consider their negative and positive responses together. Doing so yields 35% who agree with the statement that Yeshu and Yeshua are the same person, and 65% who disagree. So, most Israelis not only do not use the name Yeshua as the Hebrew name of Jesus, but they do not recognize it as referring to him. The religious gave a significantly different response to this question, in that 52% agreed and 48% disagreed. What makes this significant is that while only 13% of the secular subjects strongly agreed, a full 46% of the religious strongly agreed. It appears that while a higher percentage of the religious know that Yeshu is an acronym for a curse on Jesus, they also know that he can be called by

the non-curse name Yeshua, even if they don't choose to use that name.

Is Yeshua Another Name for Joshua ben Nun?

We used this question to explore the strength of association between the name Yeshua and Joshua ben Nun. Indeed, the association is quite high, as we found 62% of subjects agreed with this statement and 38% disagreed. This is true regardless of age, but differs somewhat between the secular (69% agree, 31% disagree) and the religious (43% agree, 57% disagree).

Is the Message of Yeshu about Atonement?

Responses to this question were fairly evenly split between those who agree (53%) and those who disagree (47%). Again, age was not a factor, but religious identification was. The percentage of secular subjects who agreed was 49%, while 70% of the religious agreed.

Have You Heard of the Movement Yehudim L'ma'an Yeshua?

This is the first of three final questions, each of which explores a new area: Israelis' knowledge of and attitudes toward Jews who believe in Jesus. This particular question deals specifically with the organization Jews for Jesus, to help us learn something about our profile in the Land. It surprised us to learn that 46% of Israelis have heard of the organization and 54% have not. We expected a smaller percentage to be familiar with us. We are not sure how best to interpret this, since we learned anecdotally that at least some percentage of those who have heard of the organization gained their knowledge while traveling outside Israel. This also indicates that though they may have had contact with "Jews for Jesus" in another language, they were able to equate the name with its Hebrew translation when asked by the pollster.

What Is Your Opinion about the Activities of the Organization in Israel?

Before asking this question, pollsters read a very brief description of the activities of Jews for Jesus in Israel, which may be referred to above. The results show that 27% of Israelis are in favor, 36% are opposed, and 37% are neutral. Significant differences are revealed by looking at cross sections by age and religious identification. Only 26% of the younger group (under 40 years old) are opposed to the organization's activities (16% "definitely against"), while 38% of the older group are opposed (35% "definitely against"). The numbers for the secular group mirror those of the younger group, except that this group had the highest percentage of those who said they are neutral (50%), which may reflect a general indifference among the secular toward religious movements. Among the religious, however, 51% said they were opposed (49% "definitely against"). It is surprising and difficult to understand why this figure isn't higher.

What Is Your Opinion of Israelis Who Believe in Yeshu?

The responses to this question were very similar to the previous one. Only 20% are in favor of Israelis who believe in Jesus, 35% are against, and 46%



are neutral. Predictably, the percentage of those who are against Israeli believers is smaller among the secular (23%) and the younger (24%). Likewise, the percentage of those who are neutral is higher among the secular (61%) and the younger (55%). What is difficult to explain is how the religious community views Israeli believers in Jesus. Almost none said they were neutral (2%), while a large number said they were against (55%, 53% of whom responded “definitely against”), but another 43% said they were in favor.

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Conclusions

Though we didn’t know what to expect from this survey, we are pleased with the amount of information we are able to glean from it. As is evident from the above discussion, there is a lot of data to interpret and we will continue to analyze it to see if we may draw any further conclusions. It would be valuable to explore the effects of the high non-response rate and to measure the significance on the overall data.

There were some surprises that have challenged our perceptions of Israeli society, particularly the relatively high level of information about Jesus in the religious community and the level of neutrality that exists among Israelis in their views of Israeli believers. We would have guessed that both of those percentages would be lower than they were. It is clear that the knowledge about Jesus and his message which exists among the secular is less comprehensive and much lower than among the religious and traditional. It seems that the secular public is much more tolerant on the issue, probably from lack of interest. A desire to delve into the issue is a point of interest, and could bear fruit for expansion.

There were findings that have missiological import and application, and we are in the process of determining just how we can best utilize these findings. We have already begun to experiment with application of the knowledge we gained from this study, and some of this experimentation will be discussed in the following article (see p. 17). As mentioned earlier, we sent the questionnaire in its formulation stage to Israeli congregational and mission leaders to ask for input. Now that the survey is completed and has had its first thorough analysis, we look forward to sharing it fully with this same group of leaders, whose work and ministry may benefit from such networking.

Finally, it would be worth doing more of this kind of research, both in Israel and elsewhere among the Jewish communities of the world. Not only would it help bring a clearer picture of specific Jewish communities and their views of Jesus and his Jewish followers, but it would provide concrete information for missionaries to utilize in formulating their methods of evangelism and specific strategies of outreach.

The Applied Use of Survey Results in Evangelizing Jewish Israelis

by **Stephen Katz**



Introduction: The Israeli Character of the Survey and Its Application

In this article I will describe some of the efforts of our Jews for Jesus staff in Israel to utilize the results of our recent survey on the knowledge and attitudes that Jewish Israelis have toward Jesus. Our Israeli staff team is currently comprised of fifteen people, all of whom are Israeli citizens. Half of them are sabras, and all but three came to Israel as children and have grown up there. There is no question that the team holds an Israeli worldview. Though some of our staff outside of Israel had the opportunity to make a contribution to this project, the input and leadership of our Israeli staff (and the professional Israeli researcher we hired) in the development of the survey and its application to evangelizing their fellow citizens, neighbors, and family members was essential. Throughout the article I will refer to conclusions we drew from data that was reported in the previous article. I encourage readers to review pertinent sections of that article to get the most out of this one, which will focus on the relevance of the data for practical ministry.

Focusing on the Name

In 2008 – through the vehicle of our two evangelism campaigns in Israel – we began to experiment with making use of the survey findings. One of our primary objectives with the survey was to probe what the names Yeshu and Yeshua mean to the Israeli public. The results provided strong evidence that people in Israel don't know the real Hebrew name of Jesus, Yeshua, nor its meaning. We decided to shape one of our primary messages as a means by which we could begin to address this problem. Our staff brainstormed in order to produce a pithy and provocative statement that we could use in a variety of venues to communicate with Israelis. What they settled on was “*Yeshu=Yeshua=Yeshuah*,” which means “Jesus (acronym for a largely unknown curse on him, but his name as used in the daily

vernacular) = *Yeshua* (his proper Hebrew name) = *Yeshuah* (salvation).¹ In Hebrew (ישוע=ישועה=ישו), the words all have the same root letters and they are taken into the mind as one unit, producing both cognitive dissonance and an educational component about the correct name of Jesus and its meaning.

The statement definitely doesn't go without notice. In May 2008, we were able to advertise the statement on large outdoor billboards, on the sides of city buses, in the newspapers, and on stickers and literature that were disseminated in public places. Young Israelis who saw us applying stickers would sometimes approach us to ask for some. We don't know their motivation – whether rebellion or curiosity or some other reason – but their response demonstrates that the slogan succeeded as something that touched an indigenous chord in that segment of Israeli society. In addition, our campaign leader was invited

Young Israelis who saw us applying stickers would sometimes approach us to ask for some.

for an interview on Israel's most popular morning television program, *Ha'Olam HaBoker*. When introducing him, the host called attention to the slogan – just one more confirmation that it struck home.

Our biggest source of contacts for follow-up was the newspaper ad that we placed in all three major papers – *Yediot Aharonot*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Haaretz*. At the top of the ad was a banner of the slogan, accompanied by two other features that we chose because of the survey data. The first feature was the graphic design, which resembled the Israeli flag in its use of blue and two horizontal stripes (one above and one below the slogan). Because the survey demonstrated that a high percentage of Israelis perceive Jesus as the founder of a new, foreign religion, we chose to use the familiar aesthetic of the Israeli flag, which allowed us to subtly combat the idea that he is an outsider to be avoided.² (We also chose this art treatment for a gospel tract that focused upon his name by using the same slogan.) Furthermore, as a subtitle under the banner of the slogan, the newspaper ad opened by stating,

Most people call him Yeshu. But his real name is Yeshua and he offers you a security that no one will be able to take from you.

1 Another direction that our staff considered was to make a direct attempt to reverse the curse nature of the name *Yeshu* by supplying the first letter of the acronym with a different word that transforms the entire phrase into a new, honorable meaning: *yishtabach sh'mo v'zichro* ("May his name and memory be praised"). Though we did explain the curse nature of the name *Yeshu* in the text of the newspaper ad and in one of our gospel tracts, we rejected the idea of taking this angle as our primary message. The reason for this is that the survey showed us that a very small percentage of Israelis know that this curse is the original background of that name. Thus, a strategy that focused on that point would have been irrelevant to the majority of the public.

2 For an interesting 1999 *Haaretz* article that corroborates the fact that Israelis do not view Jesus as Jewish, see "It's Time for Israelis to Learn Jesus Was Jewish," Lambert Dolphin's Library, <http://ldolphin.org/Yeshua.html> [accessed May 1, 2009].

This short statement not only brings an immediate clarification and amplification of the slogan's message, but it also brings in another theme that our survey data showed us is in the forefront of many Israelis' minds: security. Whether or not people took the time to read the entire full-page ad, the banner alone had several evangelistic or pre-evangelistic messages that were quickly communicated in a culturally relevant manner:

- Jesus' real name is Yeshua (not Yeshu).
- He is not a foreigner, but one of us.
- His name means salvation.
- He can answer your deepest concern: the need for security.

The details of the ad answered three major questions raised by the slogan: "Who Is Yeshu?"; "Who Is Yeshua and Why Did He Come?"; and "What Is Salvation and How Can We Get It?" The answers to the questions included several pieces of data from the "recently published survey results," which was an attempt to engage Israelis with something that could be perceived as current news. More important was the book offer at the end. The book is entitled *His Name Is Yeshua*, a title that addresses an important point that the survey data brought out: that there is ongoing confusion over the names Yeshu and Yeshua.

Reframing a Religious Message

Our survey confirmed a well-known fact about Israeli society: the majority of people describe themselves as secular.³ With this in mind, our Israeli staff decided to use a humorous tone and contemporary imagery in the gospel tracts they wrote and in the radio spots they produced. Through printed cartoon-like art and through caricatured voices of Israeli stereotypes in our radio ads,⁴ we often presented people as confused about the slogan *Yeshu=Yeshua=Yeshuah*, which was frequently the case. This good-natured acknowledgement of the secular realities of Israeli society may have helped people engage with the message and relate to us as approachable, rather than as a dour group that expects everyone to immediately understand its religious message.

Another intentional strategy we employed to reframe a religious message for those to whom religion has no appeal was to use almost no religious symbols. Our survey showed us that a significant percentage of

3 Though this is the conventional view of Israeli society, which was borne out by our survey data, it conflicts with a 2007 survey reported in Ynetnews (Kobi Nahshoni, "Secular Sector Shrinking, Study Shows," Ynetnews.com, <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3474605,00.html> [accessed May 1, 2009]). That study, conducted by Eliyahu Sapir, reported that only 20% of Israelis define themselves as secular – a 50% drop over the last thirty years. He states that the majority of the religious sector is comprised of Sephardim and of Israelis under the age of forty.

4 We produced three ads, each featuring a character with a recognizable accent: Moroccan, Russian, and "old world" Ashkenazi. The ads may be listened to on-line ("Israel Radio Ads," Jews for Jesus, <http://jewsforjesus.org/israelradioads> [accessed May 1, 2009]).



people think that Jesus' central message was "religious," and an equal percentage refused to answer the question on that issue, possibly because they, too, thought it was something religious (and foreign?) and therefore to be avoided. An examination of six of the gospel tracts we used in our campaigns reveals a total of 50 graphic images. Out of those 50 images only four might be considered "religious," and two of those four would be considered foreign since they were partial images of the cross.⁵

Though for the most part we avoided religious symbolism and terminology, we did make an exception. For distribution in a religious area that included Tiberias, we wrote a gospel tract with the title "Rabbi Yeshua Ba'al HaNess," which means "Rabbi Yeshua the Miracle Worker." It references a Talmudic sage named Rabbi Meir Ba'al HaNess, who is buried in a well-known shrine in Tiberias. It challenges readers to honor Yeshua, who performed even greater miracles than Meir. Though this tract has a narrow appeal, it responds to an important survey finding: that in contrast to the general public, most of the religious community cannot name a miracle that Yeshua performed. This specialized tract mentions no less than seven miracles that Yeshua performed, challenging religious readers to consider this rabbi named Yeshua and what he can do in their lives.

Ironically, this uniquely "religious" gospel tract may also have had special application to the secular for two reasons. First, the colorful, non-religious artwork would have visual appeal. But the contents may have intrigued many of the secular readers, a majority of whom – when asked – can only name one miracle that Yeshu performed: walking on water.

What about the Resurrection?

Another observation from the survey data is that a very small percentage of the Israeli public seems to know that Jesus rose from the dead.⁶ In light of this lack of knowledge and because the resurrection of Yeshua is an integral part of the gospel,⁷ our Israeli staff made a decision that every gospel tract they distribute will have the full gospel message (i.e. one that in some way includes the atoning death and resurrection of Yeshua), and not simply an "incomplete" gospel message that invites readers to interact with the message further. This is in contrast to the literature we use in other countries, much of which does not include both the atoning death and resurrection of Yeshua.

Our Israeli staff considered conducting a media campaign that focused

5 There were a variety of images of religious people in these tracts, but they were included to reflect the presence of religious people in the general society. Those images were not promoting a religious lifestyle, but served as an expression of the reality that many people in Israel embrace one. The two "non-foreign" religious images included renderings of an ancient Israelite altar with a red heart character on it, symbolizing *Yeshua* atoning for sin and being resurrected.

6 As stated in "A Survey of Israeli Knowledge and Attitudes towards Jesus," it is possible that people do not view Yeshua's resurrection as a miracle that he performed, and so they did not supply that answer in response to a question about his miracles.

7 Cf. 1 Cor 15:1-4, 14, 19; Rom 10:9-10.

primary attention on the resurrection, but it was decided that for now a concentration on the names Yeshu/Yeshua was more timely. We would not call Jesus Yeshu in an ad since among the believers this is not an acceptable name, and since we know the historic use of that name as a curse. Nor would we simply use Yeshua in an ad since our survey indicates that most of the general public would not know who this is or would think we are talking about Joshua ben Nun. Speaking of the resurrection of Yeshu or Yeshua both have drawbacks without further explanation of just who was raised from the dead! Rather than tackle both ideas (the resurrection and a clarification of the name) in the same ad, we decided it would be best to start with an ad that educates people about who Yeshua is.⁸ We didn't want to skip an introduction of the Jewish Yeshua to the Israeli public and simply jump to the gospel (atoning death and resurrection), because people would not have known about whom we were talking. Some day we may go ahead and do that when we feel the name Yeshua is readily understood by the Israeli Jewish mind. A media campaign that highlights the resurrection of Yeshua is still a possibility we will continue to contemplate for the future.

A Mixed Response

It would be nice to report that because of our thoughtful use of survey data we only received positive responses from the Israeli public. But of course that would have been a foolish expectation on our part. In fact, a uniformly positive response might have indicated just the opposite: that we failed so badly to communicate who Yeshu/Yeshua is that everyone misunderstood and was attracted to find out more about someone other than Jesus. The converse is also true. If we had received a uniformly negative response to our evangelistic efforts we might conclude that we failed to properly contextualize the gospel message into something relevant to modern Israelis.

The truth is that we received a mixed response. Our two campaigns in 2008 brought us into contact with thousands of Israelis who requested more information about Yeshua. We have sent them all a copy of our book *His Name is Yeshua*, which is a very readable presentation of the messianic prophecies in a historic Jewish context. We have had face-to-face follow-up meetings with many of these contacts, and have seen a number of them receive Yeshua as their Messiah and Lord. A week before writing this article, I received a report from our Tel Aviv staff that ten Is-

A week before writing this article, I received a report from our Tel Aviv staff that ten Israelis received the Lord in the previous month alone.

⁸ Though our ad did include this statement, "Isaiah wrote that Messiah would die as a sacrifice for us (Isa. 53:6), and King David said he would rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10-11)," the resurrection was not the central focus of the ad.



raelis received the Lord in the previous month alone! These are people whose first contact with us was during our campaigns.

However, we did receive a lot of negative responses and faced opposition to our campaigns. Each day hundreds of angry callers left messages on our office voicemail. Anti-missionary groups and yeshivas mobilized to counteract our efforts in public places. Though we thought our media ads were crafted with creativity, intelligence, and a sense of humor when appropriate, a number of media venues began to remove our ads under pressure from those who called to complain. We don't know if we'll be allowed to use some of those venues again in the future.

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Conclusion

Commissioning this survey was an experiment that has yielded a lot of data for us to consider. Understanding the implications of what we found is easier than knowing how best to apply the data for the sake of the gospel. We will continue to think through what we have discovered and to see how it should shape what we do to evangelize Jewish Israelis. It's not likely that we have found the best ways to communicate the gospel in Israel, but we have had a fair success in what we have done so far. Surely we have made mistakes, and will continue to do so. But there is truth in the old adage, "If you never make a mistake, you will never make anything."

What's in Jesus' Name According to Matthew?

by Kai Kjær-Hansen



In an earlier essay in *Mishkan*, I dealt with the name forms Yehoshua, Yeshua, and Yeshu for Jesus of Nazareth.¹ I argued then that Jesus of Nazareth bore the Hebrew name Yeshua, not the long form Yehoshua/Joshua, and certainly not Yeshu. As to the name form Yeshu, I briefly presented my own thesis, namely that the disciples of Jesus, with others from Galilee, may have had trouble with the pronunciation of the guttural *ayin* at the end of a word. Perhaps they pronounced Yeshua like Yeshu. But when the pronunciation of a name is established *in writing*, something happens to that name, a matter which has not always received due attention. It is my thesis that at first some Jewish leaders sneered at the Galilean pronunciation Yeshu. When later they *wrote* Yeshu without the *ayin*, it was a deliberate attempt on their part to distance themselves from the soteriological connotations of the name Yeshua; Yeshu was just a man from Galilee. Whether or not my thesis holds good, the shift from Yeshua to Yeshu in writing has not, in my opinion, been sufficiently accounted for in the various attempts to solve this problem.

Speculation in Names

Through the ages the name of Jesus, in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and other languages, has been the subject of quite a lot of interest – and speculation. The first literary example of this is found in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (IX, 7–9) from about AD 100. Christians have made numerous attempts to combine the name of Jesus and the Tetragrammaton of YHWH – or its first two Hebrew letters, *yod* and *he*. Mystical interpretation of numbers has also been used. All this has been done with pious intentions, but is nonetheless speculation.

Similarly, the name form Yeshu has been interpreted by Jews with the application of Jewish interpretative principles such as *gematria* and *no-*

¹ Kai Kjær-Hansen, "Yehoshua, Yeshua, Jesus and Yeshu – An Introduction to the Names," *Mishkan* 17/18 (1993): 23–38. A first draft of this article is available as a speech manuscript ("An Introduction to the Names Yehoshua/Joshua, Yeshua, Jesus and Yeshu," Jews for Jesus, <http://jewsforjesus.org/answers/jesus/names> [accessed May 14, 2009]).

tarikón. All of this is done in an (understandable) dissociation from Christianity and its Savior because of all the evil that has been perpetrated against the Jewish people in the name of Jesus, but it is nevertheless also speculation. Based on the *notarikón* method, Yeshu (יֵשׁוּ) has, e.g., been construed as *yimach sh'mo v'zichro*, i.e. "May his name and his memory be blotted out."

But there are also a few examples where Yeshu, on the basis of the same principles, is interpreted positively about Jesus of Nazareth by Jews who have been converted to the Christian faith; indeed, there are amulets with the names Yehoshua, Yeshua, and Yeshu written in Hebrew letters on the very same amulet – interesting matters which I cannot go into here.²

The reason why I mention this is that Stephen Katz, in his article "The Applied Use of Survey Results in Evangelizing Jewish Israelis" in this issue of *Mishkan*, says the following (in note 1): "Another direction that our staff considered was to make a direct attempt to reverse the curse nature of the name Yeshu by supplying the first letter of the acronym with a different word that transforms the entire phrase into a new, honorable meaning: *yishtabach sh'mo v'zichro* ('May his name and memory be praised')."

I am pleased that they did not give in to this "temptation." If that had happened, they could, with some right, be accused of name speculation. Nothing could be easier than, through speculation and *notarikón*, to give the name Yeshu an "honorable meaning." All you need to do is take your Hebrew dictionary and find a *hitpa'el* form of a good and positive verb. The possibilities are legion. But if the intention is to give a genuine impression of who Jesus of Nazareth was, and is, and how the gospel writers present him – then the loss is greater than the gain.

Matthew the Evangelist certainly does not use such speculative methods, even though the name of Jesus is important for him. In the following, I shall give a short outline of how he looks upon the name and person of Jesus. This outline is accompanied by some comments that may be relevant for Jewish evangelism today.

Matthew, "Iesous," and "Yeshua"

Matthew has no hidden agenda. He writes after the death and resurrection of Jesus – in the light of these events, without which it is impossible to understand the work of Jesus.

In the introduction to his gospel, he puts his cards on the table. He is about to present the story of Jesus Christ. If he had written his gospel in Hebrew, he would have written *Yeshua haMashiach*. The question of which language the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in has not yet been solved. I can only argue on the basis of the Greek text, and I note

2 I hope in a later article to be able to give examples of such speculations in connection with the interpretation of the name forms Yeshu and Yeshua in Jewish and Christian sources; some of this material appears in a commented form in my dissertation (in Danish): Kai Kjær-Hansen, *Studier i navnet Jesus [Studies in the Name of Jesus]* (Aarhus: Menighedsfakultetet, 1992).

that Matthew renders the name of his principal character with the common transcription *Iesous* and not Yeshua.

I also note that many people involved in Jewish evangelism today use the form Yeshua, even when they speak English.³ Actually, I do not think Matthew really minds that, I just note that Matthew does not use the Hebrew transcription, although he had this alternative (cf. his use of Hebrew or Aramaic words and terms elsewhere in the gospel). I think he takes it for granted that when he writes *Iesous Xristos*, he will be understood by the ordinary reader – Jewish as well as Gentile. The main character is the Jew Jesus, who is the Messiah – a Jewish concept. In other words, it is possible for Matthew to describe the Jewishness of Jesus although he uses the Greek name form *Iesous Xristos*. And, one might add, using the Jewish name form Yeshua is no guarantee for a presentation of Jesus' genuine Jewishness and unique character. Things are not as easy as that!⁴

The Genealogy and Modern Readers

In the introduction to his gospel, Matthew, after having listed Jesus' ancestors, goes on to write about Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham. Jesus is related to the big ones: to the greatest king in Israel's history, King David. He who has ears, let him hear, says Matthew: God gave promises to David that were fulfilled in Jesus. And Jesus is related to Abraham, the first "Jew." He who has ears, let him hear that this also means good news for Gentiles. God's promise to Abraham implies good news for Gentiles for, as it was said to Abraham, "Through you I will bless all the nations" (Gen 12:3).

The very first verse gives clear signals to the readers about the main character of the gospel: Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. And again: no hidden agenda. Readers could roll up the scroll saying: This is not for me. And I am afraid that at least many modern non-Jewish readers have skipped chapter one because of the many strange Jewish names in the genealogy. This is a pity, for then they miss a revealed code which I think is the very key to the Gospel of Matthew, namely the 21st verse. I will return to this verse.

Modern readers find this chapter extremely boring. When the latest authorized Danish Bible translation was completed in 1992, some churches decided to sponsor free copies of the New Testament for evangelizing purposes. And since I had been part of the team of translators, I was asked, by people who were familiar with the Bible, "Why couldn't you have placed Matthew's gospel in a less conspicuous place in the New Testament? When people open it and on the first page see this long list of names which mean

3 Although it has long been known that Jesus' name in Hebrew is Yeshua, as also evidenced in mission literature in the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, it is not until the late 1960s or the early 1970s, I think, that the form Yeshua becomes generally used and accepted in writings in English, for example. This matter might deserve a critical investigation together with a weighing of the pros and cons of this usage.

4 See my comments on this in *Mishkan* 17/18 (1993): 35–37.



nothing to them, they are bound to say: This is not for me!”

Even leaders involved in Jewish evangelism will have to admit, I presume, that several of these names from Jewish history are just names. And this is probably also the case with many of the Jewish people they are trying to reach with the gospel.

But if we assume that Matthew had a predominantly Jewish audience in mind, and that most of the first readers had a thorough knowledge of the personalities of Old Testament history, their situation was a different one. Behind each name they would be able to make out the silhouette of a person with a history – unlike many of us today.

For the first readers, the genealogy would have been shocking reading that must have made them rub their eyes, not least when they read the names of the four women – and Mary.

The Four Women and Mary in the Genealogy

The genealogy mentions five women: four from the Hebrew Scriptures and then the mother of Jesus, Mary – or Miriam as she was probably called in Hebrew.

Tamar: It was Tamar who disguised herself as a prostitute and became pregnant by her father-in-law. A horrible story (cf. Gen 38). Is it not odd that Tamar should be mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah?

Rahab: The prostitute in Jericho who helped the Israelite spies prior to the downfall of that city (cf. Josh 2). Is it not odd that she should be mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus?

Ruth: The Moabite woman who belonged to Israel’s archenemies, i.e. a Gentile woman (cf. the Book of Ruth). Even if she eventually became a part of Israel’s people, is it not odd that she has her place in the genealogy of the Jew Jesus?

Uriah’s wife: Of course Matthew knows her name, Bathsheba. The fact that she is referred to as Uriah’s wife leads us to think of David, his misdeed and sin (cf. 2 Sam 11–12; Ps 51). Is it not odd that this event is also included in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah?

The four women of the genealogy – and we could include many of the men – are used by Matthew to show that God carries out his plan in a world of sin and sinners. And if we include Mary, Jesus’ mother, we can see that the common denominator for them is something unusual. The unexpected, the atypical is part of God’s salvation history. It is also part of Jesus’ history.

Jesus’ mother was going to have a son by the Holy Spirit.

The Name of Jesus – Matthew 1:21

Matthew does not tell us about the birth itself. He says that the miraculous conception took place, and he mentions Joseph’s reaction to this and the intervention of the angel of the Lord. The words from the angel of the Lord to Joseph are important. It is said of Mary that “she will have a son,

and you will name him Jesus – because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).

I will have to restrict myself to a few brief remarks about Matthew’s revealed “code” – for this is what I think verse 21 is.

1. The name of Jesus is divinely sanctioned. The statement comes from the angel of the Lord. Naturally, this statement applies only to Mary’s child, not to other children who were called Yeshua.
2. If we translate backwards, from Greek to Hebrew, we get a Hebrew wordplay: *Yeshua* . . . *yoshia*, i.e. Jesus will save. If Matthew wrote his gospel in Greek, it is worth noting that he obviously takes for granted that his readers will understand the correspondence between the name of Jesus and the verb *to save*. In other words, Matthew – or the angel of the Lord! – is not as explicit in the interpretation of the name Jesus as when the name Immanuel is mentioned, and translated, in verse 23.
3. If the angel of the Lord had been a “dictionary angel,” I suppose he would have said – as Philo, the Alexandrine philosopher, did – that Jesus means “the salvation of the Lord” or something like “the one by whom the Lord saves.” He does not. But there is an important addition which transcends an etymological explanation of the name of Jesus. This addition is in the words “from their sins.”

He, Mary’s child, might be expected to be the one who would save his people from the Romans. But he is not. He is to save his people “from their sins.”

He, Mary’s child, might be expected to be the one who would save his people from the Romans. But he is not. He is to save his people “from their sins.” This addition makes explicit the nature of the salvation which the name of Jesus implies. It is not something which just flows smoothly from Matthew’s pen. This has been carefully contemplated. Revealed “codes” always are.

In the words of the Swedish New Testament scholar Birger Gerhardsson:

This is not an unaffected, natural phrase that flowed of its own accord from the pen of the evangelist. It is a carefully formed pronouncement showing how he apprehends the *kind* of salvation indicated by the name of Jesus.⁵

When it comes to giving a precise description of the true nature of Jesus’ work, everything else is of secondary importance. That something is of secondary importance does not mean that it is irrelevant. I am not blind to the implication of Matthew’s division of the genealogy into three groups, each with 14 persons. This may have symbolic importance since 14, in Hebrew,

⁵ Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1979), 77.



is the numerical value for DaViD, and some believe that Matthew hereby wants to indicate that Jesus, in a deeper sense, is David's son. I don't know! But surely it is not a revealed code! In verse 21, however, we find the decisive identification of the person and work of Jesus. Whether Matthew refers to Jesus as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Man, the Servant, Christ, Immanuel, etc., behind it is the reality that Mary's son is God's Son – a designation which is not explicitly mentioned in chapter one but is implied. And this Son of God – Jesus is his name – is the one who saves from sin.

“Immanuel” and “Jesus” – Matthew 1:23

The next short section in Matthew's gospel (1:22–25) is about Immanuel. The name Immanuel comes from Isaiah 7:14, and is part of the first of Matthew's fulfillment quotations. This is the only place in the whole New Testament where the name Immanuel occurs. The name Jesus appears about 150 times in Matthew's gospel alone.⁶ As mentioned above, the name Immanuel is accompanied by an explicit translation, which is not the case with the name Jesus. It is obvious that Matthew considered the meaning of the name Immanuel important. The Immanuel prophecy substantiates the significance of the name Jesus as expressed in verse 21. For Matthew, there is no competition between these names. Formally, the name Jesus is of superior importance compared to the name Immanuel, for it is the naming scene which causes Matthew to quote Isaiah 7:14, the verse with Immanuel.

In other words, if it was shocking for the first readers to read, in the genealogy of Jesus, about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife/David's sin, and if it was shocking to read that Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit, it would have been no less shocking to read that Jesus was to save his people from their sins.

Saving from sin and forgiving sin is the prerogative of Israel's God, and is normally connected with the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus and the Process of Forgiveness of Sin

In the scholarly debate, E. P. Sanders and N. T. Wright, among others, have argued that forgiveness of sin, in the time of Jesus, was seen as a *process* of confession, repentance, and restitution for the damage caused. These matters could be dealt with anywhere, at the place where the individual was living. But the conclusion of the process of forgiveness took place in Jerusalem, in the temple, where sacrifices were offered in accordance with the requirements of the law for the sin committed.

6 If we assume that Matthew knew Mark's gospel, it is remarkable that in pericopes where there is no "Jesus" in Mark, Matthew has often inserted the name, and in pericopes where Mark does have "Jesus," Matthew usually retains it. Perhaps we should not attach too much importance to this, but it is nevertheless worth noting.

On the point of forgiveness of sin, Jesus shocked his contemporaries, just as John the Baptist had done, by *not* instructing them to bring sacrifices to the temple – the time-honored place for the closure of the process of forgiveness. Jesus forgives on the spot. In Sander's words, "Jesus did not call sinners to repent as normally understood, which involved restitution and/or sacrifice, but rather to accept his message, which promised them the kingdom. This would have been offensive to normal piety."⁷

Or as Wright says: "Jesus was replacing adherence or allegiance to Temple and Torah with allegiance to himself. Restoration and purity were to be had, not through the usual channels, but through Jesus."⁸

That Jesus forgives sins on the spot is seen clearly in the story of the paralyzed man in Capernaum: ". . . Your sins are forgiven" (Matt 9:2). There is a beautiful match between these words and what is implied in the name of Jesus, as expressed in Matthew 1:21: he, Jesus, came to save his people from their sins, and the words in Matthew 9 must naturally be interpreted in the light of this.

Jesus in a Category of His Own

This places Jesus in a category of his own – but not through number mysticism or *notarikon* or *gematria* or similar speculations. Jesus is of divine origin, and he has a divine mission. He is, as Peter says about him in the middle of the gospel, "Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Peter's confession is formally correct, but the meaning of it did not dawn upon him until after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This Jesus, who saves from sin, is for Matthew greater than all those he is compared to. It is true that he is David's descendent, but he is also David's Lord (22:41–46). He is greater than Jonah (12:41), greater than Solomon's temple (12:6), greater than John the Baptist (3:11) who is even said to be much more than a prophet (11:9). This Jesus, who saves from sin, is the Son of Man who is Lord of the Sabbath (12:8).

As the Son of God of divine origin, he has been endowed with a unique divine authority. In the Sermon on the Mount, he speaks as one who is more than and greater than Moses. Jesus' words have the same weight as God's words. To confess him corresponds to confessing God. To deny him corresponds to denying God.

Jesus speaks and acts in his own name, so to speak. He has authority from his heavenly Father. Everything has been given to him by his heavenly Father: "My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27). Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). He is the Son of God, who through his suffering and death gave his life to redeem many people (Matt 20:28). He, Jesus, who saves from sin, is God's obedient Son who in every respect

7 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 210.

8 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 274. Cf. also pp. 406–12.



does the will of God – even when he is “handed over” by God to suffering and death.

That Matthew, also at the end of Jesus’ life, sees him as the one who saves from sin emerges clearly from the words said in connection with the Lord’s Supper in Matthew 26:28: “This is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Among the synoptics, only Matthew includes the words “for the forgiveness of sins” when he writes about the Lord’s Supper.

Those who remember the “code” from chapter 1 verse 21 are not surprised. Nor is it in this context surprising that the “angel of the Lord” at the open tomb has the name of Jesus on his lips.

Jesus and the Angel of the Lord at the Open Tomb

In the naming scene in Matthew 1:20–21, it is the “angel of the Lord” who commands Joseph to give Mary’s child the name Jesus. The angel of the Lord reappears in the account of Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:1–7), where he says to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified” (28:5). Just as the name of Jesus was divinely sanctioned *before* his birth, so it is *after* his death and resurrection. Of course the angel of the Lord has not forgotten what he said to Joseph about naming Jesus thirty years earlier! By means of relatively few touches, Matthew manages, at the end of his gospel, to establish a connection to the name Jesus in chapter 1.

When the angel of the Lord can use the name Jesus for the resurrected one, Matthew, the writer, can also do so (Matt 28:9–10). It is therefore

It is indeed the crucified Jesus who saves from sin. Or rather, it is the crucified *and risen* Jesus who does it.

a narrowing down of the vocabulary in Matthew to claim that the name Jesus is *only* used about the earthly Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, the name Jesus on the lips of the angel of the Lord at the open tomb is used in the service of Christology. It is indeed the crucified Jesus who saves from

sin. Or rather, it is the crucified *and risen* Jesus who does it. The words are said in the context of the resurrection of Jesus, for the “crucified one” is no longer in the tomb. A dead Jesus, whom God had not raised from the dead, would cancel the meaning of his name and work, as expressed in Matthew 1:21.

I do not deny that the name Jesus is a personal name in Matthew’s gospel, but my argument is that it has some clearly Christological overtones.

Again, in Birger Gerhardsson’s words, “The central figure of the Gospel bears the name of Jesus. It is surely inescapable that when the Gospel was finally edited this name had long since gained considerable Christological overtones.”⁹

Yeshua . . . Yoshia

It is generally accepted that there is a Hebrew word-play – *Yeshua* . . . *yoshia* (i.e., “Jesus will save”) – behind the Greek text of Matthew 1:21. Most translations of this verse into Hebrew – whether these translations lie hidden in a library or have been published – have preserved this word-play, even if there are exceptions.¹⁰

It is interesting that Ibn Schaprut, in the oldest known Hebrew translation made by a Jew (from the fourteenth century) of a whole New Testament book, namely Matthew’s gospel, used the name Yeshua in Matthew 1:21, and also retained the word-play *Yeshua* . . . *yoshia*. Ibn Schaprut also uses Yeshua in 1:25, but in all other places it is rendered Yeshu.

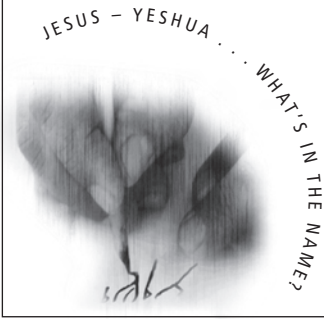
With many other examples from Jewish history, this shows that even if Jews generally speaking preferred the name form Yeshu for Jesus of Nazareth, the awareness lived on that the *original* name of the Christians’ Savior was not Yeshu, but Yeshua.

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¹⁰ This question also needs further examination, as does the question of how the Hebrew translating tradition deals with other persons in the New Testament who also bear the name Jesus.



What Can We Know about Jesus, and How Can We Know It?

by **Michael J. Wilkins**

What can we know about Jesus, and how can we know it?¹ From a twenty-first century, evangelical Christian perspective, we might suppose that is a nonsensical question. The Bible is the Word of God, and as such it gives us a trustworthy record of who Jesus was and what he did. Just read the Bible, especially the gospels, and we can know precisely who Jesus was and what he did.

The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

But many modern scholars often read the data of the New Testament quite differently. They often assume that the authors of the gospels were more intent upon their theological agendas than they were upon recording accurate historical accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. For example, they often consistently make a distinction between what they refer to as the *Jesus of history* and the *Christ of faith*. By this they mean that the portrait of Jesus that surfaces from the gospels, primarily the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), is very different from the portrait of Jesus that surfaces from the rest of the New Testament.

They contend that the *Jesus of history* that we find in the synoptic gospels gives the portrayal of Jesus' true identity. He grew up with typical human characteristics with a special calling of God (Luke 2:40, 52), and he was a prophetic figure similar to John the Baptist (Luke 4:24). But they contend that he never explicitly called himself Messiah, he silenced those who tried to give him messianic status (Mark 1:24–25; 8:29–30), and he declared that he was very different from his heavenly Father, who knew things about the future that he himself did not know (Mark 13:32). Jesus knew that he was a

¹ This material draws upon a forthcoming larger study, "Peter and His Declaration of Jesus as Messiah," which I have undertaken for the Historical Jesus Study Group of the Institute for Biblical Research. My essay is one of twelve undertaking an analysis and defense of Jesus' historical mission, collected and edited by Darrell Bock and Robert Webb, to be published in the WUNT series (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming). A popular approach, similar to this article, will also appear in a revised form in Michael J. Wilkins, "Who Did Jesus Think He Was?" in *Contending with Christianity's Critics*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, forthcoming).

special agent of God, but he did not claim that he was anything other than a prophet like those of the Old Testament.

They further contend that the Jesus that is depicted in the rest of the New Testament is the *Christ of faith*. The hopes of Jesus' mission were utterly devastated with his execution at the hands of the Roman authorities. But soon the followers of Jesus began to believe that Jesus' mission was not dead, because it was alive in their minds and hearts. It was as though Jesus himself was still alive. And if his mission was not dead, then he really was not only the Messiah of Israel, but also the Messiah of all the nations. Jesus was still alive in their minds and hearts and was more exalted than ever, and by faith the early followers declared that he was the Christ, the Messiah, who is the very Son of God (Acts 9:22; cf. Rom 1:3–4; Col 1:13–16).

So, many modern critics contend that when the authors of the gospels wrote the story of Jesus' life, they did so from the perspective of faith that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but with the recognition that the Jesus of history did not make that claim, nor did he understand himself to be such. When we find evidence of these kinds of claims in the gospels, they are understood to be the gospel writers interpolating later beliefs back into Jesus' ministry.

The Christ of History

When countering these kinds of claims, it is often helpful to use common methodologies to provide a level playing field from which we can dismantle critics' conclusions with their own tools. One significant strategy is to employ "criteria of authenticity" that modern critics themselves use to deny the authenticity of events in Jesus' life. In recent years the criteria themselves have been subject to evaluation,² especially the well-known criterion of dissimilarity,³ and some important developments have occurred, especially with reference to *historical criteria*.⁴

Contending for a comprehensive understanding of the historical Jesus within the historical context are two prominent Jesus scholars, John Meier, a Roman Catholic scholar, and Craig Evans, an evangelical scholar. Both have given primary or valid criteria a relative ranking in effectiveness in attempting to evaluate the authenticity of events and sayings of Jesus. At many points Meier and Evans employ the criteria similarly, although they

2 E.g., Dennis Polkow, "Method and Criteria for Historical Research," *SBLSP* 26 (1987), ed. K. H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 336–56; Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSupSer 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2000), esp. 17–123.

3 E.g., Tom Holmén, "Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus of History Research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (1999; repr. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 47–80.

4 See James H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research and How to Obtain Reliable Information," in *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 15–32; Scot McKnight, "Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 153–62; Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1–18.



use different terminology and somewhat different definitions to describe them. One difference is how they have assigned a different relative value to each criterion in establishing authenticity of events and sayings of Jesus.

John P. Meier⁵

Primary Criteria

1. Embarrassment
2. Discontinuity
3. Multiple Attestation
4. Coherence
5. Rejection and execution

Craig A. Evans⁶

Valid Criteria

1. Historical Coherence
2. Multiple Attestation
3. Embarrassment
4. Dissimilarity
5. Semitisms and Palestinian background
6. Coherence

In particular is the primacy that Evans assigns to the criterion of “historical coherence.” In his view, data that coheres with the historical circumstances and the principal features of Jesus’ life should be given precedence. In this he follows the programmatic lead of E. P. Sanders, who suggests that we may expect authentic material “. . . to explain historically some of the principal puzzles about Jesus, specifically why he attracted attention, why he was executed. . . .”⁷ This is in line with Meier’s criterion of “rejection and execution,” which Evans considers to be the most important feature to consider when evaluating the authenticity of any other incident of Jesus’ life and mission.⁸ Meier contends that this criterion looks to one of the most striking things about Jesus’ earthly life, his violent death, and attempts to understand the whole of Jesus’ life in the light of that final event.⁹ While Meier and Evans formulate this criterion differently,¹⁰ it is instructive that it has risen to such prominence among Jesus scholars.

The assumption of the fact of Jesus’ execution at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities lies at the base of a network of coherent facts, and any specific action or word of Jesus that is coherent with this historical scenario is potentially authentic.¹¹ Employing these criteria has led many modern scholars to the conclusion that we can establish with a high degree of certainty what Sanders calls a list of “almost indisputable facts” about Jesus’ life and ministry. Adding what Evans calls a few “highly probable events,” the results are as follows:

5 John P. Meier, “Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?” in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus – Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Anchor Bible Research Library (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 167–95.

6 Craig A. Evans, “Recent Developments in Jesus Research: Presuppositions, Criteria, and Sources,” in *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1–49; esp. 13–26.

7 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 7.

8 Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 14.

9 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 177.

10 For a comparison of the methods of Meier and Evans, see Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 110–13.

11 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 177; Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 13–15; cf. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 112.

Sanders' "Almost Indisputable Facts"¹²

1. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
2. Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed.
3. Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being twelve.
4. Jesus confined his activity to Israel.
5. Jesus engaged in a controversy about the Temple.
6. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities.
7. After his death Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement.
8. At least some Jews persecuted at least parts of the new movement, and it appears that this persecution endured at least to a time near the end of Paul's career.

Evans' "Highly Probable Details"¹³

9. Jesus was viewed by the public as a prophet.
10. Jesus' Temple controversy involved criticism of the ruling priests.
11. The Romans crucified Jesus as "King of the Jews."

With this starting point, we contend that many of the sayings of Jesus, and by extension many other events in Jesus' ministry, cohere with the above historical elements, often either explaining them or being explained by them, and as such expand broadly what we can know about Jesus.¹⁴

Peter's Declaration of Jesus' Identity as a Test-case

As a test-case elsewhere, I applied these criteria to the incident in Jesus' Galilean ministry where the apostle Peter acted as spokesman for the Twelve and declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Greek expression for "Messiah" (Mark 8:29–30; cf. Matt 16:16; Luke 9:20).¹⁵ Among Christians this has long been a benchmark for ascertaining the original apostles' understanding of Jesus' identity in his historical ministry.

But from early in the twentieth century up to recent years, modern critics have subjected Peter's declaration to radical critical examination, and many have declared it not to be a historical event. They contend that it must have been a later interpolation of the church's beliefs by the evangelists back into the narrative of Jesus' ministry, and so they view it as theological fiction.¹⁶ Recently, for example, Robert Funk and the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar unhesitatingly indicated that the episode is largely or

12 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11.

13 Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 15.

14 Cf. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 15; cf. also N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 83–89, 131–32.

15 Wilkins, "Peter and His Declaration of Jesus as Messiah."

16 E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1:26; Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 257–59; Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1969), 130.



entirely fictive. In their view this is “. . . a stylized scene shaped by Christian motifs.”¹⁷ They contend that the Caesarean declaration narrative is the product, in all likelihood, of later Christian imagination, and that the two events actually coincided – i.e., Peter had his Easter vision *and* came to the conclusion that Jesus was Messiah at the same time.¹⁸ In their distinctive color-coding of gospels material, the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar gave the incident a “black” reading, which indicates that the incident “is largely or entirely fictive.”¹⁹

The Historicity of Peter’s Declaration

But by employing the criteria of authenticity we can provide a fresh assessment of the historicity and significance of Peter’s declaration at Caesarea Philippi of Jesus’ identity. Several primary criteria lead to the conclusion that the gospel writers recorded a historically authentic account of Peter’s declaration that Jesus was the Christ/Messiah.

First, Caesarea Philippi is an unexpected locale for the declaration, which attests to the credibility of the evangelists’ record. Associating the declaration with this Gentile region strikes a chord of an actual memory of an event in an unexpected locale. The record of Jesus’ leaving Jewish Galilee to go to the Jews living in the villages in the largely pagan area outside of upper Galilee in Caesarea Philippi sounds a plausible historical note, because Jesus covered all regions of the northern part of the inherited land of Israel, inspired by his ideas and hopes of Jewish restoration eschatology. Further, Caesarea Philippi is outside the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who had recently executed John the Baptist, and who was increasingly viewing Jesus also as a threat to the security of his realm. The criterion of Palestin-

The evangelists did not avoid recording an incident that is embarrassing to Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles, which adds credibility.

ian background satisfactorily supports the historical authenticity of this declaration pericope. The Markan text describes events and concepts that were distinctive to early first-century Palestine.

Second, the evangelists did not avoid recording an incident that is embarrassing to Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles, which adds credibility to their intention to

record incidents the way that they occurred. Although Peter is affirmed for his declaration that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, when Jesus reveals an aspect of his messianic ministry, suffering and dying, that is incongruent with Peter’s still-developing conception, he is declared by Jesus to be a Satan-inspired hindrance to Jesus’ fuller messianic mission (Mark 8:31–33).

17 Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 104.

18 Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 75; Funk et al., *Acts of Jesus*, 104, 218, 303.

19 Funk et al., *Acts of Jesus*, 36–37.

The historical credibility of the evangelists' record of this incident is heightened by their willingness to include material that is embarrassing to Peter, a high leader of the early church.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the evangelists' accounts of Peter's declaration demonstrate authenticity because the incident has coherence historically with both the developing messianic ministry of Jesus and the final events of Jesus' life that led to his crucifixion.

1. In his relationship to the eschatological prophet John the Baptist, Jesus is also explicitly regarded as a prophet (Mark 6:4, 15; John 6:14). But his authority in exercising the power of the kingdom of God leads to the understanding that his ministry included a royal dimension, and in that sense he was "anointed" by God not only as a prophet, but also as a king.
2. By calling and sending out the Twelve on a mission to Israel, Jesus issues a statement of hope of restoration or reunification to national Israel, but also a threat of judgment to those who did not repent (Mark 3:13–15; Matt 10:5–15). The calling and sending imply a royal dimension, because it is a vision for the nation as he established the kingdom of God, and the Twelve represent the new leadership that is needed to replace the failing religious leadership of Israel.
3. On at least one occasion the crowd acclaim him as "the prophet who is to come into the world," but Jesus rejects the acclaim because it included a frenzied desire to make him king (John 6:14–15). Jesus is here connected with the tradition that regarded Moses as a king as well as a prophet. The crowd understood Jesus in a potentially political light, which aroused pent-up hopes for the return of the Davidic glories. Although Jesus consistently rejected the popular, earthly kingship that the people desired, misconceptions of his messianic mission would eventually lead to his execution by the Romans as the "King of the Jews."

At this point in Jesus' developing messianic ministry, Peter makes his momentous declaration that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah. He has recognized Jesus' intention to be God's agent as Messiah in establishing the kingdom of God. Yet Peter is silenced by Jesus (Mark 8:30) not because he is incorrect, but because the title "Messiah" still carries with it among the people, and Jesus' enemies, political/militaristic connotations that Jesus rejects. Also, although Peter is largely correct in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, he does not yet know the fullness of his messianic nature, which Jesus clarifies to include suffering and dying (Mark 8:31).

Peter is silenced by Jesus not because he is incorrect, but because the title "Messiah" still carries with it . . . political/militaristic connotations that Jesus rejects.

Peter's declaration coheres historically with what he has seen developing in the messianic mission of Jesus, and also coheres with what Jesus sees



in the gathering opposition to his messianic mission. As Jesus approaches the final week of his life, the events involving his symbolic royal entry into Jerusalem and the authoritative temple incident combine to have Jesus arrested, and the religious leaders will be convinced that he is a messianic blasphemer (Mark 14:64). In turn, this will cause them to take Jesus to the Roman leaders with charges that he has incited the people with his messianic pretensions. And the Romans will have Jesus crucified as “King of the Jews,” a title that coheres with the external form of Peter’s declaration, but not with the internal meaning that Jesus increasingly revealed to Peter to include suffering and dying.

What Can We Know about Jesus?

These collective criteria lead to the conclusion that the gospel writers recorded a historically authentic account of Peter’s declaration that Jesus was the Christ/Messiah.

Peter’s Declaration

Peter has recognized in Jesus’ mission that he was the Messiah who was anointed in his baptism by John, who announced the arrival of the kingdom of God, which was divinely legitimated in the miracles and exorcisms and was demonstrated in sending out the Twelve with a message to Israel of hope and judgment. Peter also recognized that Jesus rejected popular acclaim as the Prophet-King. In this Peter had come to an understanding that Jesus was quite different than what many in Israel hoped for in Messiah. Peter saw that Jesus was not only an eschatological prophet, but that he was also Israel’s anticipated royal Messiah. This prophetic, yet royal mission of Jesus elicited from Peter his declaration that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.²⁰

Establishing the historicity of Peter’s confession has significant implications for understanding the historical disciples of Jesus. Peter *did* come to understand the messianic identity of Jesus during his lifetime. It is partial to be sure, because he had not yet understood the necessity of suffering and dying. That lends plausibility to Peter’s later actions, because his partial understanding led him to attempt to deter Jesus from his fate, it led him to watchlessness and fearful denial at the time of Jesus’ greatest need, and it led to cowardly abandonment while Jesus endured his crucifixion.²¹

Nonetheless, as Peter declares Jesus to be Messiah, he opens himself to the schooling of Jesus and later history as he comes to a much more complete understanding of what messiahship meant for Jesus.

20 Marinus de Jonge, *God’s Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus’ Own View of His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 10ff., *passim*.

21 See Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 74–75.

Jesus' Self-understanding

If Peter understood Jesus to be Messiah, does that mean that Jesus also had that understanding of his own identity? Several secure strands of tradition lead to an affirmative answer to that question.

1. We noted above that when John the Baptist asks from prison if he is "the one who is to come," Jesus answers with allusions to Isaiah 35:5–6 and 61:1–2 (Matt 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–22). The *Messianic Apocalypse* fragment from Qumran (4Q521) contains parallel allusions to the passages from Isaiah and understands them as the works of Messiah. This leads to the supported conclusion that Jesus has answered John in the affirmative, that yes, he is the coming One, the Messiah. Jesus knows that he is doing the works of the Messiah.²²
2. Jesus rejected the idea of a political/militaristic messiahship, and in his teaching focused on the arrival of the kingdom of God as a matter of producing internal righteousness that affects external righteous deeds (e.g., Matt 5:20; 6:1; 15:17–20). In this way he was defining his identity as the Messiah. There was broad variation in messianic expectations among first-century Jews of a royal figure who would accomplish the rescuing purposes of Israel's God. The category of messiahship had not been fully crystallized, so Jesus had the space to intensify in his own creative variation extant messianic elements.²³ Jesus intensifies extant messianic ideas in his notion of the kingdom of God, which speaks to the intentional shaping of his messianic identity.²⁴
3. The evangelists' pericope regarding Peter's declaration, focusing attention on the identity of the person of Jesus himself, seems alien to the rest of the authentic gospel material, where Jesus consistently points away from himself (at least implicitly) to refer to God. As Jesus accepts the title, but then qualifies it with the suffering Son of Man statement, he refashions the conception of messiahship for Peter and the other disciples. This points to Jesus' self-understanding of his messianic identity. Jesus intended to be understood as, and he understood himself to be, the Messiah, albeit a very different kind of Messiah than many expected.²⁵

22 Cf. Craig A. Evans, "From Anointed Prophet to Anointed King: Probing Aspects of Jesus' Self-Understanding," in *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 437–56; Ben Witherington, III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 233, 267ff.

23 N. T. Wright, "Theology, History and Jesus: A Response to Maurice Casey and Clive Marsh," *JNST* 69 (1998): 105–12, esp. 111.

24 Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, "Resistance and Redemption in the Jesus Tradition," in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 65–77.

25 The present study moves to examine Jesus not only as an eschatological prophet, but also as a royal, eschatological Messiah. Recent study further focuses upon Jesus' self-understanding as Israel's long-awaited, eschatological high-priest; see Anna Maria Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester," in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien*, Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, WUNT 138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 165–230; Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus



The Early Church's Confession

Peter's declaration of the title Messiah for Jesus was only the beginning of understanding Jesus' identity. It later came to be a much more complete confession for the early church. He was the anointed One who announced the arrival of the kingdom of God, but he is also the crucified One, the resurrected One, and now, they believed, the exalted and glorified One. All of these elements

became associated with the title, and now the name, of Jesus as the Christ. So a scarlet thread runs through Jesus' revelation of his identity in his messianic mission. It grew out of Jesus' ministry activity. It was affirmed in Peter's first articulation of Jesus' identity with his declaration at Caesarea Philippi. It was demonstrated through the report of Jesus' final ministry in Jerusalem and his passion. It culminates for the early church in the declaration and confession of Jesus as the Christ.²⁶ The so-called distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is an unhelpful divide.²⁷ Jesus is the Christ of history *and* the Christ of faith.

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So, What Can We Know about Jesus?

So, what can we know about Jesus? He was Messiah, to be sure, but far more than even his closest followers understood. He is the divine Son of God who offers himself as the suffering and dying and rising Messiah, bringing life to all who heed his call to the kingdom of God. Jesus' intentional messianic mission uniquely focused on the establishment of the kingdom of God for all people – Jew and Gentile, male and female, young and old – which declares the good news that all can be set free from the tyranny of sin and death and brought into newness of life in the power of the Spirit.

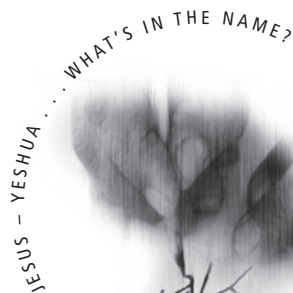
as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1," *JSHJ* 4, no. 2 (June 2006): 155–75; and Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *JSHJ* 5, no. 1 (January 2007): 57–79.

26 Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Messianic Son of Man: Jesus' Claim to Deity," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 325–44, esp. 327–33 (trans. and repr. from *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 107–24).

27 For an overview of this unhelpful divide, see James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Lee Martin McDonald, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 15–34.

Is It Kosher to Substitute Jesus into God's Place?

- A Look at Key Teaching from the Early Jesus Community



by **Darrell L. Bock**

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of teaching coming out of the early Jesus community was the extent to which they elevated his status alongside God. For a community rooted in Judaism and accustomed to reciting the *Shema* each Sabbath, such claims seem to stretch the limit of what could or should be believed.¹ How could it be that followers of Judaism could make such a move? The following study serves to indicate how this kind of identification and substitution could take place. It proceeds in three parts. First, we shall look at an incident in Jesus' life that is key to pursuing this question. Second, we shall consider a key speech of Peter, early in the life of the movement, which shows how these events helped the new community see the relationship between God and Jesus. Third, we shall consider a text that likely was a hymn sung in the early church that also addresses this issue. We are asking if it is kosher to substitute Jesus into God's place – and what this means for how we present and talk about Jesus to those for whom this move seems so radical (and even out of place).

A Key Incident on the Road to the Cross: The Confrontation with the Jewish Leadership

The initial incident we consider is Jesus' examination by the Jewish leadership, an interview that ended with the leadership deciding to take Jesus to Pilate and the Romans to ask that he be crucified. In a sense, this is the scene that tells us why Jesus was crucified. Much has brought Jesus to this place. He has had numerous encounters with the leadership over issues related to Jewish practice. He has claimed to forgive sin, something only God can do (Mark 2:1–12). He has acted on the Sabbath in ways the leadership saw as violations of Sabbath rest (Mark 2:23–3:6). Jesus defended these Sabbath actions in two ways: by appeals to the Hebrew Scripture, as well as his more radical appeal that the Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, an act suggesting on reflection that Jesus was the awaited king of Zechariah 9 (Mark 11:1–11; John 12:12–16). He had acted against the temple, a direct challenge to the leadership's au-

¹ A couple of texts that tell us this are from the Mishnah, *Megillah* 4.5 and *Aboth* 2.13.

thority over what Jews saw as the most sacred space on earth (Mark 11:15–18).² Such actions evoked hope like that expressed in works like Psalms of Solomon 17:26–31, where the hoped for end time deliverer would purge Jerusalem. It also was like a prayer, the Eighteen Benedictions, where the hope for restored Davidic rule and the restoration of Jerusalem are placed side by side in the fourteenth of these Benedictions. These claims and acts had caused the leadership to ask Jesus about the source of his authority. This seemed a fair question given they, as the Jewish leadership, had not authorized him to act (Mark 11:27–33). Jesus answered this challenge with a question about the authority of John the Baptist, a question the leadership did not answer but one that suggested God is capable of making such appointments without requiring Sadducean and Pharisaical approval. These events form a key background to why Jesus found himself in front of the Jewish leadership answering questions about whether he was seeking to destroy the temple or was claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One.

What is under examination is the extent of Jesus' claims and authority. This scene is not a trial in the formal sense.³ The leadership cannot give a legal verdict that has the force of law in the Roman world. What they are doing is gathering evidence in order to make a case to Pilate, who can make such a judgment. In our legal world, this is like a legal inquiry or a grand jury investigation where the question is whether Jesus can be charged legally with a crime against the Roman state. The Jewish leadership could bring such a case to Pilate, especially if it came from the High Priest whom Pilate had appointed. So this pre-history of tension that Jesus' ministry generated is important to appreciate as Caiaphas steps forward to ask Jesus a crucial question in Mark 14:61, "Are you Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

In a Jewish context, Caiaphas simply wants to know if Jesus is claiming to be the delivering promised one for Israel. The question about being the son is not asked with later Christian understanding of who the Son is. Rather, the roots are the idea that the king as God's representative is God's son, language that alludes to promises made to David about his dynastic line (2 Sam 7:12–14), an image that applied to all kings of the line, but which in a context of restoration and call to renewal for Israel would also likely point to a messianic expectation. Since these leaders had wedded their fate to Rome and did not hold to messianic and eschatological expectations like those Jesus appeared to raise, for Jesus to claim such a role would be all they would need to bring him before Pilate. A king that the leadership does not recognize and that Rome did not appoint in their minds would be a candidate to take to Pilate as a threat to the *pax Romana*. Rome appoint-

2 I treat these texts and others that lead into this scene in *Jesus according to Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 605–23.

3 Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53–65* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), originally *Blasphemy and Exaltation In Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1998). This is a detailed study of this scene and the Jewish background that informs it.

ed the kings of the empire and was responsible for keeping the peace. Rome was to stop anyone who claimed authority Rome did not give. To indicate how serious this question was, Caiaphas asks it and shows respect for God, by not speaking about the Son of God. Rather, he shows respect for God by referring to him indirectly as "the Blessed One." In doing so, his question indicates how seriously the leadership takes the uniqueness and glory of God's person.

Jesus' response leads to all that follows, directly triggering a series of core events that stand at the roots of the message of what became a major world religion. What did Jesus say and mean? How was his reply perceived by those who rejected it? Jesus' reply is given variously in the Synoptic Gospels. John does not record this examination, so we are only looking at Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I have defended in detail the historicity of this response in a monograph dedicated to this scene.⁴ The core of the reply is a qualified affirmative response with allusions to Psalm 110:1 ("The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand'"), and to Daniel 7:13, an allusion to the Son of Man coming on the clouds. Mark expresses an outright affirmative response ("I am"), with allusions to the Psalm (seated) and to Daniel (coming on the clouds). Matthew has a qualified affirmative response ("You have said it yourself"), with the same allusions to both passages. Luke has a qualified affirmative response ("You say that I am") with allusion to both passages, but with the reference to Daniel 7 only referring to the title Son of Man, not to coming on the clouds. I take these summaries of Jesus' response to indicate he responded positively to the question, but with a qualification that said in effect, "Yes, but not quite in the sense that you asked it." He then elaborates by appealing to God's acceptance of him as Son of Man (Jesus' favorite name for himself) at God's side in heaven (Psalm 110:1 allusion). He also declares that vindication would come in such a way that he would function as judge one day (Daniel 7 as it appears in Mark and Matthew). However, the points I am about to make would be so even if Jesus only used the Son of Man title and alluded to Psalm 110:1 without appealing to coming on the clouds. This more limited appeal is all the gospels affirm in the reply.

This long aside on the nature of the reply is required in order to discuss the saying's significance. Jesus' claim before the Jewish leadership is that God is going to show his support for Jesus' ministry and claims by bringing him into ruling authority with God. This vindication will take place regardless of what is about to happen in terms of a potential crucifixion. Jesus will occupy a regal-executive position in the program of God. The allusion to Psalm 110 points to a text that has regal overtones. The authority Jesus has, however, should not be understood as a strictly earthly authority. The

He responded positively to the question, but with a qualification that said in effect, "Yes, but not quite in the sense that you asked it."

4 Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation In Judaism, 184–237*; updated in "Blasphemy and the Jewish Examination of Jesus," *BBR* 17 (2007): 53–114.



reference from Daniel 7 to the Son of Man, either alone or along with the coming on the clouds, pictures an authority received directly from God to judge and exercise dominion. This is a heavenly and heavenly vindicated authority. What is so controversial is not the intimation of judgment but the idea that Jesus can sit in the presence of God in heaven. He can share God's glory and authority.

Caiaphas is no amateur theologian. He reacts immediately. He tears his robe, indicating that in his view Jesus has uttered blasphemy and is worthy of death. If Jesus is not who he is claiming to be and if God were not to vindicate Jesus or anyone in such a manner, Caiaphas would be right. Some Jews could contemplate such a close relationship between God and another and wrote about it. One need only look at the *Exagoge of Ezekiel* 67–82 or portions of *1 Enoch*, where the Son of Man sits with God, to see the contemplation of this idea as a possibility (applied to Moses in his Exodus authority as a metaphor, or to the future Son of Man seen as Enoch). However, other Jews vehemently denied such a connection. In *3 Enoch*, the angel Metatron is punished for claiming to be a "lesser YHWH." In Talmudic tradition Rabbi Akiba is rebuked for "profaning the Shekinah" when he says David could sit next to God (*b Hag* 14a). Caiaphas, as a Sadducee, would likely have held a view which did not see any possibility for such a thing.

So Jesus supplies in this remark the testimony that leads the Jewish leadership to take him to Pilate to secure his judgment: that Jesus should be crucified for sedition. They change the blasphemy charge into political terms for Pilate, so he examines Jesus on whether he is "king of the Jews," the title placed on the placard that hung with Jesus on the cross. They "translate" the charge out of its religious significance to make the point that Rome had nothing to do with Jesus' claim to be king, something Rome would read as a threat to their own authority. So in a real way, Jesus supplied the testimony that led to his death, and also produced a challenge that claimed they could see God behind his ministry. If there was a future vindication after the death they were contemplating for Jesus, then they could know God supported Jesus and his claims. It is important to keep an eye on the narrative-theological story line coming out of this scene in the gospels. It is a key element to understanding the early church's preaching about Jesus, as well as the debate between this new movement emerging from within Judaism and other Jews. In effect, this scene says that either Jesus is a figure to be exalted by God or else he was guilty of blaspheming God. Subsequent events are to help us determine which association properly belongs to Jesus.

On the third day, when God empties Jesus' tomb in resurrection, the vindication Jesus predicted took place. With it came a key indication of where Jesus had gone as a result of God's activity. He had gone to God's right hand, to share in God's presence, authority, and glory in heaven. The work of God in salvation became inseparable from the work of Jesus. This connection forms the background for the second passage we wish to consider, part of Peter's speech at Pentecost, and the apostle's appeal to Joel 2 and

the coming of God's Spirit. It is to this central early church proclamation that we now turn.

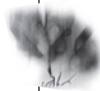
A Central Speech from the Early Church: Peter's Words at Pentecost in Acts 2

Acts 2 summarizes a speech by Peter. This address accompanied the pouring out of God's Spirit on those who had embraced the hope of Jesus and the inauguration of the new covenant brought about by Jesus' death (Acts 2:38–39; Luke 22:20). In fact what is present in this event is part of a key theological theme running through Luke-Acts.

This theme starts with John the Baptist. John called for eschatological renewal in Israel and the coming of God's apocalyptic deliverance in one who was yet to come. In Luke 3:15–16, John notes, amidst speculation that he might be the Christ, that he only baptizes with water. However there is one to come who will baptize with the Spirit and fire. This one is so great that even though John is a prophet of God, he as a prophet is not worthy to untie the thong of the coming one's sandal. The act of untying the thong of a sandal was an act no Jew who became a slave was to perform because, according to later Jewish tradition, it was seen as too demeaning a task to perform (*Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael Nezikin 1* on Exod 21:2).⁵ However, the difference between the office of eschatological prophet that John occupied and the office of the one to come was so great that such a demeaning task would have been an honor for John to perform. This already indicates that Jesus as the eschatological one to come has a place much greater than a prophet of Israel.

The next strand in the link is Jesus' post-resurrection command to his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the "promise" of the Father. This promise will cloth the disciples with power, enabling them to minister effectively on God's behalf (Luke 24:49). Jesus then echoes the remarks of John the Baptist about awaiting the promised baptism of the Spirit in Acts 1:3–5. All of this sets the context for Acts 2. After Peter's Acts 2 speech, the book of Acts again notes how central this event is in Acts 11:15–17, where Peter compares the coming of the Spirit on the family of Cornelius to the Pentecost event. This divine action functions as a sign proving that God accepts Gentiles alongside Jews in this new era of Jesus. In Acts 13:25, the early portion saying of John the Baptist appears again in Paul's speech at Pisidian Antioch. Here the allusion is to the one to come, with the next remark that is not cited being about the Spirit. Finally, in Acts 15:8–9, Peter alludes back to Pentecost in explaining the coming of the Spirit to Cornelius and clan. God has given them "the Holy Spirit just as he did to us." (v. 8, NET). The comparison to how the Spirit was given to us looks back to

5 Jacob Z. Luaterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (1933; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 2:358. The remark appears in a section discussing the six years one can serve. He should not wash the feet of his master, put shoes on him, carry things for him to a bathhouse, lift him by the hips as he goes up stairs, or carry him in a chair or sedan chair.



Pentecost in Acts 2 and pictures the cleansing of their hearts and acceptance into the eschatological program of God that surrounded Jesus (cf. Acts 11:15-17).

That is the context of Peter's remarks in Acts 2. The apostle is explaining the significance of the Spirit's coming for the program of God.⁶ He starts out citing Joel 2:28-32 (=3:1-5 MT). The promise is of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. Peter is proclaiming this text as initially fulfilled by what is taking place. But the key feature I wish to draw attention to comes at the end of the citation. In Acts 2:21, Peter notes that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Now any Jewish listener of Peter in this scene would immediately think that it is the God of Israel who is to be invoked here. After all, that is the point of the citation in the context of Joel – and it is God who delivers.

However, between making this call and finishing his speech Peter develops the imagery from Joel. He notes the hope of resurrection, appealing to Psalm 16. He then notes the promise made to David of a descendant to sit on the throne and share in rule (Psalm 132:11). Finally he appeals to the very important text, Psalm 110:1, the very text Jesus alluded to at his trial to make the point that Jesus is now seated with God at his right hand, sharing his presence and saving authority. In fact, in Acts 2:33 (NET), Peter says, "So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out both what you see and hear." Now there is something very Jewish about the way this

There is something very Jewish about the way this argument is made.

argument is made. It applies an ancient Jewish reading technique known as *Gezerah Shava*. In this technique, the reader of Scripture links two passages, or a passage and an event, together by terms they share. So in Joel 2:28 as cited in Acts 2:17, we have the idea of the Spirit

being poured out (*ekcheō*), and in Acts 2:33, we have the verb repeated in a different form to fit the syntax of the sentence that also speaks of the Spirit being poured out (*execheen*). So Peter by *Gezerah Shava* is combining the idea of Psalm 110:1 and Jesus' being seated at God's right hand with what he did when he got there, namely, to distribute the promised Spirit that had been announced as far back as John the Baptist. Salvation is being mediated through Jesus who shares God's presence, a place on his throne, and the execution of salvation.

Because of this sequence of connections, Peter is able to say in Acts 2:36 that God has shown Jesus to be Lord and Christ to Israel, in the same manner John announced in Luke 3 that the Messiah could be identified. In fact, Israel can know this is who Jesus is because of what God has done through Jesus. There is another, complicated *Gezerah Shava* here, as the term Lord (*kyrion*) appears in verse 36, invoking the presence of the second use of

⁶ This is another text I have discussed in detail in two places: *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 153-87; and *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 108-48.

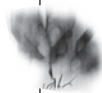
the term Lord from Psalm 110:1 in verse 34 (*kyriō*), and recalling verse 32 from Joel 2, where one is to call upon "the Lord" (*kyriou*).⁷ The significance of this becomes evident when Peter calls on the crowd to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins" in Acts 2:38. Salvation is now taking place in his name and authority, including the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is equated in his activity and responsibilities with the actions of the God of Israel. To invoke him as Lord and Christ is to invoke the authority of God. To call on Jesus' name as Lord is the same as calling on the God of Israel. As Jesus says in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one" (NET). What Jesus does in mediating the blessing of God's Spirit is to save and forgive, undertaking the prerogatives of God and showing divine authority from the very side of God in heaven. As such to call on him is to call on God. Thus, through the exposition of the speech, on reflection Peter is saying in Acts 2:21 that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved.

This teaching invoking the Lord Jesus is not unique to Peter. In Romans 10:9–13, Paul also appeals to Joel 2:32 (=3:5 MT). In verse 9, Paul treats the idea of confessing with one's lips that Jesus is Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead. At the end of this exposition in verse 13, he says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." *Gezerah Shava* tells us the Lord that Paul is referring to here is Jesus. Jesus is referred to in a text that originally invoked the God of Israel, and the substitution is entirely kosher because of what Jesus is doing, how God is working through Jesus, and the way the Scriptures are linked in a very Jewish manner.

One of the great difficulties in sharing Jesus in a Jewish context is explaining how Jesus can receive the unequivocal honor believers in Jesus give to him. The two scenes we have examined are a key explanation as to why and how that honor came to be so central to the emerging faith. Here we have Jesus at the hub of the execution of divine activity and authority, associated with both forgiveness and the establishing of a new covenant. Here the promised Spirit, the sign of the arrival of God's promise for his people, is shown to have arrived. Mediating all of this from God's side is Jesus, sharing in the divine presence, rule, and authority. Everything comes together in what God does through Jesus. Jesus even shares the title of Lord, and can be invoked for this salvation because it came through him. So Peter can speak of God and Jesus in one breath, even to the point of sharing a reference in passages that invoke God for salvation.

It is easy to see how crucial a text Acts 2 is for the question we have raised. I also have suggested that Paul and Peter agree on this point. However, there is one more passage to examine, because it appears in what was likely originally an early Christian hymn, showing what early Christians were singing in praise to God in the first century. It is to this hymn of praise that we now turn to show that Peter's view was not unique to him.

7 These are the same words. The forms differ because of the syntactical difference between an object and a genitive in Greek, which points to their syntactical role.



A Central Hymn from the Early Church – Philippians 2:5–11

Our final text is generally regarded as a hymn, sung by the early church and providing a summation of the career of Jesus. This hymn originates at a fairly early point in the theological development of the Jesus movement. What makes the text important is that it predates the letter in which it appears, Philippians, written from prison in about 62. So we are within three decades of the end of Jesus' ministry. As a hymn, it is likely older and reflects what communities were told about Jesus as they engaged in corporate praise for what God had done through Jesus. It is the crisp nature of the contrasts and the balance of the lines that cause people to see a hymn here. Here is the text:

⁶who although he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,
⁷but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of other men, and being found in form as a human.
⁸He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.
⁹Therefore God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth –
¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:6–11, author's translation)

There is much in the hymn that is debated. Is its key portrait rooted in a strong sense of the pre-existence of Jesus, as one sent from heaven, or is it rooted in imagery related to his being the second Adam, representative of humanity?⁸ Is the hymn present in the letter to make an ethical point about being like Jesus (because of the call to have a mind like that in Jesus Christ), or is it more directed at a presentation of who Jesus is? Might both those ideas be at work in Paul's letter? The career of Jesus is seen as a reverse parabola, which has him coming and sent from heaven, dipping down to take on humanity and death, and ascending again to greatness by receiving the name of Lord. All these are important questions about the passage that have led to no loss in the expression of opinions on one

8 The classic study of this text is from Ralph Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967). For a defense of Adam Christology being present here, see James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 114–21. Adam Christology roots the text in man made in God's image, from Genesis 1–3. We prefer the interpretation pointing to divine pre-existence, in part because grasping at or holding onto divinity does not make as much sense in a model that only sees this Adamic background in play. Our exposition assumes this larger christological backdrop, but the point I will make about the use of Isaiah works no matter which background is operating in the hymn.

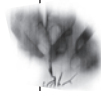
side or the other. In other words, the literature on this text is vast. But I am not interested in the hymn as a whole or in these specific debates that overview the career of Jesus. Our concern is how the hymn ends in verses 10–11.

The twin themes of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing have precedent in the Hebrew Scripture. Again, we need the full context to get the force of the point. In Isaiah 45:20–25, God is calling all to account for denying the Creator and choosing to engage in idolatry rather than give God the honor due to him. So he calls the nations to court and says this,

²⁰Gather together and come! Approach together, you refugees from the nations! Those who carry wooden idols know nothing, those who pray to a god that cannot deliver. ²¹Tell me! Present the evidence! Let them consult with one another! Who predicted this in the past? Who announced it beforehand? Was it not I, the LORD? I have no peer, there is no God but me, a God who vindicates and delivers; there is none but me. ²²Turn to me so you can be delivered, all you who live in the earth's remote regions! For I am God, and I have no peer. ²³I solemnly make this oath – what I say is true and reliable: "Surely every knee will bow to me, every tongue will solemnly affirm; ²⁴they will say about me, 'Yes, the LORD is a powerful deliverer.'" All who are angry at him will cower before him. ²⁵All the descendants of Israel will be vindicated by the LORD and will boast in him. (Isa 45:20–25 NET)

This text is one of the clearest declarations of God's uniqueness and sovereignty in the Hebrew Bible. God declares that allegiance will be uniquely his one day. There is no other God, nor is there any other savior or judge. The indication of this divine position is the fact that one day everyone will acknowledge this. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that God is the Lord and a powerful deliverer. The name given above every name is that which affirms the sovereignty of the Creator God over those whom he rules. There is no other place to go. There is no other one to whom to turn. One day all creation will know and affirm this. That is Isaiah's teaching.

Now Paul was a rabbi. He surely knows this background as he cites this hymn with its intentional allusion to Isaiah 45. In the hymn, the bowing of the knee and the confessing of the tongue include giving such honor to the Lord Jesus. His work of emptying and death is so in conjunction with the Father, and so rooted in a heavenly origin, that the honor due the God of Israel will come to be given to the one through whom God worked. Once again we see that substituting Jesus in the place of the God of Israel is kosher, justified by the calling and activity of Jesus at God's behest. Note how the hymn makes it clear that God is the one gifting Jesus with this name and role. Jesus does not act, nor does he claim to act, independently of the Father. But they are like a double helix in a piece of DNA, a package deal, operating as an inseparable team to deliver and save with a mighty hand stretched out, ironically, through the death of a frail human who



once had been in the presence of God and who afterward was vindicated back to that original position. To see and speak of one is inevitably to speak of and see the other.

It is this kind of identification that has always been at the core of the teaching of the early Jesus community. It is what led to the kind of technical philosophical articulation of the relationship between God and Jesus in later creeds. Those creeds seek to translate the kosher connections we have traced in our three passages, and to express them in terms of implications for the kind of person Jesus had to be in order to be in this role and share such glory without division from the Father. The result meant that God was affirmed as One, even though the divine also took on flesh (John 1:1-14).

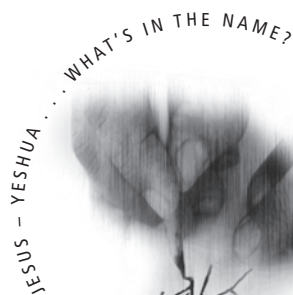
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Conclusion

We have traversed into great mysteries of the Jesus movement by examining one aspect of the use of the sacred Hebrew Scripture in the early years of this new, Jewishly rooted movement that came with Jesus. These Jewish believers did not just proclaim Jesus; they explained what they believed. They did so by appealing to a combination of the affirming actions of God and teaching from their Scripture. In linking Jesus, and substituting him in places where that Scripture had spoken of the God of Israel, they were expressing a core element of their faith. God had demonstrated to the world, both inside and outside Israel, who this Jesus was. John the Baptist pointed to it when he spoke of the coming of God's Spirit through Jesus. Jesus pointed to it when he predicted a vindication that expressed itself in a tomb emptied three days after a horrific death. The Jesus movement preached it when they substituted Jesus and proclaimed him as Lord in those very places where the uniqueness of God was being affirmed in their Scripture. It all reflected the very activity of Israel's own God, who also was affirmed as the Creator of all life. This God was the Savior of that same precious world. The story of that deliverance came through an invitation to enter into life God extended through Jesus and pictured in him. Delivering the message this way was explanatory and clarifying. It disclosed the mystery of how God had made the choice and taken the action to work through Jesus, to present Jesus from the earth up to heaven. Through this means one could begin to grasp Jesus' own uniqueness: a one of a kind person, bringing God's promised kingdom as God's uniquely anointed deliverer, the Messiah of Israel who also could fully represent God. And, best of all in their view, it was all completely kosher.

Christological Observations within Yeshua Judaism*



by Gershon Nerel

In the following discussion of several Christological questions, I use the Hebrew Masoretic text of the Old Testament and the *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament, alongside some historical creeds. Hopefully this will stimulate further studies on Messiahology/Christology, yet without provoking a Crusader/Inquisition/heresy-hunt atmosphere.

Why Discern between *God the Father* and *Yeshua the Son of God*?

In Roman Catholic theology, *Mary* is called the “Mother of God” (*theotokos*), because in Catholicism Yeshua is defined as God. But in the New Testament, Yeshua is always referred to as the *Son of (the) God* (e.g., Matt 4:3; Mark 1:1; Luke 4:41; John 20:31; Acts 8:37; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Heb 4:14; Rev 2:18). In the Pauline Epistles, for example, the apostle always distinguishes between Yeshua the Messiah, the Lord – the Son of God – and the Father as (the) God (e.g. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2).

In the New Testament, we read that the Father in heaven is above everything, as is obvious, for example, in the Lord’s Prayer. According to this model prayer, Messiah Yeshua commanded his disciples to pray to the Father in heaven (Matt 6:9); in principle, prayers should be addressed to the Father, not to the Son, although occasionally one may also pray to the Son. Yet as a matter of routine, prayers should be addressed to the Father through the Son, in whose name his disciples should pray to the Father, so that “the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).¹ And, there also exists the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2) that descends upon the disciples, the Spirit which flows both from the Father and from the Son (Luke 11:13; John 14:26; 15:26).² Apparently there is a consensus among contemporary Jewish disciples of Yeshua (JDY) that the procession of the

* I am thankful to David and Eliyahu Bar David of the Messianic Congregation at Yad Hashmona, Israel, for their thoughtful reflections during Bible studies. Also I am grateful to Richard Harvey for sharing theological insights.

1 Adolph Saphir, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Heb. trans. Maya Rechnitzer; Jerusalem: 2005), 7–15; 267–68.

2 The Latin word *filioque* (“and the Son”) denotes the dogma concerning the Spirit flowing

Holy Spirit is from both the Father and the Son, so there is no need to repeat the arguments of the ancient *filioque* debate.³

Within the divine order of the Godhead there is a “pragmatic succession” of the Holy Spirit through the Father-Son “operative relationship.” In the differing roles in the Godhead, the Father is never visible, as human beings cannot see him, while the Son manifests himself and mortals are able to see him with their human eyes.⁴ This “working differentiation” actually shapes the unique functions of the Father and the Son. Addressing prayers importantly exemplifies the relation between the Son and the Father, as it will be discussed further on.

It should be underlined that according to the Gospels there is an obvious “direction” in that the Father never prays to the Son – it is just the opposite, as the Son is the one who always prays to his Father. Within the Godhead there exists a hierarchical relationship between Father and Son, Son and Father. The Father is continually in the head of this holy rank, above the Son and the Spirit – yet still without downgrading the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Therefore Yeshua himself explained that his Father had sent him to this world, and that he as the Son was fully willing to execute the Father’s plan in one holy unity (John 5:36–38; 6:38–40). There is perfect interaction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, based upon a special position and function for each person within the Godhead.

Inside this holy yet hierarchical relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, there is a divine “mapping,” in which each and every one of the three persons of the Godhead has a specific role. Thus, for example, we cannot and should not just say that “God was crucified and shed his blood on Golgotha,” or that “God was killed in Jerusalem,” because it was actually the *Son of God* that came down to this sinful earth, whereas the Father always remained in heaven. It was “only” Yeshua who was hanged on the cross, while his Father always dwelled in a celestial locale, from which he accepted his Son’s prayer: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). It is significant to use terminology in the most transparent way.

The “Only Begotten Son of the Father”

Messiah Yeshua taught that no one has ever seen the Father at any time, but “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him” (John 1:18). Hence, it was the role of the divine Son to perform the visible communications between the Father and human beings. Consequently, for example, from the book of Genesis it is also understandable

from both Father and Son (*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., s.v. “*Filioque*”).

3 “*Filioque* Clause,” Theopedia, www.theopedia.com/Filioque_clause [accessed January 8, 2009].

4 Asher Intrater, “The Corporeal Revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures,” *Zot Habrit* [“This is the Covenant”; journal of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel] 6 (2007): 36–38.

that Yeshua was among the “three men” – YHWH himself, even before his incarnation – who appeared to Abraham sitting in the entrance to the tent (Gen 18:1–14). Later he struggled physically with the patriarch Ya’akov/Jacob (Gen 32:29–30). It was also Yeshua (*Mal’ach YHWH* – Angel of YHWH) who spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exod 3:1–7). I also believe that Yeshua was the one who spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him the Ten Commandments (Exod 19:20–24).

While Yeshua already existed in heaven before his incarnation in Bethlehem, he occasionally came down to this earth in the image of a man in order to communicate with believers. Eusebius (AD 260–339), bishop of Caesarea and author of the *Ecclesiastical History*, wrote about such appearances of the Son on earth before his embodiment through Mary.⁵ Regardless, in all cases that Yeshua faced people before and after the incarnation, he did it in full cooperation with the Father, as he said: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

It should be noted that Eusebius already shared the view of the early pre-Augustinian church that “God’s appearances to men,” mentioned in the Old Testament, were *de facto* the appearances of Messiah (*Christos*) Yeshua himself. However, it was St. Augustine of North Africa (AD 354–430) who was the first among the church fathers to introduce a different view. According to Augustine, the Son-Messiah could not have appeared to humans because the Father and the Son are of one and the same divine substance. Therefore the Augustinian view, which still prevails in the Catholic Church today, is that the *Logos* (“Word” – Yeshua) did not appear to men in Old Testament times, but that rather it must have been “just” an angel.⁶

Because Yeshua did exist alongside the Father even before the creation of the world (John 1:1), his existence for sure did not start when he was born in a manger. But still, textually and contextually, there remain some questions to be asked, as follows: What does it really mean that Yeshua is “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14)? And, when or how was he begotten? Or, if he existed with no beginning at all, why was he begotten? Or, why not use synonyms for “begotten,” such as generated, originated, or even the verb “created”? Why accept the term “begotten,” yet fear its synonym “created”? What does “begetting” really signify?

Psalm 2:7 provides the “key” for orientation, as follows: “The Lord has said to me, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” When the Father talks to his Son, it is made clear that the Son was begotten or “made” by the Father. How to understand this? The focal point is that the Father did not, and would not, beget the Son out of nothing, *ex-nihilio*. Moreover, the Son was not begotten from any created matter or spirit, but from the very essence or substance of the Father himself. In other words, the Father

5 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 1, chapters 2, 4; Eusebius, *History of the Church*, Heb. trans. Rimona Frank (Jerusalem: Caspari Center/Akademion Press, 2001), 3–4; 12.

6 Eusebius, *History of the Church* (Hebrew), 4, note 3.



somehow supernaturally took part of himself, his own spirit and/or essence, and divinely begat his Son Yeshua. When did this mystery of divine “procreation” happen?

I accept the explanation of the late Haim Haimoff/Bar David (1905–91),⁷ that the Son was indeed begotten by his divine Father. When Yeshua affirmed that he was “the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16–17), he also confirmed that as the Son of God he had full divinity, just as the son of a man is a man, or the offspring of an animal is an animal.⁸ Yeshua testified to the truth of the words in Psalm 2:7, but surely this unique “begetting” happened outside of time or before time even existed.

Thus, the “goings forth” of the Son, the divine ruler from Bethlehem as the prophet Micah called him, are “from of old, from everlasting” (Mic 5:2). From this perspective, the Son was begotten/created by the Father, from the Father, from infinity; i.e., Yeshua is the “Beginning of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14). Such a state of timelessness is beyond human understanding, because humans normally think within chronological limitations. Mortals are bound to the movement of time and the cycles of calendars. Yeshua’s begetting is a great mystery.

Yet it is not unreasonable that Yeshua was begotten divinely “somewhere” in eternity. Eternity is understood as being dateless or ageless. The fact that the Father had begotten the Son does not bring into question Yeshua’s timelessness, nor undermine his full divinity. The Son is the only one sitting at the right side of the Father’s throne in heaven (Mark 14:62; Rev 5:1). He was always divine, and he is and remains entirely divine – God from God, as in his prayer Yeshua also stated that he and the Father are one (John 17:11).

It is surprising, however, that not all versions and translations of the New Testament contain the words “only begotten Son” of the Father. Various texts simply omit the term “begotten.” Thus, while in the *textus receptus* of the classical King James Version one finds the words “only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14), and “only begotten Son” (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9), in the critical texts of other versions the term “begotten” was removed. Such editions or paraphrases include the *Living Bible* (“the only Son of the heavenly Father”); the *Phillip Modern English* (“a father’s only son”); the *Revised Standard Version* (“only Son from the Father”); the *Today’s English Version* (“the Father’s only Son”); the *New International Version* (“one and only [Son] who came from the Father”);⁹ the *Jerusalem Bible* (“only Son of the Father”); and the *New English Bible* (“the Father’s only Son”).¹⁰

What do these textual omissions and dissimilarities mean? The different

7 Gershon Nerel, “Haim (Haimoff) Bar David: Restoring Apostolic Authority among Jewish Yeshua-Believers,” *Mishkan* 37 (2002): 59–78.

8 H. Ben Joseph (Haimoff’s pseudonym), *Does God Have a Son – What Says the Old Testament?* (Jerusalem: Living Waters Printing Press, 1937), 3. Hebrew title: *Ha’oumnam Yesh Ben Le’Elohim?*

9 A footnote in the *New International Version* mentions after “only [Son]” the following: “Or the Only Begotten.” Yet the main text omits the term “begotten.”

10 *Eight Translation New Testament* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1977).

passages of Scripture *a priori* present different theological interpretations, which suit the outlook of the selectors of a specific manuscript. Upon the text which each and every person chooses is built his/her personal theological beliefs. This situation suits the saying, "Show me your biblical version/translation, and I will predict your theology."

"Yeshua Is Human in the Full Sense of the Word"

On June 7, 2002, a gathering of Israeli Messianic elders (*Kenes Artzi* – National Leaders Forum) took place at Beth Asaf Congregation in Netanya, near Tel Aviv, to discuss the issue of Yeshua's divinity/deity.¹¹ About fifty participants attended from all over the country.¹² Following the discussion, a pre-printed draft "creed" was presented, and the attendants were asked to sign it. This one-page "Principles of Faith of the Conference" was intended to be a declaration concerning the unity of God and Messiah's divinity, focusing only on one paragraph: "God." The Hebrew text was translated into English, Russian, and Amharic, as follows:

God: "The Lord our God, the Lord is One." The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the only God and Creator. There is no other besides Him and all the divine attributes are His alone. His unique unity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Each of them eternal and divine in the perfection and fullness of deity. The Son, our Messiah, who was born without sin by the Holy Spirit to the virgin Miriam, is also human in the full sense of the term.

This paragraph is actually the second item in a broader creed that holds six chapters dealing with the following topics: 1) Sacred Scripture; 2) God; 3) Man and Sin; 4) Atonement and Salvation; 5) God's People; and 6) Eschatology. Initially, this text was drafted by the organizers of *Kenes Artzi* in 1989-90, and was proposed for approval by the same forum as guidelines for an accepted doctrinal platform. However, this text did not become the formal credo of Israeli believers in Yeshua. Still, the draft was attached to an invitation promulgated on the Messianic Congregational Leadership Network (MCLN) to another meeting in September 2008, near Tel-Aviv.

However, while nowadays few Israeli JDY question Yeshua's divinity, some of them still examine the issue of his so-called humanity. As the topic of Messiah's divinity has become by now almost a non-issue,¹³ there remains the question of how to explain the "doctrinal" statement which says: "[He] is also human in the full sense of the term."

It sounds paradoxical to state that "the Messiah was born without sin by the Holy Spirit," and at the very same time to add that "Yeshua is also

11 The gathering discussed opposing views of twelve Israeli JDY about Yeshua's divinity: "Messianic Jews Debate the Deity of Jesus," *Israel Today* 22 (2001): 21.

12 List of participants in my archive.

13 Gershon Nerel, "Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and the Modern Yeshua-Movement," *Mishkan* 39 (2003): 80-82.



human in the full sense of the term.” Human identity means, *de facto*, to be sinful, errant, biased, etc. A human being born to a worldly father and a worldly mother automatically inherits sin and wickedness, which are part and parcel of human nature and substance (Gen 6:5). By definition, “Human in the full sense of the term” cannot be sinless. Can holy divinity contain humanity, which cannot but be sinful? The clarification of this issue should provide a broader explanation that Yeshua did *not* have an average or ordinary human body, but he always remained holy, just, perfect, and pure – namely, divine. In a mysterious way, he “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), but his holy body, which was uniquely real flesh and real blood, was not subject to human imperfection such as obsession, corruption, or natural decay.

One must truthfully admit that according to the New Testament, Yeshua was born as a flesh and blood baby. He was even circumcised. This was a unique, one-time incarnation of God’s Son, with indisputable “human” characteristics such as thirst (John 19:28), hunger (Matt 4:2), anger (John 2:15–16), sadness (Matt 26:37), fatigue (John 4:6), and weeping (John 11:35). But at the same time, one should also not forget to ask: Could he, with his sacrosanct embodiment, also share human weaknesses – certain mundane shortcomings which are not sins, such as limited knowledge, limited memory, and limited strength? Or, could he “just” become sick or simply die of frailty or old age? If he had a human body in the full sense of the word, in the *fullness* of the term, could he have died of lack of food or lack of drink?

No doubt Yeshua had a body of flesh and blood – a physical body that looked and functioned like a human body, but he never lost his divinity in this outward “body.” In his “humanity,” Yeshua “shared” in the flesh and blood of normal people (Heb 2:14), yet this was not at the expense of his divinity. Thus, for example, if Yeshua had wanted, he could have ordered legions of heavenly angels to come and rescue him from the *Via Dolorosa* and the crucifixion (Matt 26:53). But as the Son of God who “wore flesh and blood” (Heb 2:14),¹⁴ he chose to suffer with a humility that human beings cannot even grasp.

Moreover, his death on the cross was not just the death of a feeble and vulnerable human being, because then, actually, his disciples would have all been idol worshippers who bow before flesh and blood. No one should bow before a human person, not even before an angel, but only before God (Rev 22:9). For sure, after his body was taken down from the cross, it did not become an impure corpse as normally happens with a dead human body. According to the Torah, a human corpse automatically brings defilement: “He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days” (Num 19:11). In Jewish tradition the corpse is defined as *avi avot hatum’a*, which means the ultimate source of impurity,¹⁵ but can any

14 Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament.

15 “Kohanim Visiting Cemeteries,” Darché Noam, http://www.darchenoam.org/articles/web/q-a/ar_qa_tumatmet.htm [accessed January 8, 2009].

person think that Yeshua's crucified body became impure?

Because of his divinity, with his divine power Yeshua was able to raise himself from the dead – following his earlier statement, “I lay down my life that I may take it again” (John 10:17–18). In other words, the Son had the full divine power to resurrect himself after he “breathed his last” (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46).

The New Testament does not teach that Yeshua was just like any other mortal creature, because only he could know the thoughts of others (Matt 9:4; 12:25; Luke 5:22; 11:17), and only he could forgive sin (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:5). Although incarnate, he could never lose his divinity. By all means his “humanity” did not, and could not, reduce or detract from his divinity. He was always divine, even while he shared human attributes and acted and looked like a man.

The two concepts, “fully divine” and “human in the full sense of the term,” as it was suggested by the Draft Creed, should be explained and understood very carefully. This issue can be exemplified by the following question: When on earth, was Yeshua's blood absolutely the same as the blood of any mortal, “composed, like our blood, of red cells, white platelets and plasma,” as for example Baruch Maoz phrased it?¹⁶ But one should apprehend the nature of the incarnate Messiah through different terminology, because Yeshua's blood could not have had the potential to carry maladies or pathological conditions of body or mind.

Indeed, the Son of God did become man in a supernatural way, physically and concretely, but in a doctrinal context it is not enough to say very briefly that he was sinless. “Sinless” appears as the opposite of “human in the full sense,” but Yeshua's sinless-ness must be explained in more than that one word. Maoz stated that Yeshua “was subject to the Torah, it was forbidden for him to steal, lie, profane God's name, covet and commit adultery, profane the Shabbat or bow before false gods, and he needed to worship God alone.”¹⁷ Yet Yeshua was *above* the Torah (!), because he is the one that had formulated it and given it to Moses. Did Yeshua need to be reminded to keep the Torah which he himself planned and coined?!

Moreover, Yeshua had the full divine authority – as he had declared, “But I say to you” – to change the Torah, as he did indeed in his Sermon on the Mount, for example, when he forbade divorce which was permitted according to the Torah (Matt 5:31–32), and commanded not to swear at all (Matt 5:33–37). Furthermore, even with his “human nature,” Yeshua could not have committed sin or acted against his own divine nature. He knew exactly what to do even without the written Torah, so he did not need the Pentateuch in order to be instructed in each and every thought and deed, as he testified about himself being “*the door*” (John 10:7) and “*the way*” in everything: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Therefore, a clearer and broader understanding is needed in order to

¹⁶ Baruch Maoz, “The Nature of the Messiah,” *Zot Habrit* 6 (2007): 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



emphasize that any teaching on Yeshua's "humanity" should neither present an ordinary human nor underestimate his divinity. Instead of the expression "human in the full sense of the term and without sin," I would suggest the following terminological replacement: "Yeshua, incarnated miraculously by the Holy Spirit as true flesh and blood through Miriam, never shared inherited human limitations and/or a sinful nature." Yeshua the holy Son of God became man and acted as a man in a very unique manner, but this Christological enigma will be deciphered only in heaven.

Was Yeshua Literally the *Son of David*?

"Ben David," i.e. Son of David, is the title of a small booklet of the Gospel of Matthew published in contemporary Hebrew.¹⁸ The immediate impression it gives is of dealing with the Jewish Messiah, because *Ben David*, according to Jewish tradition, is the Messiah, a descendant of David and Jesse his father. But because of this context, one should ask: Was Yeshua really the Son of David in the sense that he physically belonged to a mundane line of Jewish royalty with Davidic "blue blood"?

It is true indeed that the Old Testament prophecies anticipate the Messiah as the "Rod from the stem of Jesse" (Isa 11:1), referring to him as the "Branch of righteousness" who is raised to David (Jer 23:5), who will sit "upon the throne of David and over his kingdom" (Isa 9:7). This "Davidic Kingdom" is already foreseen in the initial messianic promise given to David himself, that his seed shall reign forever (2 Sam 7:13–16). But the notion of "David's Kingdom" can also be understood differently, as a synonym for a kingdom of a divine ruler, not a kingdom under a mundane dynasty. In other words, the sacred kingdom headed by Yeshua is linked only indirectly to Davidic ancestry because Joseph, Miriam's husband, was from the house of David (Luke 1:27), but in fact the beginning and the end of Yeshua's divine kingdom are outside of this world, not physically dependent on Davidic parentage.

So how should we understand the opening words of the Gospel of Matthew, which declare: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, Son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1)? The Davidic line in Matthew's genealogy is also connected to the Abrahamic lineage, providing the general comprehension that the "seed" of the Messiah was fully Hebraic and Jewish, namely not strange to Israel. Additionally, Luke also writes that Yeshua's contemporaries considered him to be the son of Joseph, Mary's husband, and in this human line the carnal descendant of Adam (Luke 3:23–38). Yet we clearly know that from a human/mortal point of view Yeshua was *not* the son of Joseph. He was born miraculously through the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18).¹⁹ For this reason, the opening words of Mark declare: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

¹⁸ *Ben David – Habsora al-pi Mattai*, new trans. (Jerusalem: Bible Society Israel, 2007).

¹⁹ Cf. Serge Ruzer, "Son of God as Son of David: Luke's Attempt to Bilibicize a Problematic Notion," *Babel und Bibel 3, Orientalia et Classica* 14 (2007): 341–47.

Furthermore, in his message to Mary, the angel Gabriel tells her not merely that the son who would be born from her shall be called “Son of the Highest,” but also that the Lord God “will give him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32). So, then, is David Yeshua’s father? Is Yeshua the “Son of David”? Or in other words, did Yeshua physically descend from David’s family?

The primary answer to that comes from the words of Yeshua himself. During a meeting in the Jerusalem temple between Yeshua and the Pharisees and scribes, he raised the following question: “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They answered him and said, “The son of David.” But Yeshua continued and asked them, “How then does David in the Spirit call him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool?’” [Ps 110:1]. Further on, Yeshua asked, “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is he his son?” However, no one was able to answer Yeshua a word (Matt 22:41–42; Mark 12:35–37). By this examination, Yeshua challenged the rabbinic authorities of his time, but they remained speechless. They did not know how to explain the belief, already common in those days, that the Messiah would be the Son of David.

Because the Messiah is David’s Lord (Ps 110:1), David cannot really be his father. *De facto*, then, Yeshua was not the physical descendant of King David and his dynasty. Consequently, one should grasp not only the concept “Throne of David” (Luke 1:32), but also the concepts “Key of David” (Rev 3:7) and “Root of David” (Rev 5:5), as metaphors representing the divine and holy authority of King Messiah Yeshua, the foundation of the real “Davidic Kingdom.” Namely, the expressions “Kingdom of David” or “Seed of David” are basically figurative images or illustrations for Messiah’s everlasting dominion and sovereignty starting from Israel. In other words, the idioms “Seed of David” (John 7:42), “Key of David,” and even “Lion of Judah” (Rev 5:5) speak metaphorically about a divine king on earth – Messiah Yeshua’s kingdom, focusing around the territory of King David and David’s specific people, the Jews.

However, Yeshua’s kingdom is not limited by human and physical confinements as was David’s realm. Thus the kingly language in Scripture about Messiah’s Davidic linkage is mainly a parlance that parallels other biblical phrases which underscore the unique kingly authority of the Messiah, such as “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8) or “I am the First and the Last” (Rev 1:17). Even today, Jews sing the song “David King of Israel” (*David Melekh Yisra’el*) and dance while shouting these same words. Since David and his dynasty symbolize the sovereignty of the Jewish kingship, his name became synonymous for the powerful Messiah, Son of God, who also holds in his hands “the keys of Hades and of death” (Rev 1:18).

Conclusively, then, how can one still grasp Yeshua’s connection to the Davidic succession? The answer lies not in the direct, personal, and physical ancestry of a family tree, but rather in pointing generally to a royal status, with no less regal authority than David himself – but which is in fact a supreme divine sovereignty. Namely, because the generations in the



early centuries could not fully comprehend Yeshua's divinity, at least they were able to grasp that Messiah's royalty stemmed from regal connections with David, Israel's "model king."²⁰ No doubt in Yeshua's time, the Jewish people expected the restoration of David's kingdom: "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11:10). So the New Testament linkage between Yeshua and the messianic promises attached to David was a unique tool to easily introduce Yeshua to the generation that saw and heard him on earth.

Therefore, because Joseph was "of the house of David" (Luke 1:27) and of the "lineage of David" (Luke 2:4), Yeshua was "born" into a royal Davidic family. But actually Yeshua was "born" into it, not from it. His deity and divine sovereignty were neither comparable nor parallel to those of the fleshly Davidic royalty. Just as Yeshua was the Lord of David, he was also "greater than Solomon" (Luke 11:31), and thus he was *de facto* Solomon's Lord (Matt 12:42), not vice versa.

The Chalcedonian Creed

The first ecumenical synod which took place in AD 325 in Nicaea determined that the Son of God, or the *Logos*, was truly God. At the fourth ecumenical council, held in AD 451 in the city of Chalcedon, it was declared that Yeshua was fully man. Today the same question is raised: Is the Messiah both 100% God and 100% human?

The relevant part of the definition of Chalcedon states:

We . . . confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This self-same one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this self-same one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul [*psyches logikes*] and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are ourselves as far as his human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began [*pro aionen*] he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and on behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer [*theotokos*] in respect of his human-ness [*anthropoteta*].²¹

The Chalcedonian phraseology about Yeshua's divinity and humanity is quite labyrinthine. It continues:

We apprehend this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only-begotten-in two natures [*duo physessin*] . . . without confusing the two natures

20 Cf. Serge Ruzer, "Who Is Unhappy with the Davidic Messiah? Notes on Biblical Exegesis in 4Q161, 4Q174, and the Book of Acts," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 24, 2 (2003): 229–55.

21 John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: John Knox, 1982), 35–36.

[*asunkutos*], without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the “properties” of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one “person” [*prosopon*] and in one *hypostasis*. They are not divided or cut into two *prosopa*, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.²²

So, was Yeshua begotten in heaven in two natures? Actually the Chalcedonian Creed goes a step beyond Scripture, saying that the Son was dually begotten in heaven – both in full divinity and in full humanity. Namely, that in eternity the Father made the Son equally divine and human, and his physical body which was on earth also resides now near the throne of grace. Interestingly, however, the Chalcedonian definition does not bring any scriptural verses to support this interpretation.

According to plain Scripture, Yeshua was miraculously born as a baby in Bethlehem with a unique physical body. However, one should also ask whether this earthly body was necessarily the same exact body of the resurrected Messiah who told Mary Magdalene: “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). This resurrected body could be an incomparable transformed body. In other words, from reading the text one may understand that the incarnated Son who became a baby eventually returned to heaven not with a human physical body, but that in his ascension there was a mysterious metamorphosis, perhaps the same as during the transfiguration of Yeshua on the mountain as reported in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:29).

Probably the main reason the Roman Catholic Church embraced and still affirms the Chalcedonian definition is because of its Marian dogma. The heavy Catholic emphasis on the veneration of the Virgin Mary is largely based upon the unification of Yeshua’s divine and human natures. Since these two substances are believed to be one, as the Catholic credo claims, Mary deserves to be called and worshiped as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*). But if these two essences, i.e. the divine and the human, are distinct one from the other and their consolidation in Yeshua is just “moral” or symbolic, then Mary is only the Mother of Christ (*Christotokos*).²³ Therefore Yeshua’s “humanity” according to Catholic doctrine is essential for Mary’s exalted position in the history of salvation. It seems that Catholic Mariology fueled the great emphasis which was put upon Yeshua’s “eternal humanity.”

Summary

While the term *trinity* (Greek *trias*; Latin *trinitas*) is not biblical, it is deeply

²² Ibid., 36.

²³ David Flusser and H. Vardi, “Christianity, Doctrine,” *Encyclopaedia Hebraica* 25:339–40.



rooted in the historic creeds of the churches.²⁴ Today the question is about the content and conception of "Trinity" beyond the technical word pointing to a triune God. In this paper I raised the themes of functionality and hierarchy within the Godhead between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share the same divine quality or essence, they also allocate specific "position" and functionality within the holy operative relationship among them.

There is a clear differentiation of respective position and function within the one holy Godhead. My preliminary discussion attempts to highlight the vertical or hierarchic relationship between the Father and the Son. There is a perfect/holy "functional differentiation" between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which also reflects a functional holy hierarchy.²⁵

While contemporary Jewish Yeshua disciples fully embrace the canonical Old and New Testaments,²⁶ they do not accept automatically or "blindly" the dogmatic creeds of the historic churches. Particularly in Israel, where theologizing is done in Hebrew, JDY feel the responsibility to review the historic creeds and not just to adopt or translate them verbatim.²⁷ Likewise JDY do not accept unthinkingly the synagogue traditions and definitions.

Nowadays, JDY have not only the privilege but also the duty to re-evaluate "irrefutable" theological formulas and historic practices which prevail within both Christendom and Jewry.²⁸ JDY should not only believe according to traditional slogans, but rather ought to analyze each and every theological topic from their unique Hebraic position, without allowing Gentilization of the Jews or Judaization of the Gentiles.

Christological issues need to be discussed and understood even before ecclesiological matters. Only with an unclouded Christology that is anchored in biblical-Hebraic roots can one also frame a proper ecclesiology (*ekklesia*) of both Jews and non-Jews. A "bilateral ecclesia,"²⁹ made up of two distinct but united communal entities of JDY/Israel and the nations, can exist and share a mature testimony only with a clear Christology.

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Gershon Nerel (Ph.D., Hebrew University), along with his wife, Sara, revised the Delitzsch Hebrew translation of the New Testament (Negev Version, Beer Sheva, 2003).

24 W. A. Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1970).

25 Cf. also Aryeh Kofsky and Serge Ruzer, "Logos, Holy Spirit and Messiah: Aspects of Aphrahat's Theology Reconsidered," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 73 (2007): 347-78.

26 Gershon Nerel, "The Authoritative Bible and Jewish Believers," *Messianic Jewish Life* 73, 4 (2000): 16-19, 30.

27 "Statement of Faith," Brit Ahm Messianic Synagogue, <http://www.britahmnessianic.org/statementoffaith.html> [accessed January 8, 2009]; "Our Faith," Adat Yeshua Messianic Synagogue, http://www.ubmjc.org/adat_yeshua/pages/stmt_of_faith.html [accessed January 8, 2009]; "Foundations of Faith," Yeshua (Hebrew), <http://www.yeshua.co.il/library/libitem.asp?libitemid=22&chapterid=284> [accessed January 8, 2009].

28 Gershon Nerel, "Creeds among Jewish Believers in Yeshua," *Mishkan* 34 (2001): 61-79.

29 Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 5; Richard Harvey, "Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wales, 2007), 123.



Blessed and a Blessing

- *The Messianic Movement Today and Tomorrow*

by **Mike Moore**

The Messianic movement is, as David Rausch observes, a spectrum at one end of which are “church-acculturated” Hebrew Christians and at the other end Messianic Jews “maintaining traditional practice in either attending a Messianic congregation and/or a regular synagogue.”¹ Any attempt, therefore, to identify the challenges and opportunities facing the movement must of necessity be broad, general and, to a degree, personal.

In the three decades that the modern Messianic movement has existed, its worldwide growth has been little short of phenomenal. The existence of Messianic Jews has generated a greater awareness of the Jewishness of Christianity and of latent (if not patent) anti-Jewish attitudes within the church. While church opinion is divided about the Messianic movement, the Jewish world, especially the religiously orthodox, perceives the movement as a contributing factor to the diminution of the community. But, like it or not, the Messianic movement exists – warts and all – and Gentile believers must choose whether to help their Jewish brothers and sisters to grow in the faith or whether to stand on the sidelines and carp. The present writer favors the first option and sees three challenges that Messianic Jews must face if the movement is to flourish and grow.

Challenge 1: An Authentic Theology

The Messianic movement believes itself to have been raised up by God for a great purpose. But if the movement is to achieve what it believes to be its God-ordained destiny and not fossilize into a historic curiosity, it must develop a robust, biblically-rooted, Messiah-centered theology that will edify not only the movement itself but also the worldwide body of Messiah consisting of Jews and Gentiles.

The first great wave of missionary activity among the Jewish people in the nineteenth century produced scholars of the caliber of Alfred Edersheim,

¹ David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology, and Polity* (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), cited in David Brickner, “What about Jews for Jesus and Messianic Congregations?” http://jewsforjesus.org/publications/havurah/mm93_10/congregations [accessed March 25, 2009].

Adolph Saphir, David Baron, Joseph Samuel Frey, and Ridley Herschell, men whose writings are still highly valued. Indeed, Edersheim's magnum opus, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, is to be found in the libraries of many Christian ministers today.

That is not to suggest that the movement has no theological minds. Notwithstanding the existence of significant Messianic thinkers such as Richard Harvey, Dan Juster, Mark Kinzer, and David Stern, the movement has understandably been concerned largely with defending itself, developing patterns of liturgy for Messianic congregations, and demonstrating the Jewish roots of the faith. Worryingly, however, some Messianic voices express a deep distrust of orthodox Christian theology and argue that rabbinic sources constitute a more reliable guide to understanding biblical

truth than "the Christian creeds written by people who hated us and hated the Torah of God."²

Oskar Skarsaune, however, has shown that in the period up to AD 150, "Jewish believers were the leading theologians of the church, and the Gentiles had mostly learned their theology from Jewish tutors,

either by reading their writings (Ignatius reading the New Testament) or by copying their Old Testament expositions (Barnabas)."³

Messianic believers have to come to terms with the fact that although the Gentile church has a history of "boasting against the natural branches," it has nevertheless produced a rich body of theology expressed in its great confessions of faith. Messianic leader Dan Juster acknowledges that Messianic Jews "can learn from the whole Body [of Messiah] as we hopefully enrich it as well."⁴

That is not to say that early Christian theology was wholly untainted by Greek thought. Would the fourth century Arian controversy, for example, have occurred if the church had continued to think "Jewishly"? In answering the heretical presbyter of Alexandria, the Council of Nicea (at which, it should be noted, there was not a single Jerusalem bishop present) defined the relationship of the Son to the Father in abstruse philosophical categories rather than in exclusively biblical terms. Although the Nicene Creed has served as a useful and substantially correct statement of faith for sixteen hundred years, future Messianic scholars might be able to refine and improve some of its clauses without dismissing it entirely. Indeed, some orthodox scholars, including Calvinist professor of philosophy Paul Helm, question the biblical accuracy of the Nicene terminology.

There are of course helpful insights to be found in the rabbis, but Mes-

Some Messianic voices . . . argue that rabbinic sources constitute a more reliable guide to understanding biblical truth.

2 Cited in Baruch Maoz, *Judaism Is not Jewish* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2003), 254.

3 Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002), 223.

4 Daniel Juster, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism* (Pacifi Palisades: Davar, 1986), 249.

sianic scholars who look to them for guidance in matters of theology should bear in mind that the sages were themselves influenced by Gentile thought. Skarsaune devotes the first chapter of *In the Shadow of the Temple* to revealing the influence of Hellenism on Judaism, while Rabbi Michael Hilton has demonstrated that historically, "Judaism often developed and changed in response to Christianity."⁵

The challenge for the Messianic movement is to once again produce the leading theologians in the church.

Challenge 2: Within the Pale

The great bone of contention between classic Hebrew Christianity and contemporary Messianic Judaism has been the emphasis on Jewishness and Judaism. Many of the old Hebrew Christians had been disowned by their families and ostracized by their communities. They were Jewish but, like the believers to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed, they had chosen to go to Jesus "outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Heb 13:13).

Messianic Jews, on the other hand, have fought strenuously to stay "inside the camp" and earn acceptance from their "kinsmen according to the flesh." However, with the notable exceptions of Dan Cohn-Sherbok⁶ and Carol Harris-Shapiro,⁷ few leaders in the Jewish community are prepared to countenance the existence of Messianic believers in their midst. Thus far most attempts to gain acceptance from the community have centered around continued Torah observance and, in extreme cases, the denial of all links to traditional Christianity.

I wish to present case studies of two young men, Colin and Ian (not their real names), one of them a second-generation Messianic Jew, who have faced the challenge of seeking acceptance within the community. Both are convinced that without first gaining recognition and trust they will have no positive spiritual effect on the community.

Colin is a professional whose Jewish friends regard Jews who believe in Yeshua as "weak, vulnerable, brainwashed" and/or "irritating pamphleteers." In an attempt to escape the stereotype he signed up for Ulpan and began to attend Israeli film nights, Israel events, and young adult groups. He did not identify himself as a believer, so when he encountered a Jewish acquaintance at a local Christian event she became curious about his connections with the group – but because she had already formed a positive image of him, she did not react negatively when Colin explained that he was a Messianic Jew. Indeed, she trusted him enough to give him the responsibility of gathering together email addresses after a BICOM (Britain, Israel Communications & Research Centre) event and was later seen talking

5 Michael Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 2.

6 See Dan Cohn Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London: Continuum, 2000).

7 See Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey through Religious Change in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).



to another Jewish believer without any apparent embarrassment.

When Colin's trade union repeatedly sought to implement boycotts of Israel, he successfully proposed an anti-boycott motion at his local trade union branch. He has been supported by other Jewish members of the union, even though they have discovered that he is Messianic. Although this is not evangelism as such, Colin believes that by building a positive image of Messianic Jews, he is helping to dismantle an emotional barrier that prevents his Jewish acquaintances from taking Messianic believers seriously in faith-oriented conversations.

Ian is in his final year at university. During his first two years, he struggled to be accepted by both the Union of Jewish Students (J-Soc) and the Christian Union (CU). Because of his faith in Yeshua, other Jewish students reacted negatively to him, but by staunchly supporting the J-Soc, attending Hebrew classes, and campaigning boldly against anti-Semitism on campus, Ian began to dispel the prevalent notion that Messianic Jews were in effect Gentiles. He is probably the first Messianic Jew at his university to be-

come an active member of the J-Soc, and although he doubts that he will ever be fully accepted within the society, through perseverance he has established friendships, even with some of the J-Soc leaders. By softening some of the prejudices that existed among the Jewish students, he believes he may have helped pave the way for future Messianic Jews to be accepted.

By softening some of the prejudices that existed among the Jewish students, he believes he may have helped pave the way for future Messianic Jews to be accepted.

Ian also encountered suspicion and hostility in the CU. Following a meeting at which a Messianic speaker argued for the priority of mission to the Jews from Romans 1:16, and challenged the CU to pray for Israel's salvation, a member informed Ian that he deserved "a punch in the face" for believing the gospel was "to the Jew first." Someone else was of the opinion that Jewish mission sounded "a bit dodgy."

Ian experienced negativity even from those he regarded as friends in the CU, and was shocked when one of them informed two Indian students, without any apparent sense of embarrassment, that "the Jews" killed Jesus. Another of Ian's Christian friends, for reasons known only to himself, sent him an article that described the Jews as a "synagogue of Satan" who had been stripped of all their divinely bestowed privileges and status. When the friend refused to apologize for sending the article, the friendship dissolved.

Despite the negative incidents in years one and two, Ian reports that his final year has been overwhelmingly positive. He was a key campaigner in the motion to upgrade the university's definition of anti-Semitism, and the committee members of the university CU support his political activities on campus and opposed the call to boycott Israel. After the CU invited one of Ian's pro-Israel friends to speak, a Jewish girl thanked Ian for the talk, even though she hadn't been present at the meeting! Ian now has friends

within the J-Soc and was interviewed about his faith on the university's radio station.

From his experiences, Ian concludes that Messianic Jews are most effective when they form meaningful relationships with other Jews and Christians. Respect is gained, he believes, not by emphasizing what Messianic Jews and unbelieving Jews have in common but by showing warmth, respect, and friendliness to others in the hope that they will return the kindness. Almost invariably, he says, they do so. He recognizes that there will always be people in both communities who will not accept Messianic Jews, but believes they are members of a slowly shrinking minority. At the end of the day, if Messianic Jews are to be accepted by their own people, the cultivation of better social skills may be far more effective than developing a deep understanding of rabbinic theology and keeping kosher.

Challenge 3: A Global Vision

In an internet article called "Where Should the Messianic Movement Be in 2107?," J. K. McKee observes: "The Christian Church today largely speaks of having a global vision, but then can forget about 'tiny little Israel.' Has today's Messianic movement made the reverse mistake? How do we maintain the integrity of having a high regard for Israel, while recognizing that Israel is to serve the masses of humanity?"⁸

Murdo A. MacLeod, a former director of Christian Witness to Israel and a founding member of LCJE, observes in his essay "Pauline Missiology": "The salvation of Israel has been isolated from the salvation of the world yet this inter-relationship is extensively elaborated in many parts of Scripture."⁹

Messianic Jews believe the movement was called into being by God for a great purpose, but thus far it has produced relatively few theologians, biblical scholars, evangelists, or missionaries. Mission by Jewish believers has been undertaken largely by those who would have once been classified as "Hebrew Christians," as Mark Kinzer observes:

Several Hebrew Christian churches developed in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, but they were often linked to denominations and normally functioned as missionary centers rather than self-conscious embodiments of an autonomous, indigenous Jewish Christianity.¹⁰

The calling of the Messianic movement is nothing less than the call of the nation it represents. The primary calling of Israel is to enlighten the na-

8 J. K. McKee, "Where Should the Messianic Movement Be in 2107?" <http://www.tnnonline.net/theonews/messianic-issues/messianic2107/index.html> [accessed March 25, 2009]. McKee is sympathetic to "two house" theology and his writings should therefore be read with caution. Nevertheless he is a stimulating writer, and this article should be required reading for all Messianic believers.

9 Murdo A MacLeod, "Pauline Missiology: A Study in Romans" (Chislehurst: Christian Witness to Israel, n.d.), 4.

10 Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 286.

tions, but few rabbis, even the most orthodox, believe it is the duty of Israel to convert the goyim. Groups such as Lubavitch Chabad who advocate outreach to Gentiles do so only in terms of urging non-Jews to keep the Noachide laws. Since the nation as a whole cannot or will not seek the conversion of the heathen, the remnant according to the election of grace – Messianic Jews – must carry out that task.

The blessing of Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 12:1–3, was linked inextricably to the blessing of the nations. God called Israel his “firstborn son” (Exod 4:22), implying there would be further “sons.” Likewise, the nation was the “firstfruits” of God’s increase (Jer 2:3), implying a future harvest from the other nations. If Israel obeyed their God and served him, the nations would be drawn to their light (Isa 60:3), and throughout the biblical history of the nation – even at times when the nation’s light was virtually extinguished – goyim were drawn to Israel. Mission remains the *raison d’être* for Israel’s existence, and therefore should lie at the heart of the Messianic movement.

In Psalm 67:1–2, the poet appears to grasp the implications of Israel’s calling and election in a remarkable way when he prays, “God be merciful to us [Israel] and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us . . . That your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”

The palmist calls on the God of Israel to cause all the nations to praise him, and expresses his conviction that when the goyim are glad in his salvation and sing for joy, then “God, our own God, shall bless us [Israel].” The teaching of the psalm is that when God makes Israel know the reality of the Aaronic benediction, the nations will also benefit, and when the nations rejoice in the salvation of God, Israel herself will be blessed still further.

It is encouraging to note that there are Messianic fellowships who look beyond the four walls within which they meet; Israel may well be leading the way in this respect, as Israeli Messianic congregations have for some years been sending out teams of members to Africa and other places. At a time when passion for mission is declining within the church of the northern hemisphere, Israel’s “remnant according to the election of grace” is beginning to look beyond itself and its interests to the nation and the world.

The Messianic movement may be standing on the threshold of its finest hour. If today’s Jewish disciples of Yeshua are willing to take on the challenges of breaking forth more light and truth from God’s Word, of integrating with their fellow Jews without compromising the gospel, and of reaching out to bless the nations, they may once again become God’s instrument for turning the world upside down.

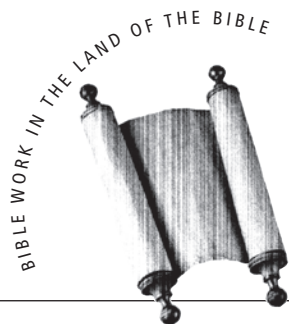
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First “Organized” Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem

*Part X: John Nicolayson and Samuel Farman
in Jerusalem in 1831*

by Kai Kjær-Hansen



This final article in the series about Protestant Bible-men in Jerusalem will deal with John Nicolayson and Samuel Farman’s two-week visit during the summer of 1831. This visit will be characterized by clearing-up in more ways than one, as we will now see.

The primary purpose of Nicolayson’s visit to Jerusalem is not to distribute Scriptures but to close down the Bible Society Room at the Greek convent Mar Michael.

Second, it fell to Nicolayson to clear up after Joseph Wolff and Lady Georgiana. When the Wolffs left Jerusalem in June 1829, the formerly good relations with the Greeks had been ruined. The air was thick with rumors that Wolff had used money in an attempt to enlist supporters for his cause. The local priest Papas Ysa had been involved in this, which we shall now see.

The appendix lists the Protestant Bible-men who have been treated in this series of articles.

On August 30, 1831, John Nicolayson and Samuel Farman arrive in Jerusalem.¹ It is Nicolayson’s third visit to Jerusalem. The repercussions of Wolff’s visit in 1829 can still be felt, although two years have passed. Already on his arrival at Mar Michael, Nicolayson is aware of the cold air. Not until Papas Ysa has been fetched are they given access to their usual rooms in the Greek convent.

Relations with the Jews

The relationship to the Jews is minimal. “The excommunication pronounced by the rabbies [*sic*] against Mr. Wolff, extending to all missionaries, only one Jew has called as yet, he probably in the character of a spy,” Nicolayson writes on September 1. And on a visit to a synagogue on Sep-

¹ From 1829, Farman was sent out by London Jews Society (LJS) as Nicolayson’s traveling companion and as a Missionary Student. They are accompanied to Jerusalem by the Rev. James Bartholomew, “a Wesleyan missionary to Alexandria,” and by an English traveler, Mr. West, cf. *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 121, 129.

tember 9, the missionaries see “the son of the late famous Rabbi Mendel” but do not converse with him.² This can hardly have come as a surprise for them after what they experienced on September 2:

Mr. Hamzolic [= Amzalag], a rich Jew, under English protection, who has been here for many years, called and told us a great deal about Mr. Wolff, whose greatest friend he had been at first, but became his chief enemy at last. He would have every man be satisfied in his own religion, and says no one shall ever induce him to change his. Mr. Farman tried to enter into some conversation with him, but to no purpose. He promised to call again in order to introduce us to the chief rabbies, but never came since.³

In this connection it may be added what Nicolayson writes about Amzalag and another Jew he spoke with in Jerusalem in March 1835:

[They] amused themselves with recounting how they (the Jews here) had duped Mr. Wolff, by burning all the New Testaments so profusely scattered by him, and some by the worse means of hypocritical professions of desire to inquire into Christianity, and a few by pretending to be actually convinced of its truth. They forget that such conduct will turn against themselves. No doubt they will try to dupe us also, and, at all events, fancy and boast that they have done so.⁴

When Wolff mentions (a few) converts among the Jews in Jerusalem during his three visits there, we cannot categorically exclude that he may sometimes have been “duped.”

Relations with the Greeks

There is a reason why Nicolayson was not given a hearty welcome at Mar Michael; the explanation is given by Papas Ysa. Even here is Wolff involved. Nicolayson writes:

The apparent reluctance with which we were received was afterwards accounted for by the details Papas Ysa gave us of Mr. Wolff's last visit, on which occasion, even the Greeks (for the first time) had recourse to excommunication. Poor Papas Ysa suffered severely, for no sooner had Mr. Wolff left the city, than he was put in prison and detained there till he had paid 2,000 piasters, which the then Governor demanded as his share in a thousand dollars which, it was pretended, had been left him (Papas Ysa) by Mr. Wolff, for the purpose of buying people over to Protestantism. I cannot but suspect that the Greeks,

2 Ibid., 130; 132.

3 Ibid. About Amzalag, see *Mishkan* 58 (2009): 63–64.

4 *Jewish Intelligence* (1836): 19.

seeing that their former pretended friendship can hold no longer, nor yield them any pecuniary advantage, will be glad to avail themselves of that occasion for putting an end to it.⁵

In order to get to the bottom of this – if this is at all possible – it is necessary to get other sources than those which have been at my disposal. But there is hardly any doubt that Wolff impeded the Protestant Bible-men's relations with both the Jews and the Greeks. On the other hand, it is not easy to understand Nicolayson's exasperation over the Greeks, since the very purpose of his visit was to close down the Bible Room.

The Closing of the Bible Society Room at Mar Michael

Nicolayson has come to Jerusalem with the purpose of closing down the Bible Society Room at Mar Michael, established towards the end of 1823. The late Pliny Fisk's personal effects were still here after his last visit in 1825. But first, Nicolayson has to tidy up after Wolff. In Nicolayson's words, September 1: "Papaa Ysa and myself set about cleaning up the chaos, into which Mr. W[olff] had thrown all the things. Not a box had he left unbroken, not a book remaining, and many things were wanting."⁶

Fisk's private books and effects are packed in two boxes; furthermore five boxes are packed with Scriptures belonging to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and five boxes with Hebrew Bibles and tracts belonging to LJS. Nicolayson decides to send them via Jaffa to Beirut, where "they can be lodged free of expense, and gradually put into circulation." The tidying up is very thorough; Nicolayson's mood shines through in the following words: "The charges for the rooms here have already been accumulating for years, and it is absolutely necessary that this should be put a stop to by leaving nothing in the convent."⁷

Nicolayson settled accounts with the Greek bishops on September 7, and writes down the amount in his journal.

First half of 1827	four rooms	25.00 Sp. D.
Second half of 1827	two rooms	12.50 -
All year 1828	two rooms	25.00 -
First half of 1829	two rooms	12.50 -
Second half of 1829	one room	6.25 -
All year 1830	one room	12.50 -
First half of 1831	one room	6.25 . ⁸

5 *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 129.

6 Cf. Nicolayson's Journal, 1831, 255; in Conrad Schick Library, Christ Church, Jerusalem. It is not clear what is implied in the words "not a book remaining," when shortly after there is mention of Fisk's "private books." When the events were published in *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 129–31, these – for Wolff – incriminating words were censored away.

7 *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 130.

8 Cf. Nicolayson's Journal, 1831, 258.



A total of 100 Spanish dollars is paid. A receipt is given and it is noted that neither owes anything to the other. The decreasing number of rented rooms gives, in its own way, some of the history of the Bible-men in Jerusalem in the period 1827–1831. The tidying up also shows that in the summer of 1831, neither Nicolayson nor the American missionaries could imagine that Jerusalem might become a mission *station* in the foreseeable future. But this is what happened. Due to the changed political situation, it becomes possible for Nicolayson to settle down in Jerusalem at the end of 1833.

After tidying up and winding up, Nicolayson uses the apartment to talk things through with Papas Ysa. The Bible Society Room at the Mar Michael convent belongs to the past, but now Greek pilgrims begin coming to Jerusalem again. What about distribution of Scriptures to them?

Agreement about Continued Distribution of Bibles in Jerusalem after 1831

Under September 9, 1831, Nicolayson writes:

In talking over with Papas Ysa the whole of the proceedings of missionaries here, from the very first up to the present time, in view of the many interruptions of the work by the death of many of the labourers, and of the many disappointments by the opposition and perversity of Jews and others, in excommunicating, burning, and otherwise destroying the Sacred Scriptures offered them, he could not repress the expression that all labour and expenses for these ten years past have been made in vain. We reminded him of the duty on our part of labouring in hope and patience, leaving the time and measure of success with the Lord, who has promised that his Word shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleaseth, and prosper in the thing whereunto he sends it. When considering what might farther be done, he suggested that a quantity of Scriptures, in modern Greek and Turkish, might be laid up in the great convent, with the consent of the bishops, and placed under his own particular management for distribution to the pilgrims. I requested him to speak with the bishops on this subject, and promised, that if he should obtain their full assent, and would answer for the actual circulation of the Scriptures, I would apply to the Auxiliary Bible Society at Malta for a supply of the Sacred Scriptures suited to that purpose, and either bring them with me to this country myself or send them hither.

No sooner said than done. Papas Ysa goes to the Greek bishops, who accept this plan. In Nicolayson's words: "Papas Ysa has returned with the full consent of the bishops to the above plan, so I hope it will be carried into effect, and pray that a rich blessing may attend it."⁹ The fact that the Greek

9 *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 131.

bishops, in 1831, still want Scriptures to be distributed to Greek pilgrims is a further sign that their banning of Wolff in 1829 was not primarily connected to his *distribution* of Scriptures, a view that I have argued for in the previous article.¹⁰ And the fact that Papas Ysa seems to have had access to the bishops, and their trust, puts a question mark on some of what Wolff has said about Papas Ysa. At any rate, distribution of Bibles in Jerusalem is now entrusted to a local person, namely Papas Ysa, as had been the case with Procopius in the early 1820s.¹¹

On September 13, the Protestant Bible-men – Nicolayson and Farman – leave Jerusalem. In Ephesus, on October 31, 1831 – on his way back to Malta and his family – Nicolayson spots a vessel under sail. He is told that its destination is Jaffa, and that the passengers are Greek and Armenian pilgrims who are going to celebrate Christmas in Jerusalem. Nicolayson recalls the agreement with Papas Ysa: "Would that the Scriptures had already reached that place for distribution among them."¹²

There is evidence that Scriptures, sent by Nicolayson or others, did reach Papas Ysa in Jerusalem in 1831 or later. We do not know how many Scriptures Papas Ysa managed to distribute,¹³ but at his death on June 10, 1834, a quantity was left and there was an epilogue to this almost one year later.

On May 22, 1835, Nicolayson learns that "a young man was selling the books of the late Papas Ysa Petras [*sic*] in the market, and among them such as belonged to the Bible Society." Nicolayson continues: "I called on the widow, who told me that it was done by the executors, contrary to her request of them to wait my arrival, she knowing that the Bibles were not his own." Even though Nicolayson has no "legal authority to act for the Bible Society in this case," he enters the case and finds out that the young man had "a great variety in several languages, amounting in all to perhaps a hundred copies of Bibles and the New Testament, besides nearly as many, chiefly New Testament, in Hebrew, belonging to our own Society [LJS], and to which, therefore, I had a legal claim."¹⁴ Nicolayson then lays claim to these copies – and gets them.

With this, the time limit has not only been reached, but also exceeded, for this series of ten articles about organized Bible-work in Jerusalem in the period 1816–1831.¹⁵

Summary

Concluding remarks have been made in each of the previous nine articles in this series about the first Protestant Bible-men in Jerusalem. In the pro-

10 See *Mishkan* 58 (2009): 67–70.

11 See *Mishkan* 44 (2005): 68–72; 48 (2006): 73–78.

12 *Monthly Intelligence* (1832): 150.

13 *Jewish Intelligence* (1835): 208.

14 *Jewish Intelligence* (1836): 193.

15 In *Mishkan* 41 (2004): 6–20, Kelvin Crombie has given a historical cross section of the Bible work in *Eretz Israel* from ca. 1820 to 1948.



cess, a few myths have been laid to rest, for example about the time of the arrival in Jerusalem of the first Bible-man, which was not in 1816 but in 1818. Scriptures were distributed to local Christians, Christian pilgrims, and Jews in Jerusalem. The wastage rate seems high, not least among the Jews. The optimism of the early 1820s, that the Jews of Jerusalem were open to the gospel, did not last. But this did not mean that the missionaries lost heart or ceased to hand out Bibles in the following years – when the political circumstances permitted.

In so far as the Bible-men's visits to Jerusalem were *planned*, it is certainly possible to speak about "organized Bible work" in the period under investigation. But it is difficult to talk about an actual "organized Bible work *in Jerusalem*." An attempt was made with the arrangement in 1820 with Procopius, *locum tenens* for the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, residing in Constantinople, but Procopius died soon after. At the turn of the year 1823–1824, a Bible Society Room was set up – one step in the right direction. But the designated leader of it, Pliny Fisk, died less than a year later. A Bible Society proper was not established in Jerusalem in this period.

The Greeks and the Armenians were generally open to Bible distribution, although some friction with the Protestant Bible-men did occur if their work resulted in conversions to Protestantism. Bible distribution to Jews was largely done by visiting Bible-men – and with limited success.

Success or no success, the Bible-men were convinced that they were under an obligation, and that the word of God would not return empty.

It may be fitting to end this series of articles with Sherman Lieber's words about the Protestant missionaries:

Through their religious beliefs and actions missionaries found tranquility, fulfillment, and spiritual freedom. Missionary achievements were measured not by the number of conversions, but by feeling God's pleasure, and attaining profound inner contentment and deep serenity. With joy in their hearts, missionaries praised the Lord and persevered in the belief, that "God has not called me to be successful. He has called me to be faithful."¹⁶

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16 Sherman Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 317. Lieber took the concluding quotation from Mother Theresa, winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize.

Appendix*

Protestant Bible-men in Jerusalem 1818–1831

NAME	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Christop Burckhardt	May 9	(approx.) May 19, 1818
James Connor	March 6	April 19, 1820
Levi Parsons	February 17	May 8, 1821
Melchior Tschoudy	April 6	(shortly after) April 22, 1821
Joseph Wolff	March 9	(approx.) June 1, 1822
Pliny Fisk	April 25	June 27, 1823
Jonas King	April 25	June 27, 1823
Joseph Wolff	April 25	July 17, 1823
William Jowett	November 21	December 15, 1823
Pliny Fisk	November 21, 1823	April 22, 1824
William Bucknor Lewis	December 13, 1823	January 20, 1824
Jonas King	January 21	February 6, 1824
Isaac Bird	January 21	April 22, 1824
Benjamin Barker	between Aug. 1 and	mid-Sept. (short visit), 1824
William Bucknor Lewis	March 29	May 9, 1825
Pliny Fisk	March 29	May 9, 1825
Jonas King	March 29	May 9, 1825
George Edward Dalton	April 2	May 9, 1825
George Edward Dalton	December 24, 1825	January 25, 1826 (died)
John Nicolayson	January 3	February 17, 1826
Samuel Gobot	March 31	June 23, 1827
Christian Kugler	March 31	June 23, 1827
Theodor Müller	March 31	April 20, 1827
John Nicolayson	March 31	April 20, 1827
Joseph Wolff and	January 7	June 13, 1829
Lady Georgiana	January 7	June 13, 1829
John Nicolayson	August 30	September 13, 1831
Samuel Farman	August 30	September 13, 1831

* A few of the cited dates are uncertain, since the sources sometimes give different dates; the discrepancy is usually only a few days and does not affect the overall picture of the length of the visit. I have cited the dates that I find most likely. Omitted are a few names of missionaries who came to Palestine accompanying the Bible-men to Jerusalem, but who did not have an independent ministry.

For easily understandable reasons, Procopius is not mentioned in this list of *Protestant Bible-men*, which does not mean that he did not play an important part in the beginning of the 1820s. Procopius and other Greeks, not least Papas Ysa, played an important role in the Bible-work in Jerusalem in this period. This is something which deserves a closer study.

And lastly, I dare not rule out the possibility that I have overlooked some individuals and their visits to Jerusalem. Lady Georgiana must resign herself to being included under *Bible-men*!

The previous nine articles in this series about the first Bible-men in Jerusalem have been published in *Mishkan* in the following issues: 41 (2004): 21–30; 42 (2005): 57–67; 44 (2005): 62–75; 48 (2006): 73–85; 49 (2006): 42–58; 54 (2008): 64–79; 55 (2008): 55–69; 57 (2008): 71–82; 58 (2009): 60–72. Cf. also “Stories about Disease and Death” *Mishkan* 52 (2007): 6–50.





by **Richard A. Robinson**

Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, ix+338 pp., \$29.95, hardback.



Stephen Spector, Professor of English at Stony Brook University, delivers a well-researched book that offers a corrective to much that has previously been written on Christian Zionists and their support for Israel. Spector, who is himself Jewish, has skillfully woven numerous news items and personal interviews into a volume more or less divided by subject. The subtitle is a bit misleading; there is but little “story” in the sense of history. What we do have is largely a portrait of the contemporary scene in America.

Spector focuses on two areas. The first is the motives that impel Christian Zionist support for Israel, which he finds more diverse and nuanced than often depicted. The typical caricature that Christian Zionists simply want to hasten the return of Christ is not reflective of the complexity of motivations, which actually include a (selfish?) desire to be blessed by blessing Israel; humanitarian and geopolitical reasons; gratitude towards the Jewish people; and dispensational the-

ology.

The second focus is whether Christian Zionist theology informed George W. Bush’s Israel policy, to which his answer is no. Those who have said otherwise have, according to Spector, offered no evidence in support of their views.

Spector has done his homework, citing just about everyone from American conservative Christians Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson to Reform Judaism’s Eric Yoffie and church historian George Marsden. Chapter 1 offers a journalistic portrait of some recent Christian Zionist gatherings and a bit of history. Chapter 2 surveys some of the motives undergirding Christian Zionism, while chapter 3 observes the variety that exists among evangelical Christians. Chapters 4 and 5 delve into Christian Zionism vis-à-vis the Muslim world.

In chapter 6, we hear four criticisms made against Christian Zionism. First, it treats Jews not as real people but as players in a drama in which all Jews must convert or die. Second, there is a hidden agenda to convert the Jews. Third, its theology is flawed, a charge made by other Christians. The fourth criticism is the subject of chapter 7, that Christian Zionist insistence on Israel’s retention of the land – no “land for peace” – makes them allies of Israeli rightists.

However, in chapter 8, Spector writes that “the claim that all Christian Zionists adamantly demand that Israel keep every inch of its biblical territory is vastly overstated. So is the charge that they are yearning for the Jews to convert or die at the end of time” (p. 158). All evangelicals, we learn, are not dispensationalists. And some, such as Becky Brimmer of Bridges for Peace, simply downplay the need for Jews to find faith in Yeshua (pp. 176–77).

Chapter 9 ranges widely, focusing first on surveys that have been taken of evangelical attitudes to Israel and the Jewish people (which have been inconclusive in really sorting out where evangelicals stand, their



motivations in supporting Israel, etc.). Then – since surveys can't really tell us what we want to know – we get another journalistic portrait of another group of Christian Zionists, followed by a discussion of the Third Temple, the red heifer, and whether George W. Bush is a Christian Zionist or dispensationalist. Finally, chapters 10–11 focus on tracing evangelical interaction with the George W. Bush administration, and to what extent his policy-making was influenced by American evangelicals (conclusion: Bush was far more independent-minded than many suppose).

So, a lot of great quotes and demystifying – if not de-mythologizing – of Christian Zionism. What is lacking is a synthesis that draws everything together and puts the results of the research into a larger picture. There are however, a few take-aways to be had.

First of all, as a sourcebook of quotations, it is an enormously helpful resource. Almost the entire book has been put together from primary source quotations and interviews, with a detailed index to locate them.

Second, it counterbalances the near-hysteria of some recent books that darkly depict a conservative Christian desire to make America into a theocracy. Whether it's theology or politics, Spector finds nuance where others have seen stark black-and-white.

The third take-away is something that left me feeling uncomfortable. It is not just that the need for Jewish people to find atonement through Yeshua is downplayed by some of the players in this book. That will come as no surprise to readers of *Mishkan*. It is also, first, that American evangelicalism has become strongly identified as a political bloc that happens to hold certain religious views, rather than as a faith community that witnesses to the reality of Yeshua in all areas of life, including politics. Further, support of Israel, though much-needed and much-welcomed, appears to overshadow

the news that we are all sinners and that we all need the atonement offered in Yeshua. In other words, are evangelicals all about eschatology and the Middle East, or are they at root about God's redemption of this world through Yeshua? Despite the nuancing that Spector offers – not all evangelical support for Israel is motivated by particular eschatological schemes – the overall impression given in the book is that eschatology far outweighs the Great Commission in American evangelical thinking.

Spector is neither a theologian nor a sociologist, and readers can make up their own mind on whether his portrait is accurate, or whether he accords some spokespeople or some theological strands more weight than he should. Paul Merkley, surprisingly cited only once, should be read in conjunction with this book for a broader view that includes mainline Christianity's attitudes toward Israel.

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by **Bodil J. Skjøtt**

Kelvin Crombie,
*Restoring Israel –
200 Years of the CMJ
Story*. Jerusalem's
Ltd, Christ Church, 2008, 192 pp.,
\$30.00, paper.



This year, the Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ) celebrates its 200th anniversary, and the book *Restoring Israel – 200 Years of the CMJ Story* has been written and published to mark the occasion. What was initially planned to be "a simple 60-page booklet" ended up as a 192-page book that is far from simple looking. Its nice coffee table appearance makes it a book one really wants to pick up and look through. The approximately 300 illustrations of people and scenes from different parts of the world take the reader on a tour through the ministry's history and allow the reader to discover the amazing history of this 200-year-old ministry; with each page, a new chapter. The literary journey is made accessible not only to specialists but to a wide audience; this is the clear intention of the historian – and also missionary – Kelvin Crombie.

In his foreword, Crombie makes it clear that his telling of the history and remembering past events serves a purpose. We need to remember "in order to recall and

recount the wonderful deeds that the Lord God has done for us." In this case, the wonderful deeds God has done refer to the London Jews Society (LJS) – or the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews as it was called when it was established 1809. With his usual interest in setting the history of the mission in its wider context, Crombie devotes the first of the nine chapters to "Our Spiritual Pioneers," going back to the Protestant Reformers, the Puritans, and the French Revolution. The following eight chapters tell the history of CMJ chronologically, all the way up to 2009, although the first 150 years proportionally get more attention than the last 50. Maybe the last 50 years will be dealt with more in depth in the promised "larger and more academic" book to be produced later. One can only hope for this, as parts of the history told here have stirred interest and raised questions which the present publication leaves unanswered. When more than 50 years get less than 50 pages, not all questions can be answered.

Crombie does not need to apologize for not fitting everybody and everything in. With who and what he has managed to fit in, one cannot help but be amazed at the number of people, countries, and cities that have been touched in one way or another by the work of CMJ over the 200 years the society has existed. We meet workers in England, in most countries in Europe, in Africa, and all over the Middle East; wherever there were Jewish people who needed to hear the gospel or were in need of a hospital, a school, or a place to meet, CMJ has made the attempt to be there.

The format of the book, with one page per topic, makes it less obvious which were the more important achievements in the long history. On the other hand, it allows for even the lesser known people or places to get a mention. Again and again, interest is stirred, and the opportunity to recall and recount yet another deed the Lord has done



is provided.

CMJ is marking its bicentenary, and this book is just one of many ways in which this story is being told and celebrated this year. When we celebrate, we recall and remember the good things of the past, and in that respect the book serves its purpose. It reminds us of forgotten events and places within the amazing history of the society. However, we all know that this is not the whole story. There are – as with any society or Christian organization – other parts which could be told that those critical toward the purpose of a Jewish mission society seem to remember better and love to tell. One can only hope that a larger and more academic publication will appear, and that it will include this as well. Let's not leave it to our critics to tell those parts. They are not necessarily less honoring to God, and telling them ourselves certainly makes the good stories more trustworthy.

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by **John Sode-Woodhead**

The Israel Education Forum

On February 23, 2009, delegates from twenty-eight education and discipleship organizations registered in Israel met at Israel College of the Bible in Jerusalem and unanimously agreed to establish an education forum for the Messianic and evangelical community in Israel. The vision is to see people's lives being transformed through faith-based education. The mission of the Israel Education Forum will be to deepen fellowship and mutual support in a common cause; build capacity for member organizations through benefiting from synergies through cooperation, organizational development, and the professional, personal, and spiritual development of the staff and board members of member organizations; and strategic development with a view to provide more extensive service to the Israeli believing community, impact on Israeli society, and ministry to the rest of the world. Underlying this vision was the recognition of the need and opportunity for the Messianic, Arab evangelical, and foreign communities to work together for a common cause.

It was in March 2008 that four friends – Erez Soref, Botrus Mansour, David Zadok, and John Sode-Woodhead – met to discuss the current situation of education in Israel and options for the future. All four are

heavily involved in education. Botrus is General Director of the Baptist School in Nazareth, which has just over one thousand pupils and is recognized by the Ministry of Education as being one of the top schools in the country. David has been active on a committee set up to advance the development of Messianic schools. Erez, a doctor of psychology, is President of the Israel College of the Bible. John, who founded the Fellowship of Christian Students in Israel, is former Deputy Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and has served in senior levels of management at the University of Edinburgh. The four believed that the way forward would be through a forum for mutual support, in which a mutual vision could be developed and implemented.

No plans were made for follow up, and that's where it appeared the vision would come to an end. At the beginning of August, John was contacted by a friend he had last known in 1977, when Angus was a volunteer working with John's father at the hospital in Nazareth. Angus was naturally interested in what was happening in Israel, and John shared the vision. To John's surprise, Angus responded by saying that he believed this was from God and would be willing to fund the start-up if John was willing to devote the time to it. After consultation, it was agreed that the original four would form a board for the development of the initiative, with Erez as chair and John as chief executive. The board believed that its initial task was to identify potential members, understand the nature of the work and needs of these organizations, and call a meeting to which all these organizations would be invited to consider future direction. This led to the founding meeting in February, and the resultant decision to proceed with the vision.

The organizations fall into three natural groups: schools, higher education, and discipleship. Within each group there is a



wide diversity of organizations and needs. The schools include the top quality Nazareth Baptist School, a couple of small Messianic schools, a cluster of Messianic projects aiming to establish schools, and a couple of well established international schools. The major challenge for the Messianic schools is to achieve recognition by the Ministry of Education. The longer term vision would be to develop a faith-based Israeli curriculum and establish more schools. Higher education institutes include primarily Messianic and Arab theological colleges, with an exception being the School of Nursing at the Nazareth Hospital. A major challenge is achieving accreditation to offer degrees that will be honored in Israel. Longer term thought will be needed to rationalize this fragmented sector and move toward greater disciplinary diversity. Discipleship is the least clearly defined area of work; a number of the ministries, such as the Caspari Center, have a clear educational vision of developing skills for the local congregations, however other organizations are much more informal in their education methodologies. In the first instance, efforts will concentrate on the development of children's and youth ministry for the believing community. Many of these ministries are organizationally weak and need a great deal of input to increase their capacities.

The Forum is still in the process of defining itself and developing its own capacity to deliver on its mission. Membership criteria, values, and constitutional issues are still being worked out by members. The three groups have begun to meet as "sections" to determine their own terms of reference and objectives. Parallel to this, the board is developing strategic and business plans to give clear focus and so that the appropriate resources can be raised. The immediate plan is for a conference on fundraising toward the end of the year. Jerry Twombly, a major American

fundraiser, has agreed to come and provide training aimed at decision makers within organizations.

On May 11, 2009, potential member organizations were scheduled to meet again in Nazareth to formally establish the Israel Education Forum.

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