

# MISHIKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

## CONTENTS

<b>Messianic Jews and the Liturgies of Judaism</b> Editorial .....	1
<b>Worship in the New Testament — Remapping the Land</b> Paul Sumner .....	5
<b>The Use of Liturgy in Messianic Jewish Worship</b> David H. Stern and Elazar Brandt .....	15
<b>The Place of the Siddur in the Messianic Community</b> Tzvi Sadan .....	28
<b>The Siddur in Israeli Congregations</b> Menahem Benhayim .....	38
<b>The Use of the Siddur by Messianic Jews</b> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum.....	43
<b>Two Nineteenth Century Hebrew "Siddurim"</b> Kai Kjær-Hansen .....	50
<b>Worship in an Israeli Messianic Lutheran Congregation</b> Torkild Masvie .....	60
<b>Meeting the Needs — Siddur for Messianic Jews</b> John Fischer .....	64
<b>The Development of a Messianic Jewish Theology</b> Harald Hegstad .....	67
<b>When and Where did the Jerusalem Church Pray?</b> Bodil F. Skjøtt .....	73
<b>From the Israeli Press</b> Sean Osborne .....	76
<b>LCJE Europe Conference Statement</b> .....	79
<b>Book Reviews and Books Received</b> .....	81



# MISHKAN

**A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People**

**"MESSIANIC JEWS AND LITURGY"**

ISSUE 25 / 1996

**General Editor: Ole Chr. M. Kvarme**  
**United Christian Council in Israel · Jerusalem**

All Rights Reserved.  
For permissions please contact [mishkan@pascheinstitute.org](mailto:mishkan@pascheinstitute.org)  
For subscriptions and back issues visit [www.mishkanstore.org](http://www.mishkanstore.org)

# Messianic Jews and the Liturgies of Judaism

## Editorial

In the early 1960's a Messianic congregation in Jerusalem composed a liturgy for Pesach Eve. A lot of scepticism ensued because such a venture smacked too much of synagogue and legalism and was not recommended for a "Biblical" Messianic congregation. Against such opposition the congregation conducted its seder.

Much water has poured into the sea since then. It is now the rule for Messianic congregations all over the world to maintain a Pesach seder in some form. The Jewish Haggada forms the backbone, while some additions provide a little New Testament flavor. One may certainly ask whether the present Messianic seders express a consistent theological view and the confession to a triune God, or only represent a patchwork in which conflicting theologies stand side by side. But within the Messianic Jewish family of today no one questions his brother's right to celebrate Pesach by following some order of worship.

The use of Jewish liturgical elements is not confined to Pesach Eve. In Israel a couple of congregations use large sections of the Siddur and Mahzor, while others confess the *Shema* and use some festival prayers. Every Hebrew congregation in the land celebrates the Jewish festivals in some way, but in general Israeli congregations seem more influenced by gentile, and particularly American Protestant traditions than by Jewish ones. In his article, Menahem Benhayim hints of the secular background of most Israeli believers as a reason for the prevailing scepticism against utilizing Jewish liturgical traditions. Another factor could be the non-liturgical Protestant roots of the gentile members of the Israeli congregations. But if we go to America where the need to mark a Jewish identity is more strongly felt than in Israel, the use of Jewish liturgical material in Messianic congregations is much more widespread.

A main part of the present liturgy of Israeli Messianic congregations is their collection of songs. Both the music and the textual material of these songs ought to be evaluated in a separate article. Perhaps some short comments could stimulate the discussion and provoke some "children of Asaph" to give expression to concerns lacking in the present body of songs. From 1976 to the early 1980's most Israeli congregations used a songbook (*Hallel-ve-zimrat-Yah*) which contained Hebrew translations of gentile hymns, with a few additions like "Adon Olam." This very "churchy" hymnal has since then received a silent burial in all but the Messianic-Lutheran congregations.

Today all congregations use collections of songs composed within the Messianic movement during the last 20 years. Most spectators agree that these songs give a more Jewish and Israeli flavor to the congregations. But to what extent do these texts express the different aspects of Christian/Messianic faith and life? More than 90 percent of the songs consist of verses from the Old Testament; consequently they cannot give expression to the incarnation, death or resurrection of Jesus. Further, the majority of the songs convey praise and adoration. As one example, the

complaint and despair of the believer before the Lord, an important theme in the biblical Psalter, is only scarcely represented. One should also ask which christology is expressed in this body of songs. How is Jesus addressed — “Adon,” “Adonai,” “Elohay,” “Moshia”? A certain song concludes with the words “Adonai (YHWH) El chay, Yeshua” (cf. John 20:28). Some believers have changed these words. One needs to consider what kind of christology is thus expressed.

The Messianic Jewish movement must relate to the liturgical traditions of both synagogue and church. Navigating between the dangers of the Scylla and Charybdis of respectively Jewish and Christian tradition is not easy. On board the Messianic ship can be heard conflicting voices as to which course to tack.

The dating of the prayers of the Siddur is a relevant question for this argumentative crew. Did Jesus and the apostles take part in these prayers, or do they represent later rabbinic tradition which often is opposed to Jesus’ claim to be the ultimate representative of the God of Israel?

Research of recent decades has established the antiquity of the Jewish prayer tradition. Many elements of the Siddur go back to the Second Temple period, and thus to the days of Jesus. The *Shema*, the *Kaddish* and the *Amidah* have long been recognized as such early elements. The Qumran scrolls have brought a new impetus to the research of early Jewish prayer. For example, recent scholarship demonstrates that apocalyptic passages in pre-Essene literature from the early second century BC (1Q/4QInstruction, 1Q/4QBook of Mysteries) closely parallels the Rosh Hashanah liturgy of the Mahzor. So the Jewish New Year liturgy has roots in the post-biblical community as far back as c.200 BC.

Thus, a certain core of the liturgies of the Siddur and Mahzor stems from the days of the Second Temple. Certainly then, Jesus and Jewish Christians of first century Judea took part in Jewish communal prayers. Jesus’ critique of long public prayers as superficial and not heartfelt cannot be considered a disapproval of the Jewish liturgical tradition in his time or of fixed prayers in general.

On the other hand, from the late first century onwards the rabbinic tradition consciously marginalized the Jewish Christians within the people of Israel. Within the confines of the synagogue liturgical measures were instituted against them, with *Birkat ha-Minim* as the primary example.

Jacob Neusner has shown that the rabbis’ encounter with Byzantine Christianity in the fourth century gave the impetus for new dogmatic concepts. The traditions of the sages were (only) now considered Oral Torah, equal in authority to the written one. The rabbis of the Jerusalem Talmud (400 AD) ascribed to the Torah a metaphysical value it did not have earlier. Torah became a supernatural power symbolizing the sanctification and salvation of Israel. The two-fold Torah given at Sinai represents the final revelation from the God of Israel. They held that salvation comes from the Torah, not from the cross! Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament have much in common, but do possess contrasting, often conflicting views of God, man and the ways of salvation. And the Siddur is by and large a product of post-mishnaic rabbinic Judaism.

In this light one must ask whether the theological framework of the Siddur is compatible with New Testament faith? Can one only omit a few prayers here, add some others there, and produce a Messianic Siddur which expresses biblical faith in Jesus the Messiah? Is it not so that the Siddur presupposes a view of man which does not recognize original sin and a concept of the one God that excludes a trinitarian faith? If one answers this question affirmatively, one would have to

rewrite the Siddur instead of adapting it. What kind of systematic theology is presupposed when one wants to “modify the Siddur without transforming it into another book?” Some of our writers are confident that the Holy Spirit can inspire unbelieving rabbis to compose prayers fit for use by Jewish followers of Jesus. One needs to give some systematic reasons for such confidence.

On the other hand, if it will not evolve into a shallow copy of American Evangelicalism with a little Jewish spice poured on top, the Messianic movement is in dire need of liturgical thinking and practice. Kai Kjør-Hansen points to Joseph Rabinowitz as a model for Messianic Jewish rewriting of Jewish liturgical traditions which has the living Christ as its illuminating center.

The liturgies of the early church have hardly influenced liturgical practice or thinking in the Messianic movement of this century. This seems a paradox, as scholars have long recognized the influence of liturgies from temple, synagogue and the Jewish family upon the early church. Is this neglect of what ought to be a major source of inspiration due to lack of knowledge or to shallow theological thinking?

Ten years ago I encountered in Jerusalem a Jewish-Christian clergyman of the Church of the East (the Nestorians) who scoffed at the vague christology and lack of true trinitarian thinking in the Messianic movement, where some leaders pray only to the Father in the name of the Son, and do not address the Son or the Spirit in their prayers. We should not ignore this question.

Paul Sumner asks both gentile and Jewish believers to review their prayer habits in light of an investigation of prayer in the New Testament. In the New Testament prayers are offered to God the Father, or to God in the name of Jesus. There are some exceptions to this rule; the Son can be directly addressed (e.g. Acts 7:59; 9:10-17; Rev 5:9-13), but never the Holy Spirit. Philipians 2:5-11 depicts Jesus as one who is worthy to receive adulation from all. In this light, does Messianic-Jewish praying only to God in the name of the Messiah reflect a weak christology?

On the other hand, have fourth century concepts of Jesus' divine nature and the divinity of the three persons of the godhead lead gentile Christians to patterns of praise and prayer that are abnormal as seen through New Testament eyes? Both gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus need to be confronted with New Testament teaching both on the priority of the Father and the divine roles attributed to Jesus (by himself or his early followers). These questions illustrate Harald Hegstad's assertion that the Messianic movement provides an essential challenge to the gentile-dominated Christian church, a challenge which is hardly recognized by the main body of the church.

Hegstad formulates a fascinating rewording of the reformation's criterion that every church tradition should be judged by “Scripture alone.” He proposes that any formulation of Christian doctrine should undergo the test: Can it be communicated and understood in a Messianic-Jewish setting? If it cannot, it should be seriously doubted whether this idea can be regarded as an expression of New Testament faith.

This issue of Mishkan raises more questions than it answers, and therefore highlights the continued need for theological thinking in the Messianic-Jewish movement and Jewish missions.

*Copyright Torleif Elgvin, All Rights Reserved*

# Worship in the New Testament — Remapping the Land<sup>1</sup>

Paul Sumner

Messianic Judaism is like the pre-1948 *aliyah* to Palestine. Like early pioneers Messianic believers are returning to the homeland of biblical faith and removing its accumulated foreign debris to rebuild a viable society on ancient foundations. But Messianics are settling the land using two maps: rabbinic and Christian.

The problem is both maps were drafted in exile under the influence of evolving orthodoxy. Though neither is completely useless (one can find the Kotel or Kinneret), they also contain many sectarian holy sites, founded not on archeological fact but pious tradition. Because Messianics (like the pioneers of Palestine) have long been engaged in basic survival, they have often tried out of convenience to merge the two maps together. Of specific concern, they try to blend unitarian forms with trinitarian faith; they recite the *Shema* with a Nicean understanding. Yet few have seriously questioned whether such harmonizing of the two evolved orthodoxies is biblically valid.

## Why a New Map is Needed

Resurveying the Land afresh and drawing an accurate, complete map is what this paper is about. The justification for this is that the rabbinic and Christian maps do not depict the whole landscape, the full reality of Scripture. Messianics are well aware that rabbinic, *Maimonidean* unitarianism is flawed and incompatible with biblical faith in Jesus. They tend to be less aware that the trinitarian grid-map also has irreconcilable features built into it. One can simply look at the larger church to realize the chaos it has produced.

Though most Christians officially define themselves in terms of trinitarian orthodoxy of the fourth century, they are not of one mind in their actual concepts about God. In church services today some Christians worship God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ his Son; others worship the Triune God; some worship Jesus as Jehovah; others worship the Holy Spirit as Lord and Mediator. And some worship the Mother of God, saints, angels, and — now — God the Mother.

These Christians all profess allegiance to the same trinitarian map, yet obviously it has not led them to the same place. Why? I believe it fosters disorientation because it is based on speculative reasoning about the imagined but impenetrable subsurface of God's being and not on the actual, commanding topography of Scripture.

A good map depicts what you encounter when you travel the land; it provides precise orientation. The New Testament is God's map of spiritual reality. Too often, however, Christians and Messianic believers read it with superimposed trinitarian grid-lines and frequently miss its distinctive contours. I suggest we re-survey the whole New Testament landscape. Instead of starting with traditional proof texts on the Godhead, I suggest we begin with a whole other set of

---

<sup>1</sup>Paul Sumner (M.A. in Old Testament, Pepperdine University) works in Princeton, New Jersey.

reference coordinates to get a more complete picture. These markers appear when analyzing patterns of worship.

Worship is a reflection of theology. How people worship reveals how they perceive God. And drawing a map of New Testament worship is the purpose of this paper. It is not concerned with the *hows*, but with the content and particularly the *objects* of worship. To whom did the first century Jewish believers actually pray and on whom did they focus their attention? Answering this will help us regain clarity in how to think about God.

### Vocabulary About God

Prerequisite to a study of worship is the need to review the New Testament's use of the words "God" and "Lord." Several biblical scholars have reminded us that these two words are rarely synonymous. In fact, New Testament writers use them primarily to distinguish between the Father and the Son.<sup>2</sup>

The term "God" (*theos*) almost always refers to the Father. He is the "one God" (1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5), the "only God" (John 5:44; Rom 16:27; 1 Tim 1:17), and the "God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah" (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 11:31; 1 Pet 1:3). He is Jesus' "head" (1 Cor 11:3). He sent Jesus into the world (John 6:29) and will eventually send him back (Acts 3:20). And the central message of Acts is: "the God of our fathers raised up Jesus" (5:30).

On the other hand, Jesus is called "God" unambiguously in only two passages, yet both texts have safeguards to prevent exclusion of God the Father (John 1:1; 20:28).<sup>3</sup> In some verses where the Son is called God, the Greek textual witness is mixed and shows signs of tampering by dogma-motivated scribes (John 1:18; 1 Tim 3:16).<sup>4</sup> In other verses, the punctuation or grammatical construction of Greek phrases makes the attestations of deity ambiguous (Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 Jn 5:20). In any case, it is rare in the New Testament that Jesus is referred to as "God," and never without qualification.

---

<sup>2</sup> "The characteristic New Testament idiom is that God is the Father and the title 'Lord' is almost completely confined to Jesus" (Ralph P. Martin, "Carmen Christi: Philippians ii.5-11" in *Recent Interpretation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 275). "[The term 'Lord'] is not only a way of *identifying* Jesus with God but also of *distinguishing* Jesus from God" (James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (Waco: Word Books, 1988) 841). "Gentile Christians...reserved *theos* regularly for God the Father and *kyrios* regularly for Jesus" (F.F. Bruce, *Philippians* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 51).

<sup>3</sup> While John 1:1c reads "the Word was God," the previous phrase reads: "the Word was *with* God," signifying distinction between them. John 20:28 contains Thomas' declaration to the resurrected Lord: "My Lord and my God." In v 31, however, narrator John pulls back from this affirmation and concludes the scene by telling us he wrote his gospel "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, *the Son of God*" — the emphasis found throughout his account. Cf. John 14:1 — "You believe in God, believe also in me."

<sup>4</sup> At John 1:18, most modern versions follow the older Alexandrian text tradition: "the only [begotten] God," against the Majority Text: "the only [begotten] Son." Bart Ehrman believes the reading *only God* is one of many anti-Adoptionist changes made by 2nd century scribes, and says it "would be a mistake ... to read these sophisticated forms of Christology back into the pages of the Fourth Gospel" (p. 80). He substantiates the idea that "disputes over Christology prompted Christian scribes to alter the words of Scripture in order to make them more serviceable for the polemical task" (pp. 3-4); *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: University Press, 1993). In 1 Tim 3:16, the reading "God was manifested in the flesh" appears first in Greek texts of the late 4th century.

The word “Lord” (*kurios*), on the other hand, serves double duty. At times, it refers to God the Father, and usually represents the Hebrew Tetragrammaton (Acts 2:39; 4:26; 7:33). But most often *kurios* designates Jesus. In fact, confessing him as Lord — not God — is the purpose of apostolic evangelism and evidence of the work of the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Psalm 110:1 is foundational here: “The LORD [YHVH] said to my Lord [Adon], Sit at my right hand.” This is the most used passage from the Old Testament in the New Testament. Jesus employs it at key moments of self-revelation to identify himself as God’s *Adon*, the Lord sitting beside YHVH (Matt 22:43-45; 26:63-64). The apostles follow his exegesis.<sup>6</sup>

This God/Lord pattern is evident everywhere. Note Peter’s summary declaration in Jerusalem: “God has made him both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36), or the opening salutations of most epistles (“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah”), or Paul’s words in 1 Cor 8:6: “For us there is one God, the Father ... and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>7</sup>

This distinction between God and Lord, once perceived, allows the dominant New Testament worship patterns to emerge. Words have meaning, and words convey images, and imagery conveys theology.

The objects of Jewish apostolic worship are determined by studying words such as prayer, praise, thanksgiving and blessing, and the specific content of hymns. They also appear in descriptions of the Temple, and in visions of the heavenly throne room or Mount Zion. A complete list of pertinent texts would be astonishingly long, so I will only cite representative examples in various categories.

## Prayer

The primary New Testament Greek verb meaning to pray is *proseuchomai*. The majority of time, the apostles pray to God, as Jesus directed them: “Pray to your Father who is in the secret place” (Matt 6:6). “Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25). “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, when we pray for you” (Col 1:3). In two places *proseuchomai* is used for communication with the “Lord,” probably the resurrected Messiah (Acts 1:24, 22:17-19).

Similarly, prayers (*proseuche*) are mostly offered to the Father, not Jesus. “As I remember you in my prayers...I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah will give you ...” (Eph 1:16-17); “I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus the Messiah and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom 15:30).

Entreaties, supplications, or earnest requests (Greek *deesis*) are addressed to God. “My prayer to God ... is for their salvation” (Rom 10:1). Prayers using other verbs are mostly directed to God

---

<sup>5</sup> Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:9-11; cf. Acts 10:36.

<sup>6</sup> On the use of Psalm 110 in the New Testament, see David Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973). For my related article entitled “Was Judaism Originally Unitarian?” contact me at PO Box 3160, Princeton, New Jersey 08543, USA.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that although God’s title “Lord of lords” (*Adonei ha’adonim*, Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2) is also given to Jesus (Rev 17:14; 19:16), the Son never wears the Father’s unique title “God of gods” (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2; Dan 2:47; 11:36).



(2 Cor 13:7; Phil 4:6; Jam 1:5; 1 John 5:16), with some made of Jesus (John 14:13-14, 2 Cor 12:8). At times, praying simply means raising the voice to heaven, as when the apostles “lifted their voices in one accord to God,” asking for his protection and healing power through his “holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:24-30).

The New Testament reports people “calling upon” or “invoking” (*epikaleo*) the name of Jesus as Lord. Invoking him means calling for his presence and assistance, as when Stephen “called upon [the Lord Jesus]” while being executed (Acts 7:59). Or *epikaleo* means confessing that he is Lord (Rom 10:9). The verb is also used for calling on God (Acts 2:21; 2 Cor 1:23; 1 Pet 1:17). Invoking “the Lord” is a Hebrew idiom from the Old Testament, where the phrase *qara beshem YHVH* signifies either prayer or worship (Gen 13:4; Isa 64:7; 1 Chron 4:10). In Rom 10:12-13, Paul quotes a passage from Joel 3:5 LXX that speaks of calling upon YHVH, but he applies it to Jesus. Paul frequently does this, implying not that Jesus *is* YHVH himself, but that his lordship is the present expression of God’s sovereign reign through him.<sup>8</sup>

Apostolic benedictions are a form of prayer. These exist in two formulas: (A) “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus...make you complete” (Heb 13:20,21; cf. 1 Thess 5:23). (B) “Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you” (1 Thess 3:11; cf. 2 Thess 2:16-17).

Prayer directed to the Holy Spirit is unknown in the New Testament. People pray “*in* (the) Spirit” (Acts 7:55; Eph 6:18; Jude 20), but never “*to*” the Spirit. At no time do they say, “Come, Holy Spirit” or “We seek your will.” Most weighty is the example of Jesus himself. When once “he rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit,” he immediately said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Luke 10:21). Being in Spirit did not compel him to acknowledge the Spirit. When Jesus prays, he seeks counsel from God his Father, not the Spirit. When he says, “I am not alone,” he points to his present Companion: “the Father is with me” (John 16:32; cf. 8:16,29). Likewise, the disciples show no inclination to inquire of the Spirit, as though a voice or presence distinct from God or the resurrected Messiah. In Acts, the Holy Spirit is also designated “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7), and Jesus himself orchestrates the spread of the gospel.

The dominant New Testament practice is that prayer is typically directed to God the Father. In the early days of apostolic evangelism, there is on-going communication with the resurrected Lord, but it never stops with him. Jesus is not a substitute for God. He is positioned between us and God as interceding priest and beside God as ruling prince.

### **Praise**

The primary New Testament expression for offering praise is “to give glory” (*doxa*). Literally, *doxa* means brightness, splendor, or radiance. Figuratively, it means fame, renown, or honor. In the New Testament, after any significant event or answer to prayer, the apostles want all the honor to be credited to the Father, especially when remembering his gifts and saving actions through Jesus.

To the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus the Messiah! (Rom 16:27)

---

<sup>8</sup> Jesus (Heb. “YHVH saves”) came in his Father’s name (John 5:43). Heaven declares: “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah” (Rev 11:15).

God highly exalted him ... that every tongue should confess that Jesus the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9,11)

Believers also “glorify” God. “With one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah” (Rom 15:6); “So that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus the Messiah” (1 Pet 4:11b). Three times Jesus alone is given glory (2 Tim 4:18b; 2 Pet 3:18; Rev 5:12).

The phrase “Blessed be” is a familiar expression from Hebrew and Jewish worship (Exod 18:10; Ezek 3:12; Ps 119:12;). The verb *barakh*, translated “to bless,” originally meant to kneel down or to adore on bended knees (Ps 95:6). In the New Testament, the object of every *berakhah* is God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah” (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3).

### Thanksgiving

“Thanks” or “thanksgiving” are almost always given to God. “Giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah” (Eph 5:20); “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, when we pray for you” (Col 1:3). Numerous times, the apostle says “I thank my God” (Rom 1:8; Phil 1:3; Phlm 4) or “Thanks be to God” (Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 2:14). The *Messianic Shema* in Col 3:17 commands: “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks to God the Father through him.*” Only one time is thanks offered to Jesus directly: “I thank Messiah Jesus, who has strengthened me” (1 Tim 1:12).

### The Objects of Hymns

Many commentators think we have portions of hymns or doxologies scattered throughout the gospels and epistles.<sup>9</sup> Of those hymns mentioning Jesus, not one is directly addressed to him, but are *about* him. Instead, believers are told to direct their “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs ... to God” (Col 3:16) or “to God, even the Father” (in the name of the Lord Jesus the Messiah) (Eph 5:19-20).

The Book of Revelation is another matter. It contains the greatest collection of hymns in the New Testament. Sung in the heavenly temple by heavenly powers or by human martyrs, these hymns are directed to both God and the Lamb (the usual designation for Jesus in this book). As with prayer and praise, most of the hymns recorded by John are addressed to God. In Chapter four, the opening vision of the celestial court focuses on the “One who sits on the throne.”

The four living creatures say: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty,<sup>10</sup> Who was and who is and who is to come Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, To receive glory and honor and power (Rev 4:8b, 11a).

The scene turns to the Lion of Judah/Root of David, who appears not as a warrior but as a lamb.

---

<sup>9</sup> A list of New Testament hymns might include passages such as: John 1:1-18; Eph 1:13-14; 5:14; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 3:4-7; Heb 1:1f.

<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew equivalent of “the Almighty” (Greek *Pantokrator*) is “Lord of hosts” (*YHVH Tzeva’ot*; so usually in LXX).

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, For you were slain and by your blood did ransom men for God Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth And wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (Rev 5:9a,12b).

The scene ends with an explosion of heavenly honor for God and the Lamb:

To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever (Rev 5:13).

Later in Revelation, worship is occasionally offered to God and the Messiah (“Salvation [belongs] to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”, 7:10; cf. 11:15). But most often it is given to God alone (“Amen, blessing and glory ... be to our God”, 7:12; cf. 11:17; 15:3-4; 16:7; 19:1-2, 4-7; 22:9).

### **Worship**

When the four living creatures finished their praise of God and the Lamb, the 24 elders “fell down and worshiped” (Rev 5:14). In the Scripture, to worship someone literally means to prostrate before them. It is an ancient universal sign of reverence, submission or obeisance to any superior. The act does not necessarily imply the superior is deity.

For example, at Solomon’s coronation, King David offered a final blessing and prayer. When he finished, the people “bowed low and *did homage* to the LORD and to the king” (1 Chron 29:20). The Hebrew behind “did homage” is *hishtachavah*, the common verb used for worship. Since David served as God’s co-regent on earth, both he and God receive “worship.”<sup>11</sup> The LXX here has *proskuneo*, which in Koine Greek connotes bowing down and even kissing the hem of someone’s garment, their feet, or the ground.

In the New Testament, *proskuneo* is the standard word for “worship.” Satan wanted Jesus to “fall down and worship” him (Matt 4:9). Many people honored Jesus by prostrating in his presence (Matt 2:11 [the Magi]; 8:2; 14:33; 15:25). Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, his disciples “worshiped him” (Luke 24:52). And in one passage, God orders his angels to “worship” Jesus (Heb 1:6). Yet to worship the Son diverts no honor from the Father God.

Similarly, the act of bending the knee(s) or kneeling is also a sign of reverence. Paul said, “I bow my knees before the Father” (Eph 3:14). At the final coronation of Jesus, everyone will bow and acknowledge that he is “Lord” — a confession that gives glory to God (Phil 2:9-11).

Another verb rendered “worship” is *latreuo*, which literally means *to serve*, usually in the Temple. Worship and service are parallel concepts (Deut 5:9). Inside the heavenly temple, angelic beings continually “serve” God (Rev 7:15). Paul saw himself as a temple-servant, “*ministering* as a priest the gospel of God” to bring the gentiles as an offering to God through the Messiah (Rom 15:16). “I appeal to you ... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual worship* [lit. reasonable service] (Rom 12:1). “Let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28).

---

<sup>11</sup> *Hishtachavah* is used for God (Gen 22:5; Isa 66:23; Ps 97:7) or fellow humans (Gen 23:7; 37:10; 49:8).

## Temple Worship

As part of worship, believers bring various sacrifices — praise, acts of self-giving, even obedience to Messiah — and offer them “to God” (Rom 14:18; 1 Pet 2:5), hoping they are “acceptable” or “pleasing to God” (Heb 13:16,21). Even Jesus gave himself up as “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2).

Following the Temple floor-plan, New Testament worship has a consistent movement or direction. People approach the Holy Place *through* the high priest Jesus who leads them from the altar, past the light, bread, and incense, *toward* God who is in the Most Holy seated on the ark-throne (Heb 4:16; 7:25).

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus the Messiah. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand. (Rom 5:1-2)

Through him both [Jew and gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph 2:18)

Through him ... let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God. (Heb 13:15)

Though Messiah is praised, honored, and served, worship does not end at the High Priest. It moves ever inward — with him — into the Most Holy Place where his blood purchases reconciliation and fellowship with God.

## Visions of Heaven and Mount Zion

The hymns of Revelation emerge from visionary scenes of heavenly worship where God and Jesus are honored. These New Testament scenes in turn draw upon older Hebrew visions of God sitting on his throne. A close study of Rev 4-5 shows many connections to the throne visions of the Old Testament.<sup>12</sup> Of special note is the vision in Daniel 7. This passage marks a significant change in Hebrew throne visions, for in each previous vision (except Exod 24) God is surrounded by spirits. In Daniel 7, he and his royal entourage are joined by a “son of man” (i.e. someone with human appearance). To him God gives authority to share his throne.

This palace scene is mirrored in a New Testament vision described by Stephen, the first martyr for Jesus. Nearing death at the hands of an unbelieving crowd, Stephen “gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said: ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” (Acts 7:55-56). Along with Psalm 110, Daniel 7 is primary Old Testament evidence in the apostle’s apologetic case for Jesus’s authority to stand or sit with God. As God’s co-regent king, he sits and now governs all creation (Eph 1:20-23). As high priest, Jesus stands in the true Temple and “always lives to make intercession” for those “who draw near to God through him” (Heb 7:25).

Throne-room imagery is likely reflected in Paul’s charges to Timothy “in the presence of God and of Messiah Jesus and of the elect angels” (1 Tim 5:21) or “in the presence of God and Messiah Jesus” (2 Tim 4:1; cf. 1 Tim 6:13). And to the victorious believer, Jesus promises: “I will confess his name before my father and before his angels” (Rev 3:5).

---

<sup>12</sup> Exod 24:9-11; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Isa 6:1-8; Ezek 1; 10; Zech 3; and Dan 7:9-14. See also Job 1:6ff; 2:1ff; Ps 89:5-8; Neh 9:6; etc.

Similar imagery is found in Hebrews 12 where the author describes approaching heavenly Mount Zion. This is not a vision *per se*, but a spiritual reality to be imagined in the hearts of believers. Through Jesus the High Priest, they are welcomed into the holy Presence. The Yom Kippur blood of the Messiah Lamb is sprinkled on their behalf to cleanse the ark-throne from contaminating sin.

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *innumerable angels*, in festal gathering and to *the assembly of the first-born* who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge, who is *God*, of all, and to *the spirits of just men* made perfect, and to *Jesus*, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood. (Heb 12:22-24, RSV)

This imagery is consistent with Revelation's throne visions. This is the ancient Hebrew picture of God's council in the heavenly temple-palace, with the one significant addition of the High Priest/Lamb, Jesus. It contains no theological abstractions, only concrete images. If we scan this scene with our mind's eye, what's missing? Biblically speaking, nothing. Yet some early Christian scribes, with a trinitarian map in mind, decided what — or *who* — was missing. So they altered various Latin manuscripts in v 23 to read: "and to *the Spirit* of just men," to create a trinitarian pattern of God, Spirit and Jesus. The biblical writer had, in their opinion, fallen short of orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup>

### **Messianic Revival and the New Map**

This survey of worship in the New Testament has shown a consistent pattern. Jewish apostolic faith is centered on a divine Messiah, but it never becomes a "Jesus-only/Jesus is God" cult. There is no monotheism or monism of the Son. He does not eclipse the One who sent him. Likewise, when praise and prayer ascend to God, there is awareness of his Unique Son to his right who mediates reconciliation. Thus there is no strict unitarianism of the Father. There also is no *tri*-nitarian worship. The Spirit is never an object of devotion — later Christian practice notwithstanding.<sup>14</sup> This Biblical map — with its precise language and imagery — holds the objects of faith in perpetual focus. The image of God and his anointed Lord ever remains before our eyes, from Matthew through Revelation.

In many Christian circles, this image and its associated vocabulary have all but lost their Biblical imperative. Theologians ignore them, I think, because they can't fit them into the traditional landscape. This raises a set of pointed questions.

Did the apostles, martyrs, and heavenly beings who worshiped in God's presence really know what they were doing?

Are their visions, hymns and worship practices fully inspired and theologically adequate?

Do their words serve as prescriptive examples for believers in all ages — or are they meant only as infant steps toward fuller revelation?

Put another way, does the New Testament contain merely a temporary Jewish map of the divine topography to be superseded by one drafted by gentile Christian cartographers?

---

<sup>13</sup> A similar dogmatic correction was made to some Greek texts of 1 Cor 8:6 so as to read: "one God ... one Lord ... *and one Holy Spirit*."

<sup>14</sup> The Creed of Constantinople (381 AD) was the first to include the innovation of worshipping the Holy Spirit

Survival is not the main issue now for most Messianic believers. They're rooted to the source of life and are growing their spiritual kibbutzim before the world. Now is the time to re-evaluate the heritage of the Jewish and Christian exile in light of the reality of God's survey of his land. There is no obligation to use foreign maps of Palestine in the restoration of the land of Israel.

*Copyright Paul Sumner, All Rights Reserved*

# The Use of Liturgy in Messianic Jewish Worship

David H. Stern and Elazar Brandt<sup>15</sup>

To start our article one of us has this story to tell:

*A few years ago I attended the annual conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. One morning I was looking at the program to see what seminars were available and spotted these two: "Liturgy" and "Worship." They were being held at the same hour in adjacent rooms separated by a partition.*

Worship and liturgy separated by a partition — that says it all! All they needed to do was raise the partition and combine the two sessions into one. But the Messianic Jewish movement can sometimes be so vermisht (mixed-up) that it was possible to innocently schedule these two seminars opposite each other without realizing that their subjects are inseparable.

It got worse. I went to the "Liturgy" meeting and tried to pay attention, but the singing from the "Worship" gathering penetrated the partition and kept me from focusing on the topic at hand. I could neither worship using the familiar Jewish liturgical prayers being discussed, nor could I join in the happy singing of familiar Messianic Jewish songs commonly used in "free worship." Either half of the picture would have been better than both at once coming at me from two directions. A man with one watch knows what time it is; a man with two is never sure.

Even Messianic Jews who take pride in their Jewishness, including those boasting orthodox family origins, have a tendency to view liturgy as something other than worship. In addition, to the extent that Messianic Judaism has been influenced by "low-church" Protestant tradition, we have inherited an aversion to liturgy. While there is no shortage of Messianic Jews who participate in liturgical worship in Lutheran, Episcopal, Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches, for example, even these tend to balk at the suggestion of using traditional Jewish liturgy in our Messianic worship services or our personal prayer lives. Since we are heirs to an unusually rich liturgical heritage, parts of which can be traced back to the beginnings of the Israelite nation, and most of which is firmly rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is worth our while to examine this aversion to its inclusion in our spiritual experience.

The very fact that a Messianic Jewish conference can offer a workshop on "Liturgy" and

---

<sup>15</sup>Elazar (Larry) Brandt (M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary) was a teacher and congregation leader within the Messianic movement in the States before he made *aliyah* in '96. He is presently living in Jerusalem.

David H. Stern holds Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University and a M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary. His books include *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, *Jewish New Testament* (his translation) and its companion volume, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. He, too, lives in Jerusalem.

schedule it opposite a workshop on “Worship” suggests a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, if the organizers were opposed to the use of our liturgical tradition, they would not give it a hearing at a conference. They were obviously attempting to inform people about the liturgy and its appropriate use. On the other hand, placing it separate from the “Worship” class, but at the same time, makes one wonder about the schedulers’ attitudes toward the very same tradition. It would seem that they expected people to choose either “Liturgy” or “Worship” — the possibility that one person might be interested in both was apparently not considered. At some level there is a perceived conflict between worship and liturgy — a conflict felt even by those who favor the liturgy’s use. The question is: why?

The authors of this present article unashamedly advocate a recovery of our Jewish heritage by the Messianic Jewish movement, including the re-incorporation of our liturgical tradition into our worship and prayer life. Since we hold our Siddur (the Jewish Prayer Book) and other liturgical collections to be rich spiritual and cultural treasures well worth using in a Messianic Jewish setting, we will attempt in this article to identify what it is that makes people resist the use of liturgy. We further plan to inform the reader of the general history, nature and content of the liturgy; and address certain problematic issues connected with the liturgy — both theological and practical. We fervently hope that our readers will re-examine their understanding of and attitude toward Jewish liturgy, and return to the wealth of worship resources that belong to us and our people.

### **What is the Real Question?**

The title of the article implies a question. But what is the question? Is it: a) Why *must* we use liturgy? or b) Why must we *avoid* using liturgy? The “musts” and “mustn’ts” suggest an underlying problem. Too many of us act as though complying with laws or traditions is always motivated by obligation, fear and guilt — we feel obligated to do what we do not want to do; we fear the consequences of failure; and we feel guilty for not living up to the supposed expectations. This leads to resentment and rebellion. We hope to show a more excellent way.

When Jewish life is lived as an expression of love for God and our people, the whole framework of the question changes from “musts” and “mustn’ts” to a much more inviting “Why not?” If we catch even a glimpse of the enormous privilege of being born into the people called by God to carry the message and power of his Kingdom to the ends of the earth, yea, to live in the very generation that rose from the ashes of the Holocaust to share in the return of our people to the land promised 4000 years ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and if that is not enough, to live at a time when the return of Messiah Yeshua to Jerusalem seems imminent), how can we resist the joy of walking in our calling and discovering the fullness of what God has for us both spiritually and culturally? Why not be a Jew in all of the ways that are important to God? Why not praise the God of our Fathers in the synagogues of Jerusalem, or New York, or wherever his people are found, clad in *tallit* and *tefillin* like Yeshua and his disciples, even if only to help our Jewish people understand and receive the good news? Why not pray some of the very same prayers Yeshua’s first disciples prayed 2000 years ago, in the same language that they prayed and spoke in, a language which was almost dead, and now lives again? Why not, indeed?

If the liturgy is a vehicle for such good news, whence the guilt and fear? This is a worthy question! There is a story in *Mishnah Berakhot* 1:1, according to which the sons of Rabban



Gamliel returned home from a party after midnight and had not yet recited the evening *Shema*. Since this Gamliel was the teacher of Shaul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul), it is quite possible that Shaul was also at this party, and one cannot help but wonder if he also failed to recite the *Shema* before midnight — the deadline suggested by the sages. (Note that the recital of the *Shema* — Deuteronomy 6:4-9 with accompanying benedictions and other Torah passages — morning and evening was a tradition enacted by the rabbis based upon verses in the Torah, but not directly commanded in the Torah. Virtually all Jewish liturgical prayer originated this way.) When the sons asked their father what to do, he replied, “If the sun has not come up, you must still recite it.” No guilt; no fear. What happens if the sun *has* come up? It simply means the time for the evening *Shema* has passed, and they can say the morning *Shema*. The evening *Shema* they’ll say tomorrow evening. The rabbis of old did not heap guilt and fear upon us at all. The fact is, we have often done it to ourselves by jumping to uninformed conclusions about matters we do not adequately understand. And modern Judaism can tend to make us feel guilty, if we manage not to do it to ourselves.

To our rabbis of ancient times, prayer was a joy and a privilege, not just an obligation. Centuries of usage have for many of our people turned this joy and privilege into a rote exercise. The codification of the prayers in the Middle Ages, along with processes which history has brought to bear on the Jewish people, have forced the prayers into a role they didn’t originally have — that of preserving Jewish identity. Hence the guilt and fear, the all too common vain repetition of daily prayers formed directly from words of Scripture, the reduction of conversations with the God of the Universe to forms without meaning, recited merely because they are statutory and somehow preserve Jewishness. The time has come for us to stop rejecting our customs because they can be misused, and to start rediscovering what all the earlier excitement was about.

### **The Story of Jewish Prayer**

According to the Torah, ever since creation, people communicated with God. Adam and Eve spoke directly with him almost as though he were part of the family. Unfortunately, no one has enjoyed such closeness with our Creator since. Cain and Abel already knew how to offer sacrifices. One can imagine that this procedure and the words and actions accompanying it eventually became customary. The slaughter of an animal and the burning of it on an altar built of stones must have been a sufficiently formal occasion that the worshipper would not then proceed simply to “share what was on his heart” with the Almighty. This is not to suggest that the worship was impersonal, but only that it was probably formal, like a husband and wife expressing their love for each other at their wedding ceremony as opposed to in their bedroom. True, the great men and women of the Scriptures enjoyed an intimacy with God that we all crave, but every one of them also built altars, offered sacrifices and no doubt followed time-honored sacred procedures in their communication with him.

Serendipity was never high on God’s list of values when it comes to worship. As Cain, Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10), Uzzah (2 Sam 6:6-7), and others learned the hard way, God is to be approached on his terms, not ours. When the Scriptures speak of someone “calling upon the Name of the Lord,” we must remember that the meanings of the word “call” include “to recite, to call worshippers to an assembly.” So these events may also have been conducted according to prescribed or customary formal procedures. Noah knew about clean and unclean animals already

long before Leviticus! In Leviticus, and throughout the Torah, God prescribes in minute detail how he is to be approached in worship. The conditions and procedures are specific and clear. And, inasmuch as these instructions were given to us by God either directly or through his servants, and inasmuch as his presence dwelt in the sanctuary, it is not hard to imagine that formal levitical worship must have been a powerful spiritual experience which was in reality “led” by the Holy Spirit, albeit led in advance.

In Deuteronomy 26:1-10, we find an example of a prescribed (liturgical) prayer which God himself commanded us to say when we bring our firstfruits to the temple on *Shavuot*. Even though we are unaccustomed to bringing firstfruits, this prayer is familiar because it has become an important segment of the Passover *Seder*. God did not say, “Bring your firstfruits and thank Me.” He ordained the formal recital of the events that brought Israel to this moment, the events that made the growing of fruits in the land of promise a reality. Indeed, part of the purpose of liturgical prayer is to ensure the completeness and correctness of the worship experience, as well as the beauty and sanctity of it.

Our most ancient songs and prayers, such as the songs of Moses and Miriam (Exod 15), Deborah (Judg 5) and Hannah (1 Sam 2), are far too complex to have been prayed spontaneously. It is almost certain that they were composed for, or in response to, the occasions, and then used by others in subsequent celebrations of those occasions or events. We find similar prayers in the mouths of Miriam (Mary) the mother of Yeshua and Elisheva (Elisabeth) the mother of Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) on the occasion of their meeting prior to the birth of their children (Luke 1). Of Elisheva the text says she was moved by the Spirit to pray her prayer. Liturgical prayer and the moving of the Spirit can and do go hand in hand.

But it was with the advent of David and Solomon that our prayer traditions find their real origins. David composed many of the Psalms and made preparations for the construction of the temple, which was later built by his son Solomon. The sacrificial services prescribed in the Torah were brought into the temple worship, along with whatever customs and traditions had developed by that time. The Psalms were not just the private meditations of David and other authors. They became the “prayer book” of Israel, and were used as an integral part of temple worship. Certain psalms, prayers and songs accompanied the morning and evening daily sacrifices, and the afternoon grain offering. Others were added for special occasions like the holy days and festivals, or the coronation of a new king.

At some time during the Monarchy, or more likely, during and after the Exile, when Jewish people were dispersed far and wide, those who lived too far from Jerusalem to go to the temple regularly began meeting in their own communities. (While local worship before the Exile became corrupted with the worship of local deities, this later practice remained focused on the God of Israel.) Each community would send delegations to Jerusalem on the festivals, accompanied by their priests when it was their turn to serve. These delegations brought the sacrifices and offerings of the community, and returned with the songs and prayers from the temple. The communities learned to pray the prayers from the temple services at the times when those services were taking place in Jerusalem, and so they vicariously participated (*Mishnah Ta’anit* 4:2). This was the origin of the synagogue service and the Siddur, or prayer book.

By the time the temple was destroyed the second time, there were synagogues throughout Israel and the Diaspora. This fortuitous link between the temple and the outlying communities

enabled Judaism to survive one of its worst tragedies, the destruction of Jerusalem. The patterns of worship established in these synagogues to reflect the temple services are still the basis of our synagogue services today.

### **The Jewish Prayer Book**

The Siddur, embellished over many centuries by many hands, is an anthology of the language and customs of Jewish prayer. It is used worldwide and has been used in one form or another for nearly 2500 years by most Jews who pray. The Siddur holds the central place in Jewish hearts when we think of prayer. It uses biblical and traditional language to express the hopes and spiritual struggles of our people. It is not a book written by rabbis and imposed on mindless sheep. On the contrary, it is the product of many generations of actual use by Jewish communities around the world. Individual prayers, hymns and songs were composed by a broad spectrum of authors, some known and some unknown to us. What has stood the test of time and continued to be used by the community found its way into the Siddur (Daily Prayer Book), *Machzor* (Holy Day Prayer Book) and *Haggadah* (Passover Prayer Book). Even today, the prayers in the Siddur are too numerous for all to be used at every service; so modern rabbis, cantors and worship leaders select the prayers to be used at each service. And most congregations have room for prayers, songs and meditations composed by their own members to be added to the “mix” at any given service. Moreover, there are variations in the Siddurim used by the Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Kurds, Tunisians, and other groups.

Extemporaneous prayer is certainly also a known part of our tradition. Chassidic stories abound portraying beloved rabbis and *tzaddikim* praying to God from their hearts during services or at any other time they may be so moved. Such stories are also found in Talmud and Midrashic literature. But they are only a small part of our worship repertoire. One might liken it to an extemporaneous cadenza performed by a soloist in a concerto. The cadenza derives its meaning from the fixed written music of the concerto.

But, you might object, the Holy Spirit can come upon someone and inspire a spontaneous expression from our spirits which is of infinite value to God! Yes, we agree that this is possible, but in our opinion, in a congregational setting the Spirit generally inspires people over time to produce fruits of enduring value. Inspiration is not meant to be a momentary experience. We believe it is in God’s interest to inspire communal worship that has beauty, balance and an awesome reverence, not to mention continuity with our collective history and faith. As stated we are speaking about our public, corporate worship. No one would deny an individual the right to cry out to God from his heart in his prayer closet. No one — certainly not God — will presume to judge the aesthetic value of someone’s heart cry. But many a person has found inspiration from the Spirit to produce poetry, books, music or works of art in the wake of tragedy as a way of turning the tragedy to triumph. It is these compositions that tend to find their way into our corporate worship, not the momentary musings of our souls.

### **The Structure of Jewish Prayer**

Nearly all Jewish worship services follow the pattern of the temple service. A typical service is organized around the following outline:

	Opening prayers, psalms and hymns.
<i>Barekhu</i>	Formal call to worship.
<i>Shema</i>	Creed. Declaration of God's sovereignty over Israel, recited morning and evening.
<i>Amidah</i>	Praise/prayer. The <i>Eighteen Benedictions</i> , a daily synopsis of prayer, corresponding to the daily sacrifices, morning, afternoon and evening.
<i>Kriat haTorah</i>	Reading of God's word (the Torah and the Prophets), often with translation, explanations or a sermon.
	Concluding prayers and hymns.

Every one of these elements in one form or another dates back at least to Second Temple times, and was most likely part of the customary practice of Yeshua and his disciples.

In that timeless world of Midrash where all things are possible, our rabbis even imagined that the daily prayers were established and practiced by the Patriarchs! In *Berakhot 26b*, Rabbi Yose ben Hanina (late third century CE) says, "The Patriarchs instituted the (three daily) prayers." Nobody claims this to be a historical fact — not even Rabbi Yose ben Hanina who said it. It is a typical form of rabbinic application of the biblical text, the purpose of which is to establish a metaphorical continuity between the Torah text and the practices of later times. The significance is not in the historical/exegetical value of the statement, since it has none, but rather in the rabbis' vision of "all Israel" praying together in all times and places — even the patriarchs. The same passage goes on to state what we said earlier, that the three daily prayers corresponded to the morning, afternoon and evening sacrifices in the temple, and this statement *is* historically valid.

So we have inherited a system of prayer and synagogue worship which either historically or midrashically is linked to the patriarchs, the temple services and the prayer life of Yeshua and His disciples. To participate in this structure by using the Siddur in Messianic Jewish worship is to state that we share the hopes and struggles of our people. Furthermore, through our own additional prayers and songs we declare that Yeshua is the answer to those hopes and struggles. Not to participate is to appear to abandon our portion of the Jewish hopes and struggles in favor of a new and different faith. In fact, it is more than mere appearance, because by not using the inherited structures, we are indeed abandoning a significant mass of Jewish experience, discarding it like so much rubbish. Is this the message we wish to send to our people? Is it the message we wish to pass on to our children? Is it really what we intend to do to ourselves?

### **What About Free-form or Spirit-directed Worship?**

This is a more complicated question than it seems to be on the surface. We have already argued that there is a place for unstructured, non-liturgical prayer. However, we do not feel that we should limit our corporate worship experience to the transitory meditations of individual hearts — even those moved by the Spirit. We must consider that the Holy Spirit can move, and indeed has moved, over long periods of time through many willing hearts to produce a legacy of worship materials that have stood the test of time, and are in use worldwide and by most Jews who pray. The Spirit continues to move in our day to inspire people who compose songs, poetry,

inspirational stories and such that are also widely used in modern Messianic Jewish worship. Just because we have the Holy Spirit does not mean that we do not need other people who also have the Holy Spirit, in past, present and future generations, to give expression to our worship of the Most High that is worthy of His Name.

We do not mean to say that the rabbis who composed many of the prayers now found in the Siddur had the Holy Spirit in them without believing in Yeshua, but rather that, in our view, the Holy Spirit can use any vehicle he wishes, including unbelievers, to do his work; so that the inspired prayers can come from the mouths or pens of uninspired people. Whether a prayer can be prayed by believers does not depend on who wrote it, but on what it says — compare uninspired Caiaphas' truly inspired prophecy of Yeshua's death for all the people (John 11:49-52).

Consider for a moment the use of songs in our "Spirit-directed" worship services. What is the difference between a song and a liturgical poem? Both use someone else's words and melodies. They are not spontaneous expressions from the heart of the worshipper. But when enough individual worshippers learn a song, or a piece of liturgy, and use it in a commonly understood way, that song or liturgy becomes a group expression of worship. Perhaps the Spirit could move a group of people spontaneously to sing or chant the same previously unknown words to the same previously unknown tune. But he does not; to our knowledge this has never occurred. Groups worship together as the Spirit leads worship leaders to teach us how.

We must now dispel a common misperception about the moving of the Holy Spirit. "Spirit-directed" and "spontaneous" are not the same thing. People who did spontaneous things in worship in Biblical times sometimes paid with their lives! Just because something happens spontaneously does not mean that the Holy Spirit prompted it. Likewise, just because something is planned does not mean the Spirit did not prompt it. We must renounce this aversion to structure and authority for what it is — rebellion! Spontaneity does not produce holiness. Discipline — in accordance with biblical teachings and empowered by the Spirit — produces holiness that will show itself in the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22).

In any case, "free" worship, as we have observed it, is often not as free as its practitioners imagine. Apparent "free-form" prayers are often repetitions of the same expressions by the same people at the same time in the weekly service — an unofficial liturgy! We would do well to check that our "free" prayer practice has not degenerated into mediocre repetitions of the same songs and phrases — the very fear which drives us to avoid liturgical worship. It is by no means proven that people who renounce liturgical prayer for free-form prayer pray more or better than before (indeed, the opposite may occur). Rather, what often happens is that an unsaved but "religious" person attending a traditional congregation with a liturgy may get saved in a congregation that has free-form worship. He begins attending that congregation, and of course his prayer life is better — not because he has switched from liturgical to spontaneous praying, but because he is now born again. The reverse pilgrimage, from free-form to liturgical worship, produces the same result — if the person goes from an unsaved to a saved condition! What makes liturgical or free-form prayer come alive is not its style, but the person's salvation experience. In a group of people that does not know God, any song or prayer in any language could seem spiritually dead — although its presentation might be infused with much soulful or fleshly excitement.

Regarding Jewish prayer specifically, many of our Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters recall bad experiences from childhood or even adulthood, such as being bored silly in dead

liturgical services, and so they blame the tradition, when the problem is really that they and their synagogues did not know God. So why not attack the real problem, instead of red herrings and straw men? We know for a fact that some Jewish believers *not* raised in religious homes *enjoy* traditional Jewish synagogue services and have no trouble sensing the Holy Spirit at work in themselves, even if the other worshippers do not believe in Yeshua. We have heard accusations of everything from religious spirits and vain repetitions to legalism and Judaizing ascribed to the traditional liturgy, when in reality the problem is not in the liturgy, but in some of the people who use it. The same problems are also found among people who do not use the liturgy. Avoiding the liturgy is not the answer. Once again, we avoid the liturgy out of fear or ignorance, but do not deal with the problems we are afraid of, so the problems continue precisely as we feared they would! Let's deal with the problems that hinder our worship, and quit dispatching scapegoats outside the camp. And in the process, let us not neglect the great legacy that has been handed down to us.

### **Some Issues Regarding the Use of Jewish Liturgy**

Anyone who uses the traditional prayers encounters several issues regarding the use of our Jewish liturgy in Messianic Jewish worship. Before we address them, let us make sure we are asking the right questions. Example: you read in your Siddur a prayer which appears to contain a doctrinal problem. Before either throwing out the prayer (or the Siddur) or attempting to repair it, you must verify that there is an actual problem. Does the prayer contradict the teaching of Scripture, or is it just saying something in a way you are not accustomed to hearing? Does it actually conflict with Scripture, or only with something you read or heard taught *about* the Scripture? Is the problem in the Hebrew text, or in the translation? Is the alleged problem fatal, or is it in an area that is open to differences of opinion? If it is an actual problem, can it be solved by changing a word or two, or is the whole passage problematic? Once you know what the question is, you are ready to try to answer it. Here are a few common complaints about the Siddur among Messianic Jews:

Theological error: The well known hymn *Adon Olam* contains the statement “He is one, there is no second.” This was written in the Middle Ages, and, given when it was written, there is no doubt that its author meant to reject Yeshua. Some Messianic Jewish congregations won't use this beautiful hymn, or they omit the stanza containing this line. Is this necessary? The language of this stanza is taken from Isaiah 45. Do we still believe Isaiah 45? The fact is, the author was rejecting what he thought was a polytheistic belief — that Yeshua is the Son of God. We know that our belief in Yeshua is not polytheistic, that it is in keeping with Isaiah 45. So need we reject the language of Scripture because someone tried to use it against us? We think not. In fact, those omitting the stanza may implicitly be admitting the polytheism they are falsely accused of.

Error in the translation: The opening paragraph of the *Amidah* concludes with the phrase, “He (God) *will bring* a Redeemer to their (the Patriarchs') descendents for His Name's sake.” Some Messianic Jews feel this is a problem, since we believe that God *has brought* a Redeemer to us — Yeshua. So some change the text to read in the past tense instead of future. In our opinion, the change is unnecessary, because the Hebrew reads in the present tense — “He brings” — which does not emphasize the time, but the act. If you're praying in Hebrew, no problem. If the translation is wrong, change it to conform to the Hebrew text. (One of us used to alter the English translation, but not the Hebrew, to read: “who brought a Redeemer to their children and will bring

him again to their children's children.”)

Anti-Messianic statements: Perhaps the best known is the “blessing” on the heretics (Hebrew: *minim*), as it was originally composed, but now altered to be a “blessing” on the traitors (Hebrew: *malshinim*). In the synagogues of the first and second centuries many groups were considered heretical — the Sadducees, the Gnostics, and, among others, the believers in Yeshua. The leaders of Judaism at Yavneh who developed the framework for post-Temple Judaism attempted to solve the problem by this addition to the *Amidah*, thus raising the number of its blessings from 18 (Hebrew: *shemoneh-esreh*) to 19. Actually, most of it is not a blessing but a curse; the idea was that anyone who did not recite this benediction was a heretic who refused to curse himself. Such a person could then be expelled from the synagogue. The modern form of this benediction is not explicitly anti-Messianic. But some may not wish to pronounce a curse on anyone. Either eliminate it entirely, or compose a true blessing or prayer asking God to change the hearts of traitors, so that they come to repentance and salvation through Yeshua.

Can or should we try to correct these problems without abandoning the Siddur out of hand? We say yes. Yes we can, and yes we should. The vast body of traditional prayer is quoted directly from Scripture, or paraphrases scriptural teachings and yearnings. Often the influence of the rabbis is felt not so much in the language of the Siddur, but in the choice of which passages to pray under what circumstances, or in the concatenation of several Scripture quotes into a single prayer or song. When problems are encountered, they are generally not fatal, and can be corrected by changing a word or two, or at most by omitting a sentence or paragraph. It is best to keep changes minimal, and change only what is absolutely necessary. Extensive changes undermine the point of using the liturgy.

Many people, particularly outside of Israel, question the use of Hebrew. Why use Hebrew among non-Hebrew-speaking Jews? Frankly, we wish everyone felt as we do, that it is a unique historical privilege and joy to be able to pray in the language of the prophets and apostles, which was long dormant, and is now alive again. It is quite possible in a few months or a year of routine learning to acquire enough Hebrew knowledge to understand the relatively elementary Hebrew of the Siddur. There are even classroom programs teaching the basics of reading Hebrew (the alphabet and a selection of common words and phrases) in one day or weekend, or a couple of evenings (check your local Jewish newspaper or *The Jerusalem Post*). Considering the relatively small effort required to enrich a lifetime of prayer, worship and biblical study, is it really too much to ask? But for those who cannot, it is far better to use the vernacular than to neglect the Siddur completely.

What about long or repetitious prayers? Must we use “the whole megillah?” The answer to this is: nobody uses the whole thing. No, it is not necessary to use everything. When introducing liturgy one might start with *Barekhu* followed by a few relevant selections from the *Shema* and the *Eighteen Benedictions*. One can use the benedictions for bread and wine at meals. One can use prayers or songs that are particular to the festivals as part of your celebration. It takes time to learn. One cannot expect to come into a liturgical service with no preparation and find it meaningful. (Similarly, the first few times one attends a less structured worship service, it too may feel uncomfortable and foreign.)

Learning how to pray and worship is an investment, especially when liturgy is used. Like songs, liturgical prayers become meaningful when they become familiar, when they are

understood. It is our great misfortune to live in one of the few generations of our entire history when the average Jewish person has not been educated in these things from his youth. It will take much work to recover lost ground. As Rabbi Tarfon said, “You are not obligated to finish the task, but neither are you free to neglect it” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:15). To this end we present here a brief bibliography that can greatly enhance a person’s understanding and appreciation of Jewish liturgy and worship. The three Hebrew-and-English editions of the Siddur that we find most useful are:

- Joseph Hertz, *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book: Hebrew Text, English Translation — with Commentary and Notes*. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1948).
- Philip Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book*. (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1949).
- Nosson Scherman, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur: Weekday /Sabbath/Festival*. (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1985).

The Hertz, though 50 years old, still has the best English commentary, relying, as it does, on modern scholarship; whereas the ArtScroll commentary is more dependent on Chassidic interpretations. The Birnbaum has the most readable English translation; it has good Scripture references, as do the others, but little other commentary.

In addition, we recommend:

- Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship*. (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 222 North 15th Street, 1971).
- Daniel Burman, *Praying with Understanding*. (Jerusalem: Abaima Publishers, P.O.B. 7867, Israel, 1985, 1986).
- Evelyn Garfiel, *Service of the Heart: A Guide to the Jewish Prayer Book*. (North Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Book Company, 12015 Sherman Road, 1958, 1971).

Millgram’s book is the longest, broadest, deepest and most scholarly; Garfiel’s is also broad but shorter. Burman’s uses a journalist’s framework (who, what, where, when, how and why) for each prayer.

### **Reprise — What is the real question?**

When all is said and done, what is the real question? We exhort our people to search their hearts and souls and get to the root of it. What is it that keeps us from participating in the heritage handed down to us by a hundred generations, many of whom gladly gave their lives rather than forfeit the treasure they possessed? Is the tradition worthless? With a continuous life of 4000 years, how can it be worthless? Is it ungodly? Only if it is misused. But then anything can become ungodly if misused. At the very least, it is a tool which God used to unite and preserve our people through centuries of wandering and persecution. It is what reminded us who we are, to whom we belong, and what we stand to inherit if we endure to the end. Is it legalistic? People can be legalistic. People who do not follow Jewish traditions are also capable of legalism. Indeed, enforced non-use of the tradition is equally as legalistic as enforced use of it. Is it burdensome? At first it can be intimidating; but it need not be burdensome.

What is the real question? How much do we value our identity as part of Israel? Do we love God and Israel enough to make the effort to learn our people’s language of prayer? We live in what may well become one of history’s most exciting generations. There is no doubt that Israel has found a central place on the stage of world events in our time. What is God doing? What is our part in it? Does God have something to say on the subject of how we Messianic Jews live our



lives? Does God care if we value our Jewish heritage, or is it enough for him if all or most of us come to know Yeshua as Messiah, but neglect our mission as Israel? Won't we be surprised if we gather for the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the subsequent worship in heaven, and find Yeshua leading us in the prayers from the Siddur? Why not taste and see that what we have inherited is good?

*Copyright David H. Stern and Elazar Brandt, All Rights Reserved*

# The Place of the Siddur in the Messianic Community

Tzvi Sadan<sup>16</sup>

Before attempting to speak about the place of the Siddur in the Messianic community, we need to place the prayer book in the context of wider Jewish tradition. The Siddur cannot be separated from other aspects of Jewish tradition since to a very large degree it represents that tradition. Both liberal thinkers such as Rosenzweig and ultra-orthodox scholars such as Adin Even-Yisrael (Steinsaltz) would agree with this view:

If any single volume can tell us what it means to be a Jew, it is the Siddur which embodies the visions and aspirations, the sorrows and joys of many generations. The whole gamut of Jewish history may be traversed in its pages.<sup>17</sup>

The prevalent attitude towards Jewish tradition — that it is anachronistic and irrelevant — is held only by those who either reject faith in general or by those who reject Judaism in particular. Today, for example, although a secular Jew can argue whether one needs tradition he cannot ignore the truth that he is a Jew because his forefathers lived according to the tradition which he now rejects. Messianic Jews, being Jews, must also decide what their relationship to Jewish tradition will be. This necessity and choice form the framework of the present discussion.

The Siddur, the fixed order of daily prayers as we know it today, is a relatively late compilation of public prayer. Public prayer did not start with the Siddur. It was, so it seems, an integral part of Israel's communal activity from the creation of the nation. The first hint of the existence of a public prayer may be found in Genesis 4:26, where for the first time we are told that "at that time men began to call by the name of the Lord."<sup>18</sup> Corporate prayer is attested from the time of Egypt where the congregation of Israel "cried out" and "God heard their groaning" (Exod 2:23, 24) all the way through to post-exilic times (cf. Neh 9:1-6). In the New Testament period, it is evident that public prayer already had a specific recognizable form that had been developed within the framework of the synagogue apart, though not disconnected, from the temple.

From the information found in the New Testament one can draw a rough sketch of the nature and purpose of the synagogue. The synagogue was a public house (Luke 7:5)<sup>19</sup>, with its own

---

<sup>16</sup> Tzvi Sadan holds an M.A. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, Illinois. He has contributed to several publications on the Messianic movement and has recently founded the Kivun Ministry in Jerusalem.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Birnbaum, *Daily Prayer Book* (Hebrew Publication Company: New York, 1977), xi.

<sup>18</sup> Targum Onkelos renders the word "call" in this verse as "pray", thus giving the impression of public prayer.

<sup>19</sup> The synagogue had another name, i.e., *beit ha-am* (the people's house).

public officials (Mark 3:35), that was active at least once a week on the Sabbath (Mark 3:6). It was used for public prayer (Matt 6:5), and the reading (Acts 13:15) and teaching (Matt 13:54) of Scripture.

The New Testament does not provide us with specifics as to how a public prayer was conducted. That does not mean, however, that prayer in public was a daily matter of improvisation and the activity carried on within the synagogue was according to public whim. From its early stages, synagogue life was regulated in accordance with specific regulations.<sup>20</sup> Uniformity was necessary if unity was to be achieved.

At the same time that prayers were not rigidly fixed and varied in style and content from place to place, they nevertheless possessed a recognizable form. When the Talmud discusses the *Amidah* prayer, for example, it is concerned about the order of the blessings within an already-existing prayer.<sup>21</sup> This example clearly shows that known prayers were available in a well-defined form. Other prayers from the Siddur, such as the *Shema* and the *Kaddish*, have been shown to be very old.<sup>22</sup> Since the liturgy was considered so important it was carefully evaluated and approved by the community's religious leaders, since their very purpose was to reflect the community's understanding of who God is and what he requires from men. As such, the synagogue served as a vehicle by which the idealism, hopes, and aspirations of the people were internalized within the life of the nation. No less important was the role the synagogue played in providing the all-important link and sense of continuation with a common history. The reading of Scripture and the recital of biblical prayers created the sense of a shared past and destiny. It was this sense of common history which, more than anything else, helped to preserve the Jewish people over the last 2000 years. Indeed it was a sense of common history, not theology, which eventually gave rise to the Zionist movement. It is also a sense of common history which today gives adhesive power to a fragmented Israeli society.

### **The Formation of the Siddur**

Although written prayers and forms of worship existed in one shape or another from the beginning, it was not until the ninth century AD that the first prayer book designed to create a unified form of prayer throughout the Jewish diaspora was composed. For centuries, public prayers more closely resembled R. Shimon's dictum that discouraged too formalistic prayers. The saying: "When you pray, make not your prayer into a fixed form" (*Pirkei Avot* 2:18) held true for centuries.

It was only at the time of the gaonim (8th - 11th centuries) that serious attempts were made towards creating a standard form of public worship. During the gaonic period, both Amram Gaon and Saadia Gaon compiled Siddurs which are still influential today. It should not surprise us that this process began in the diaspora, for it was there that the need for unity was felt more strongly.

---

<sup>20</sup> bBerakhot 19b, for example discusses even minute details like who is allowed to read Scripture in public.

<sup>21</sup> bMegillah 17b.

<sup>22</sup> For a brief discussion of the origin of these prayers, see H. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 24, 50-51, 56. One may find these prayers in Birnbaum's Siddur: *Shema* (pp. 76, 78); *Tefillah* (pp. 82-96); *Kaddish* (p. 70).

As long as the Jewish people lived in the land the question of unity was not as acute. Perhaps this is why “the process of standardization was never completed” in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> The religious leaders of the diaspora, however, were clearly aware that a slow process of fragmentation was beginning to creep into the Jewish community. A fixed prayer service was sanctioned only when it became obvious that unless a unifying factor was introduced into the disintegrating Jewish community it would fall into such disarray that Jews around the world would succumb to irreparable sectarianism.<sup>24</sup> At the heart of the formation of the Siddur, therefore, lies the attempt to preserve a unity within the Jewish community. The emergence of a standard form of prayer was possible precisely because it was based on tradition and was not an innovation.

The preserving force of liturgy can be well demonstrated by looking at the Karaite community. The Karaites, although labeled as heretics and forced out of the synagogue, remained a vibrant and viable Jewish community due, at least in part, to the uniting nature of their own particular form of Jewish tradition.<sup>25</sup> It needs to be stressed here that the Karaites *did* share the same, albeit not identical, Jewish tradition as mainstream Judaism. So much so that to the untrained eye there is no difference between them and rabbinic tradition. We can take an example from the *Kiddush* blessing. The rabbinic version says: “Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine.” The Karaite prayer says “Blessed is your God, King of the universe, who created the tree of vines, and, from its wine, makes the heart of humanity rejoice; as it is written, ‘wine makes mankind’s heart happy, making the face brighter than oil’.”<sup>26</sup>

Without entering into the details of the blessing itself, both forms share a common tradition: the general idea of blessings and the particular blessing over the cup of wine at the Sabbath meal. Both blessings are uniquely Jewish. More recently, the Reform and Conservative movements have proved the same principle: that in keeping at least some aspects of tradition, Jewish identity is preserved. Even when these movements reject two major pillars of Judaism, the hope in a personal Messiah and the need for sacrifice, they have nevertheless remained within the Jewish fold.

By contrast, in cases where Jewish communities were unable to link themselves to tradition, they slowly withered and eventually vanished from the face of the Jewish world. Such was the case of the myriad of first-century Jews who came to believe in the messiahship of Jesus and were all zealous for the Torah (cf. Acts 21:20). Pushed out of the synagogue by the Jewish community<sup>27</sup> and forbidden to indulge in Jewish rites by the church,<sup>28</sup> they lost contact with the

---

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman, *Canonization*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. VII: *Hebrew Language and Letters* (NY/Philadelphia: Columbia University Press/ The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958<sup>2</sup>), 113.

<sup>25</sup> Baron argues quite convincingly that “passages from talmudic methodology, the kindling of Sabbath lights, and the sacrificial services” were included in the Siddur to exclude the Karaites from the synagogue; pp. 70-73. See also Hoffman, *Canonization*, 14-15.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Hoffman, *Canonization*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Many scholars (e.g., Adin Steinsaltz, James Parkes, et al) believe that it was primarily the 12th blessing of the Amidah, “May the slanderers have no hope . . .”, which forced the Messianic Jews out of the synagogue. In contrast, Eliezer Levi argues that it was the now censored verse from the *Aleinu* prayer (“. . .

nation's history and people and therefore slowly faded and died out as a living community. Paradoxically, the secular "tradition" of so many of today's Jewish communities is leading them also to assimilation and the ultimate breakup of Judaism itself.

From the above discussion we arrive at the following conclusion: Although public prayer is not unique to Judaism, the Jewish people developed their own unique public prayers — a living tradition which enabled them to preserve and protect their Jewish identity. In this sense, the Siddur, in one form or another, may well be unique, since no other prayer book demands unity of belief and of a people. All other prayer books demand only unity of belief.

### **Bonding the Messianic Jewish Community**

This conclusion has direct bearing upon the Messianic community. Today, just as in the first few centuries AD, most Jews who come to accept Jesus' messiahship insist on their Jewishness. There is an objective difficulty in this claim, however: for centuries, faced with the option of either being faithful to the Messiah or to the Jewish community (but not to both), Messianic Jews were forced to assimilate. It is little wonder that in researching the history of Messianic Jewry, Hugh Schonfield was able to produce only a thin single volume.<sup>29</sup> Possessing no history of their own, Messianic Jews had to face the stinging accusation that when they embraced Jesus they ceased being Jews. In the past, we have to admit, this charge readily matched reality. Today, when Messianic Jews are free to worship as they please, the problem still persists. Messianic Jews rightly insist on being called and remaining Jews, a claim supported by scripture.<sup>30</sup> Still, they are, by and large, slow to grasp the significance of this avowal and its application.

Understandably, many Messianic Jews tend to resent Jewish tradition because it symbolizes for them a deeply-entrenched resentment towards Jesus and towards their own faith. It is undoubtedly true that Jewish tradition developed at least partially in response and opposition to Jesus. Yet in rejecting Jewish tradition, Messianic Jews also inevitably reject the history of the people of whom they claim to be a part. Rejecting Jewish tradition, whether willingly or unwillingly, clearly leads to assimilation. I have tried to show how this comes about above. The vitality of the link between tradition and unity (identity) is clearly demonstrated in the secular state of Israel. Under the influence of left-wing political parties, the desire to become "like any other nation" became such an important value that subjects like Bible and Jewish history have

---

nor our lot like that of all their multitude [who bow down to thin air and nothingness and pray to a god who cannot save]" which was directed against them (p. 105; my translation). See Birnbaum, 135. The censored verse is found in some late additions of prayer books such as *Shira Hadasha* [New Song] (Jerusalem: Eshkol Publication, 1978), 105. In any event, it is agreed that special prayers were introduced to the synagogue service to exclude heretics.

<sup>28</sup> James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 397.

<sup>29</sup> Hugh Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity: From the First to the Twentieth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1936).

<sup>30</sup> Tsvi Sadan, "Who Is a Jew?", in *Jewish Identity and Faith in Jesus*, ed. K. Kjir-Hansen (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1996), 79-86.

been relegated to electives in matriculation exams.<sup>31</sup>

As long as secularism forms the driving force the position behind this attitude can perhaps be understood. When religious Jews adopt this perspective, however, they are launched on a self-destructive route. The Conservative and Reform movements understood this well when, despite strongly disagreeing with Orthodox Judaism over such cardinal issues as sacrifice and the messianic hope, they nevertheless employ the Siddur with as few changes as possible.<sup>32</sup> Unsurprisingly, today even avowedly secular Jews are becoming increasingly aware that the deliberate estrangement from tradition fostered by the first Zionists endangers Jewish existence.<sup>33</sup>

In the light of these observations, the Messianic community around the world faces only two options: either to ignore the Siddur (tradition) and face assimilation, or adopt the Siddur and put their Jewishness into practice. By adoption, I do not mean a wholesale acceptance of what is now known as Orthodox Judaism but rather a critical process by which offensive prayers are ignored while others, relevant to the beliefs of the Messianic Jews, are introduced. I will develop this idea later in this article. For the moment, my concern is with the lax attitude which allows Messianic Jews to ignore tradition.

### **Messianic Congregations and “Christianization”**

The estrangement of Messianic Judaism from Jewish tradition is not merely formal. It symbolizes the schism which exists between the Messianic and mainstream (religious) Jewish communities. It demonstrates a serious divergence from Jewish history on the part of the Messianic community. Divorced from its history and tradition, Messianic Judaism is vulnerable to the process of assimilation which in turn leads to a loss of Jewish identity. Given this conclusion, it becomes an imperative for Messianic Judaism to reconsider its relationship to Jewish tradition and begin to find ways in which certain aspects could be adopted and adapted to Messianic faith.

To this end, it may help to describe a typical Messianic congregational service, in order to highlight the existing detachment of many Messianic communities from the Jewish world. But even before that it will also help to give some background to the contemporary Messianic congregation, and outline the underlying assumptions which give rise to the various types of Messianic worship.

Today, five main approaches to tradition are prevalent among Messianic Jews. The first reflects a total lack of concern for anything Jewish. Those who hold this view insist on the universal character of the gospel and therefore, as a corollary, on the irrelevancy of Jewish

---

<sup>31</sup> This was done under Amnon Rubinstein of Meretz (a liberal party), Minister of Education from 1993-1996, and reversed by the present Minister of Education, Zevulun Hammer (Mafdal, a religious party).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *HaAvoda shebeLev* [Worship of the Heart] (Jerusalem: The Movement for Progressive Judaism, 1992). Note that passages concerning sacrifices are ignored (e.g., in the section of the “dawn blessing”), as well as references to a personal Messiah (e.g., the 15th blessing of the *Amidah*).

<sup>33</sup> A case in point is kibbutz Beit Hashith which, from its foundation, never observed any Jewish liturgy on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonment) until the famous Yom Kippur poem “Unetenah Token” was sang to a tune written by Yair Rosenblum a few years ago.

tradition and Judaism in general. The second approach — and the prevailing view today — understands the importance of being Jewish yet seeks to create a new tradition. Those who hold this view react to the antagonism which rabbinical Judaism has developed towards Jesus and Messianic Jews. The third approach is the missionary one of being a Jew for the sake of the gospel. Those who hold this view ascribe value to Jewish tradition only as a tool to reach other Jews. (This is the least appealing of the five approaches, smelling as it does of deception.)<sup>34</sup> The fourth approach represents an attitude of modernity towards tradition in general. Those who hold this view argue that all tradition is anachronistic and irrelevant to modern society. The fifth approach is that of understanding the importance of being a Jew and critically accepting the tradition. This article is advocating this last position. All five approaches are discerned in Messianic Judaism, contributing in one way or another to what is known as the “Messianic congregation.”

A typical worship service in a Messianic congregation is roughly divided into three sections: singing, prayer, and preaching. The worship time includes church hymns and contemporary songs (choruses) written by Messianic Jews. In some congregations, traditional songs or *piyyutim* such as “Adon Olam” may also be included.<sup>35</sup> The songs are usually selected either according to the theme of the sermon or according to the decision of the worship leader. The prayer section mainly contains prayers by individuals. In some congregations, a traditional prayer might be included, especially the *Shema* and parts of the *Amidah*. The sermon section contains preaching from the Bible, the theme picked by the preacher. In a few congregations, the sermon may follow the portion of the week (*parashat hashavua*).<sup>36</sup> If elements of Jewish tradition are used, this is simply the consequence of a random decision rather than an awareness of the internal structure of the Siddur and the meaning of the prayers within its context.

Those familiar with contemporary Christianity will recognize that the form of Messianic worship described above closely resembles many church services. There is a good reason why such places of worship are usually called “congregations”— a term (in Israel although not in the United States) which betrays a lack of direction and a lack of commitment to either church or synagogue. In many ways, the Messianic Jewish community is a hybrid created out of a mixture of church and synagogue.

In order to maintain its unique new blend, a hybrid must balance its two “parents.” By nature, however, a hybrid prefers one rootstock over the other since in itself it is sterile. Transferring the analogy, Messianic Judaism must either sustain its own Jewishness or revert to Christianity. Messianic Jews can either assimilate (and go to church) or become Jewish (and go to a Messianic synagogue). The function of the Siddur in consolidating the Messianic community can be vital in helping it to engender itself as a viable and living movement.

---

<sup>34</sup> On this point, see D. Juster, “Towards a Messianic Theology” and “Messianic Judaism and the Torah”, both in Kjørt-Hansen, 57-62, 113-122.

<sup>35</sup> On the origin and function of the *piyyut*, see Baron, 89-105.

<sup>36</sup> See Bodil F. Skjøtt, “The Messianic Movement in Israel”, *Mishkan* 23 (1995), 35-46 on patterns of worship in Israeli congregations.

## The Messianic Siddur

If the above analysis is correct, the Messianic community must begin to incorporate Jewish tradition into its life in order to remain vibrantly Jewish. It must do so not in order to find favor within the Jewish community but because it is the right thing to do. Unfortunately, the Jewish community will be likely to resent anything the Messianic community does. Yet this need not deter the Messianic community. Once this approach is taken, the Messianic community will be forcibly encouraged to study Judaism and by doing so become ever more familiar with Jewish traditions and practices.

Messianic Judaism can start this process with the Siddur because, as we said earlier, “there is no other Jewish book which contains, like the Siddur, the whole of Judaism.”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, because the Siddur is the daily prayer of the observant, it provides the Messianic community with the opportunity to join in united prayer with the rest of the Jewish community. This process will not be an easy one, of course. To begin with, the Siddur is unfamiliar territory for most Messianic Jews. Using the Siddur will demand a commitment to study and practice its observance. Moreover, in using the Siddur the Messianic community will have to find the way in which to modify it without transforming it into another book. This last factor may prove to be the most difficult thing to do. Yet with a careful hand and constant study it can be accomplished.

In the following, a few examples are provided to demonstrate how this modification can be effected without damaging the Siddur to the degree that it becomes unrecognizable. Still, it needs to be borne in mind that the Orthodox community considers any type of meddling with the Siddur as forbidden. Thus even the very act of changing the present Siddur in whatever minute detail is a deviation from tradition. Despite this, as Salo Baron has demonstrated, the Siddur was always subject to changes and constant remodification — what I call the factor of “dynamic tradition”. Although this sounds like a contradiction in terms, the fact is that tradition, no matter how important it becomes, is nevertheless always transforming itself and being transformed. This change needs to be viewed as refreshing rather than as regrettable. It allows the Siddur to be ever relevant and meet the needs of every generation which uses it. Freezing the Siddur will eventually make it utterly irrelevant.

Although elements of Jewish tradition may arouse a strong reaction from many Messianic Jews, the fact is that for the most part the Siddur contains few prayers so offensive as to call for their deletion. On those rare occurrences, the wording can be slightly altered in order to solve the problem. A case in point is *Birkat haminim*, the 12th benediction of the *Amidah*. The Reform Siddur dealt with this offensive blessing by substituting the words “May those who err return to you” for the traditional “May the slanderers have no hope,” aimed against Messianic Jews. A similar attitude towards the same problem is reflected by the apostles in Acts 4:27-29. The prayer of the apostles can form a basis for a Messianic formulation: “May you see their threats and let your servants boldly speak your word. Blessed be thou, O Lord, who destroys your enemies and humbles the arrogant.”

Again, the guiding principle should be to leave the Siddur intact as far as it is possible. In this

---

<sup>37</sup> Adin Even-Yisrael (Steinzaltz), *HaSiddur vehatefilla* [The Siddur and Prayer], vol. I (Tel-Aviv: Yediot Acharonot - Sifre Hemed, 1994), 6.



way it can be ensured that in using it we do not alter its contents to the degree that it becomes “another book.” One of the greatest challenges facing Messianic Jews in this regard is the absence of any reference to Jesus and the testimony of the New Testament in the Siddur. Although incorporating such references will admittedly effect a major turn from tradition, this course of action is imperative. By introducing Jesus into the Siddur the Messianic community will also bring in the very force that, given its due place, will bring about the reformation of the Siddur (Judaism) which is so sorely needed. In doing so, Messianic Judaism will be the transforming force of Judaism and not a force that creates another religion.

By employing such a procedure even when it drastically alters the tone of the Siddur, a great deal of continuity is nevertheless still maintained, none the less because in many places the text is originally messianic in content. Such an example can be found, for instance, in the 15th benediction of the *Amidah*, where the traditional text says: “Speedily cause the shoot of thy servant David to flourish, and let his glory be exalted by thy help, for we hope for thy deliverance all day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who causes salvation to flourish.” This can be slightly modified to read: “Bring back Yeshua, the shoot of thy servant David ... Blessed art thou, O Lord, who has caused salvation to flourish in Yeshua.”<sup>38</sup> The change from “cause to flourish” to “bring back” indicates that the Messiah has already come. Moreover, deleting the suffix from the phrase “your deliverance” (*yeshua[tcha]*), creates the desired name of the Messiah, i.e., Yeshua.

In addition to these alterations, other prayers such as The Lord's Prayer, which greatly resembles the *Kaddish*, and the Beatitudes may also be included. A chain of verses joining up to create a meaningful prayer would further add beauty and richness to the Messianic liturgy.

These short examples serve to illustrate that a “Messianic Siddur” is not only possible but also desirable. In creating such a Siddur, the Messianic community will once again become that which it was meant to be all along: a vital community able to contribute the essential life-bringing and transformational force of the Messiah to a disillusioned nation.

*Copyright Tzvi Sadan, All Rights Reserved*

---

<sup>38</sup> This is a good example in light of the fact that modern research has suggested that the extant wording of this benediction already reflects a response on the part of mainstream Judaism to the claims of Messianic Jews regarding Yeshua. In other words, the original reference was in fact to Yeshua and was emended by the editors of the prayer book to read “salvation” (*yeshua'ah* - a noun) in place of the proper name. See Y. Libes, “Matzmiach Qeren Yeshua'ah”, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3.3 (1983/4), 313-348.

# The Siddur in Israeli Congregations

Menahem Benhayim<sup>39</sup>

The Encyclopedia Judaica states categorically, that “books containing the texts of the customary daily prayers did not exist in ancient times.” It was even forbidden by rabbinic decree to write down texts for blessings and prayers. It was only in the medieval era in the Babylonian and other Diaspora communities that written Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic liturgical prayers and blessings began to circulate and eventually reached the far-flung Jewish communities of the East and West.

Once they became an essential part of Jewish life, the siddurim (and the supplementary festival mahzorim) became almost as sacred as Scripture and the so-called Oral Law, like Torah from Mount Sinai. They would be handled with reverence, feel the lips of worshipers kissing them gently (like the Torah scrolls), studied and debated, and when they were worn out would be buried with other sacred literature in the synagogue geniza, fully woven into the private and corporate life of practicing orthodox Jews.

A Jew who regularly recited the siddur liturgy would in course of time know large portions of Scripture (often by heart), as well as ancient prayers and benedictions worked out in the talmudic academies of Babylon and the Holy Land, and special prayers reflecting the often tragic situation of medieval Jewry in Christian Europe.

The constant repetition and the obligation to complete the recitations day after day in the midst of the pressures of daily life often led to a mechanical approach to the texts, which were uttered with astonishing speed, and all the more so, when the Hebrew and Aramaic words were not really understood.

While many observant Jews understand the texts, for those who do not, translations into Yiddish (especially in pre-Holocaust Europe, “tehinot,” supplications for women, and the Yiddish paraphrases of the weekly portion, the “teitsch humash” or “tsena u'rena”), as well as modern translations into English, French and other vernaculars have become available.

Nevertheless, with or without translations or paraphrases and supplementary devotions, the Orthodox Jew is required to “say” the prayers in Hebrew, or as with the *kaddish* and similar prayers, in Judeo-Aramaic. Ignorance of the text may explain why many think that the *kaddish* is a text of mourning; actually, it is a declaration of faith in God and prayer for Israel's redemption and peace. Male mourners are required to recite it as their personal affirmation and prayer, but it is recited by the cantor or prayer leader in every corporate service where there is a quorum of adult male worshippers.

Integrated into the ritual prayers were the annual cyclical readings from the Torah, selected readings from the Prophets, and the five *megillot* (scrolls) during festivals and special days of observance: Song of Songs (Passover), Ruth (Pentecost), Lamentations (Ninth of Av), Ecclesiastes (Feast of Tabernacles) and the Book of Esther at Purim.

---

<sup>39</sup>Menahem Benhayim is the former Secretary of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance and one of the founders of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel. He has written numerous articles on issues related to the Messianic Jewish movement.

In traditional Jewish communities the liturgical calendar of readings and prayers has been strictly observed, whether in the Synagogue (especially for the cyclical Bible readings) or in private prayer. Following bar-mitzva at age 13, orthodox Jews undertake this heavy liturgical program for the thrice-daily prayer times (morning *shaharit*, afternoon *minh* and evening *maariv*; the latter two often combined into one service), as well as the additional prayers (*musaf*) for Sabbaths, New Moons and other holy days.

There is also the nightly *kriyat sh'ma*, (literally, “reading of the Shema”), a nine or ten-paragraph recitation before retiring, about half of which is composed of biblical texts. A lengthy benediction following meals, and special short blessings before partaking any food within the context of a meal or otherwise, is another part of the intricate prayer rites of the traditional Jew.

### **Decline of Religious Observance**

With the steady decline of Jewish religious observance in Israel and in most Diaspora communities, vast numbers of Jews have abandoned most of the prayer rites, with more liberal forms of Judaism greatly reducing or eliminating the yoke of the daily prayer ritual. Nevertheless, a significant number of orthodox Jews continue to integrate the siddur and its requirements into their daily lives. For most secular Jews, however, it remains irrelevant, except for special occasions such as bar-mitzva, festivals, mourning rites, and the like. In recent decades some Messianic Jews, on the model of Reform or Liberal Jews, have produced Messianic siddurim with textual changes to suit Messianic preferences. The most ambitious to my knowledge was the bilingual siddur produced by American Messianic Jewish leaders David Bronstein and John Fischer<sup>40</sup>. Others have been content to use the traditional siddur and mahzor with ad-lib changes. (This is the practice in the Jerusalem Roeh Yisrael Congregation.) It has also been a practice in a number of congregations to use the traditional Passover Haggadah with such adaptations.

### **Attitude to Traditional Jewish Worship**

In approaching the topic of this article I sent out a questionnaire to 43 Hebrew-speaking congregations and house fellowships throughout Israel in order to assess the present attitude to traditional Jewish worship.<sup>41</sup>

The response to the written questionnaires was over 50 percent (22 out of 43), with 16 of the respondents representing active fellowships for a decade or more, and which have presumably developed established patterns of worship; the balance were smaller recent groups. Most of the non-respondents were newer groups, but two of the long-established groups were opposed in principle to participating in the project. As far as I know, one does use traditional Jewish elements in worship regularly, the other does not, except for the Passover Seder.

Of the 22 respondents, only two groups affirmed a regular extensive use of the siddur and Mahzor: the long-established Roeh Yisrael (Netivya) Congregation, and the more recent Neveh

---

<sup>40</sup> See article in this issue, pp. 64-66.

<sup>41</sup> See *MISHKAN*, no. 22, 1/95, p. 39, paragraph 3 & 4, article by Bodil F. Skjott, “Sabbath and Worship in Messianic Congregations in Israel — a Brief Survey”, for the results of a telephone survey on the use of the Siddur.

Tsion Congregation, both located in Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that a significant part of their memberships are reported by them to have come out of a secularist background.

Seven other well-established congregations affirmed the use of some traditional Jewish elements in their worship: the *Shema*, the Aaronic blessing, special festival prayers, Torah and *haftara* (prophetic) portions of the week, and unspecified excerpts from the Siddur. The balance of the respondents — 13, or 60 percent — negated the use of the Siddur. Most of these felt that New Testament worship should be free from the constraints of traditional worship, with two of them referring to John 4:24 (“God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”)

It is significant that all the respondents affirmed congregational celebration of the Jewish holidays — Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Hanuka and Purim — with several adding other holidays, Rosh Hashana (Hebrew New Year), Tu B'shvat (Arbor Day), Israel Independence Day. Seven congregations combine the celebrations with parallel Christian feasts: Passover/Easter, Pentecost/Whitsuntide, Hanuka/Christmas; but the majority (14 out of 22) negated congregational celebrations of Christian festivals.

Why, it is asked, do most of these groups, which are generally seeking recognition by the Jewish mainstream as a legitimate Jewish religious movement, largely ignore the Siddur, one of the major Jewish expressions of worship?

In this connection, it has been noted that there have been non-orthodox Jewish religious movements in modern times which, while challenging rabbinic orthodoxy's exclusive claim to interpret Judaism, have modified and integrated portions of the Siddur and mahzor into their worship. The Masorati (Conservative), Reform-Liberal, and Reconstruction movements, however, have developed in the Western Diaspora, and only recently have challenged established Jewish orthodoxy in Israel, primarily through judicial actions to obtain legal recognition under Israeli law.

### **Resistance to Orthodoxy**

The basic fact remains that modern Zionism and the State of Israel were founded and dominated by non-orthodox and secularist Jews who either rebelled against or ignored the Jewish orthodox life style, of which the Siddur prayer rites are a major component.

Actually, this resistance to orthodoxy opened the way for Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews to develop in Israel, despite prejudice and occasional harassment. The concepts of religious freedom and religious pluralism in the modern sense were never encouraged in orthodox Judaism (or orthodox Christianity). As a result, openness to the New Testament option for Jewish believers has usually followed the rejection of orthodoxy, individually or in a social climate of secularism. Meanwhile, Orthodox Judaism in Israel, as in the Diaspora, still spearheads the opposition to Jewish believers in Yeshua.

An additional factor affects Israeli Jewish believers in their fellowship worship: It is the continuing impact of Evangelical Christian missions and their traditions of worship, including both the more liturgical and the free Evangelical as well as the more recent Pentecostal-Charismatic styles. Except in terms of adapting a more Hebraic sound to musical worship and the use of Hebrew, any serious consideration of the possible integration of classical Jewish elements of worship to Israeli congregations has been discouraged.

There are liturgical communities in Israel — Anglicans and Lutherans, for example — which have their own established liturgies, but the two Lutheran respondents to the questionnaire were

negative about incorporating parts of the Siddur liturgy into their worship.

All of these factors have led to an ambivalent attitude among many Messianic Jews and their gentile friends toward traditions and practices rooted in rabbinic Judaism, such as the use of prayer rituals. An extreme example of this attitude may be found in a mission magazine which helps support a local Israeli group.

In almost every issue it features a “witness” article by an Israeli member of the congregation, which describes an encounter with rabbinic Jews in a negative manner. The protagonist confronts the rabbi or pious Jews and aggressively protests the futility of their rituals, their practices and teachings. The writer then describes how he presents a fundamentalistic expression of New Testament faith. Nevertheless, the same magazine will carry feature articles about traditional Jewish life by Diaspora Jewish Christians and gentile friends which are quite objective, even nostalgic, alongside a strong pro-Israel and Zionist emphasis.

Admittedly, few if any Israelis would engage in or report on such antagonistic witness among orthodox Jews. Whether or not the reports are credible, it does reflect an attitude of total discontinuity between mainstream Judaism and the classical evangelical Jewish Christianity being presented. This stream is obviously quite hostile to the trends being developed in Messianic Jewish experiments. They have parallels in classical Zionist negation of the Diaspora way of Jewish life, and extreme secular Jewish negation of Judaism.

While among Diaspora Messianic synagogues (especially in the United States), there has been a move to integrate the Siddur into worship, this has not had any major impact on most Israeli congregations to date.

It may be regrettable that most congregations in Israel are unable or unwilling to explore other worship and life-style options more compatible to Jewish life, rather than merely translating the experiences of Western conservative evangelicalism. It is still true, however, that the evangelical movement grew out of the challenge to established Christian liturgical orthodoxies very similar in spirit to Jewish orthodoxy. As long as the ties between evangelicalism and Israeli Messianic congregations remain as strong as they are at present, it is unlikely there will be a basic change in worship, but there is reason for cautious optimism.

As this writer pointed out in the essay “Between Church and Synagogue”<sup>42</sup>, there is a need for the rebirth of “an authoritative Jewish component” on the New Testament model, within the Jewish people and Israel, to grapple with issues such as worship, tradition, and other basic biblical issues requiring application to contemporary Jewish and Israeli life. Whether the Siddur, or any other liturgical replacement, would necessarily follow is a moot question.

In all fairness to the debate over “authoritative” or authentic Jewishness, it should be noted that Israeli mainstream Jewish life, as in the Diaspora, in all their diversities are also facing conflict and uncertainty about Jewish identity and its authentic expressions.

*Copyright Menahem Benhayim, All Rights Reserved*

---

<sup>42</sup> See *TISHREI*, Occasional Paper, Menahem Benhayim, “Between Church and Synagogue” (original article published in *TISHREI*, Vol. 2 No. 3, Spring 1994, pp. 57-70.).

# The Use of the Siddur by Messianic Jews

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum<sup>43</sup>

I should probably begin by stating my personal bias against prayer books in general. The following comments would not be unique against the Siddur, but general of any prayer book, including those used in high churches, such as the Anglican, Episcopalian, and Lutheran churches, among others. My problem with prescribed prayer is that I do believe it tends towards “vain repetition,” the very thing Yeshua warned against in the context of prayer (Matt 6:5-15).

With the development of rabbinic Judaism in the intertestamental period, the trend was clearly to move away from extemporaneous prayer so common throughout the Hebrew Bible and move towards prescribed prayer so that eventually there were set prayers for virtually every occasion: daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly observances. By the time of Jesus, rabbinic Judaism had become like a gentile religion using vain repetition. Obviously, the apostles knew how to pray through prayer books and certainly were raised with, and no doubt used, many of the set prayers common to first century rabbinic Judaism. Yet Jesus was characterized not so much by prescribed rabbinic prayers, but by extemporaneous prayers, carrying on the tradition of biblical Judaism. This was not the common experience of the apostles, so finally they had to ask Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Even what has come to be known as “the Lord's Prayer,” was not given for the purpose of being recited regularly every Sunday as many churches do. It was simply intended to be a model or outline.

Having said this, I recognize that many in both the Jewish and gentile believing community would now choose to use such books. Therefore, I need to go on to discuss specifically the validity of using the Siddur.

Though not specifically addressing the Siddur, elsewhere I have written something applicable to the issue here:

Messianic Jewish practice cannot be based on Rabbinic Judaism as an obligation. Again, the emphasis is on the word “obligation.” . . .

Since the Bible is the only source of authority . . . he rejects these practices as binding and obligatory and is free from any need of observing them. However, just as freedom from the law means freedom also to keep certain aspects of the law, so freedom from Judaism also frees the Messianic Jew to keep certain aspects of Judaism, . . . However, there is a danger that must be avoided. Jewish believers cannot celebrate these Holy Days and other Judaistic practices in strict accordance with Judaism. While they are free to copy those things from Judaism which do not go against Scripture, they are not free to use those which do. Many of the services of Judaism cannot be used in their entirety since there are sections which clearly go against the teaching of the New Testament. The

---

<sup>43</sup>Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum is Director of Ariel Ministries, Tustin, California. He holds a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and did his Ph.D. studies at New York University on Israelology.

prayer book for Yom Kippur and the Haggadah for Passover are examples of this. While many parts present no real difficulty, there are parts which do. Unfortunately, . . . some messianic congregations have not been careful on this point. Often the traditional Orthodox Jewish service has been used and has resulted unknowingly in statements and practices which are quite contrary to biblical truth. One example is the observance of Sabbath by lighting the candles. This practice was never commanded in the Law of Moses, but is of rabbinic origin. However, as it is not forbidden by the New Testament, it is biblically neutral. The Jewish believer is free to kindle the Sabbath lights, but he is also free not to. However, the prayer that goes with it states: 'Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath candles.' The truth is that no such command is found anywhere in Scripture. This prayer is not biblically neutral and a Jewish believer would be wrong to recite this prayer, so he has three options. First, he may choose to dispense with the prayer altogether. Second, he can reword the above prayer to bring it into conformity with biblical truth; the last phrase could read, "permitted us to kindle the Sabbath candles." Third, he may choose to make up his own prayer altogether. Messianic Jews are free to participate in these things, but the guiding principle is that of conformity with their faith in Jesus the Messiah and the Scriptures.<sup>44</sup>

What has just been stated is also applicable to the Siddur. A Messianic congregation could simply dispense with the Siddur altogether. Or it could simply reword the Siddur to bring it into conformity to New Testament faith. Third, a Messianic congregation could compose their own Siddur, with or without similarities to the Orthodox Siddur.

Most dangerous is the temptation to use the Orthodox Siddur as is, without making the necessary adjustments and, therefore, fall into error. Much of the Siddur is simply Scripture, especially from the Book of Psalms, and, therefore, would present no difficulty. There are also many rabbinic prayers and songs which are biblically neutral and, therefore, present no difficulty either. But some sections of the Siddur clearly violate New Testament truth, some were inserted to oppose the early Messianic Jews when rabbinic Judaism was still being formulated.

The following are specific examples which either come from *The Hirsch Siddur* or *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*.

My God, the soul which You have placed within me is pure. You have created it; You have formed it; You have breathed it into me.

The theology behind this is the rabbinic concept that God created all the souls at one time and all souls that have not yet been embodied are kept in a place called the *Guf* until such time as the soul is placed into the body. Furthermore is the belief that this soul is pure and holy when it is placed into the body and receives the evil inclination sometime later. Such a prayer based upon such a theology is highly questionable and is not something that can be validly prayed by a Messianic congregation.

Blessed be you God, our God, King of the Universe, Who has not made me a non-Jew. . . . Blessed be you God, our God, King of the Universe, Who has not made me a woman.

Regardless of the original purpose for these prayers, in most Messianic congregations, men and women are not separated, as they are in Orthodox synagogues, but are intermixed, reciting the same prayers. Furthermore, in most Messianic congregations, a large percentage (in many

---

<sup>44</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israeology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1993), pp. 760-761.

Messianic congregations, the majority percentage) are gentiles. Certainly it would be inappropriate to pray this prayer in such a context.

A number of the prayers in the Siddur are prayers for the coming of the Messiah, such as the following example:

Speedily cause the offspring of David, Your servant, to sprout, so that his horn may be lifted up by Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation each day. Blessed be you God, Who causes the horn of salvation to grow.

The wording of this prayer is based on the belief that the Messiah has not yet come. A Messianic Jew might state that he can still pray this prayer, keeping in mind that he is praying for the second coming. However, the prayer also includes the fact of a future salvation. Why not write a prayer that makes it clear that the Messiah both has come and is coming again and that we already have salvation? There certainly is to be a future facet of our salvation, but it must be made clear that salvation is available here and now.

Along this same line is the prayer for the rebuilding of the temple:

May it be Your will, O God, our God and God of our fathers, that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days, and give us our portion in Your Torah, so that we may serve You there with awe as in the days of old and as in former years.

Messianic Jews, who are also premillennial, certainly believe in a temple in the Messianic Kingdom as described in Ezekiel 40-48. But people of the same school also believe there is going to be a third temple built by unbelievers who will resume the sacrificial system because they do not believe that Yeshua is the final sacrifice. The next temple is not a temple sanctioned by God (Isa. 66:1-4). Can Messianic Jews really pray this prayer with a clear biblical conscience? This is a prayer that would either have to be dropped or reworded in such a way as to make clear what kind of temple we are anticipating. Again, there will be a difference of opinion among Messianic Jews who would not be premillennial.

May it be Your will, O God our God and God of our fathers, that we may keep Your statutes in this world and thus become worthy of living, of seeing and inheriting happiness and blessings in the years of the days of the Messiah in the life of the world to come.

One common rabbinic thought (not the only one) is that the Messiah will come only when Israel is worthy. Messianic Jews who hold to the biblical view of the nature of man recognize that if we have to wait until we are worthy, Messiah will never come. In fact, he already has come; we were unworthy then and he died for our unworthiness. Prayers that assume we must obtain a level of spirituality and worthiness before God in order to bring the Messiah (or to bring him back), would be biblically invalid.

The same issue of worthiness is in the following prayer:

Who gives rest to His people on His holy Sabbath Day because He has found them worthy of His favor to grant them rest.

The fact is that the Sabbath was not given to Israel because Israel was found worthy. It was given as an act of God's grace at that time and if it is on the basis of grace, it could not be on the basis of works (Rom 11:5-6).

The Sabbath welcome song, known as *Lechah Dodi* personifies the Sabbath as a bride to be



welcomed. The Scriptures simply do not treat the Sabbath as a bride needing a welcome and so personified. In this prayer the Sabbath is personified and virtually glorified, close to the point of being worshipped. It sometimes appears to replace God as the object to be worshipped. Even the footnote in *The Hirsch Siddur* states that this song is

the call upon all the members of the Jewish community to welcome and receive the Sabbath as the source of all blessings. Truly, even as the Sages have said it, the Sabbath is the ‘most precious pearl’ that God could give His people from His treasure chamber.

But the correct Biblical teaching is that God is the source of all blessings and not the Sabbath. Indeed, is the Sabbath the most precious pearl that God could give Israel? Or is it the Messiah? Furthermore, in this personification of the Sabbath as a bride, Israel is the husband. Therefore, Israel is married to the Sabbath. Here, again, the Sabbath replaces God because the teaching of Scripture is that Israel is the wife of Jehovah, and not the husband of the Sabbath. Yet a footnote in *The ArtScroll Siddur* states, “God told the newly created Sabbath, ‘Israel shall be your mate.’ Accordingly, every week, Israel greets the approaching Sabbath like a groom awaiting his bride as she advances to the wedding canopy.”

And what about praying for the dead? The kaddish prayer, used in Orthodox circles, does not in itself pray specifically for the dead, but actually recognizes the sovereignty of God in the events of what happened. The prayer itself is biblically neutral. But for those who recently lost a loved one, there is the addition that they have to recite for the deceased. The person prays:

May his resting place be in the Garden of Eden; therefore may the Master of mercy shelter him in the shelter of His wings for eternity; and may He bind his soul in the Bond of Life.

Biblically speaking, once a person dies, his soul has gone into its place and that cannot be changed by the prayers of the survivors on earth. Since it has already been determined where the soul goes upon death, such a prayer would not be proper for a Messianic congregation, though the normal kaddish prayer, taken by itself without this addition, is neutral and, therefore, can be used.

*The ArtScroll Siddur* also contains Maimonides' “The Thirteen Principles of Faith.” The third Article of Faith reads:

I believe with complete faith that the Creator, Blessed is His Name, is not physical and is not affected by physical phenomena, and that there is no comparison whatsoever to Him.

Speaking of God the Father and God the Spirit, it would be a valid statement. But what about God the Son? Before the Incarnation, one could pray this prayer; but not since, for the Second Person is now the God-Man and, therefore, is both spirit and physical.

The ninth Article of Faith reads as follows:

I believe with complete faith that this Torah will not be exchanged nor will there be another Torah from the Creator, Blessed is His Name.

It is recognized that there is disagreement among Messianic Jews as to the continuity of the Mosaic Law as a rule of life for this age. Virtually all Messianic Jews agree that many parts of the Law have ended with the Messiah and, therefore, we do not have the obligation of offering up sin sacrifices on a yearly basis. Disagreement has to do with a minority of the 613 commandments. However, this particular Article of Faith is not merely denying that there will ever be a change in the written Law of Moses, but that there will ever be a “New Covenant.” Furthermore, by rabbinic

interpretation, this Article of Faith is not merely dealing with the written Law of Moses, but with the Oral Law as well, as the footnote in *The ArtScroll Siddur* states: “Since both the Written and Oral Law were God-given, they cannot be improved upon in any manner.” I have met Messianic Jews who believe in the inspiration of the Oral Law, but these are very rare and would not be indicative of the majority in Messianic congregations. Yet some recite these thirteen Articles without recognizing the original intent of when they were written.

Another problem that must be avoided is the implication of any salvation apart from faith in the Messiah. One statement in *The ArtScroll Siddur* is:

He who studies Torah laws every day, has the assurance that he will be in the World to Come.

Shall we truly attain the world to come by merely studying the laws of the Torah? Is studying the Torah every single day the means of salvation? If it is, it is clearly a salvation by works and not by grace through faith. Regardless of the view of the Mosaic Law and its applicability to Jewish believers today among Messianic Jews, one thing that must be clearly rejected is that one can earn his salvation either by studying it or by trying to keep it. This is another example of what could not be kept intact and still remain consistent with the New Testament.

Finally, perhaps something should be said about the *Shmoneh Esreh* prayer, meaning “The Eighteen Benedictions,” though there are now 19 because the 12th benediction was added later (90 AD), though the title has never been changed. However, the 12th benediction was clearly intended against the early Messianic Jews. I recognize that there are a few Messianic Jews here and there who want to hang onto the entire *Shmoneh Esreh* and, therefore, have denied that that benediction was aimed against Messianic Jews and, therefore, recite it as if it were not. Such a conclusion goes against the majority of scholarly conclusions, both Jewish and gentile, both believers and unbelievers. It is not my purpose here to deal with the actual issue and there is enough scholarship available concerning the *Birchat Haminim* that the reader can consult. What is germane here, however, is the fact that the footnotes in the Siddurs themselves readily state the purpose of the 12th benediction. *The Hirsch Siddur* states:

which is a prayer for the suppression and elimination of pernicious elements within our people was added at Yavneh during the administration of Rabban Gamaliel at a time when certain elements within the Jewish community, who had become estranged from true Judaism, sought by means of crafty calumny and inveiglement to wield such a dangerous influence among their people that they represented a real threat to the survival of traditional, Torah-true Judaism.

*The ArtScroll Siddur* is even more specific, clearly stating this was aimed against “the early Christians.” The very fact that these early Christians came out of the Jewish community emphasizes the fact that these were Jewish believers. The very fact that these Siddurs as put out by the Orthodox community clearly identify this 12th benediction as being aimed against Messianic Jews shows what is being communicated to the larger Jewish community. So even those very Messianic Jews who believe it had nothing to do with that, would be unwise to use it in their services. What better way to counteract this propaganda from the Orthodox community than to refuse to recite it?

Obviously, many other examples could be given, but this should suffice. Again, I prefer not to use a prayer book of any kind. But if a Messianic congregation wishes to use a Siddur, it certainly has the biblical liberty to do so. However, the Siddur cannot be used as is. An Orthodox Siddur

must be purged of all elements which are clearly not biblical. A person or congregation must not be so enslaved to tradition that they would be reluctant to make the necessary changes because biblical truth must always take the higher priority.

*Copyright Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, All Rights Reserved*

## Two Nineteenth Century Hebrew “Siddurim”

Kai Kjær-Hansen<sup>45</sup>

In the 19th century the prayer book of the Anglican Church, *The Book of Common Prayer*, was translated into Hebrew. For those interested in Jewish evangelism today, this might be no more than a historic curiosity. On the other hand, the Hebrew *Siddur* written by Joseph Rabinowitz (1837-1899) might be of greater interest. Rabinowitz was the leader of The Israelites of the New Covenant and the *Siddur* he compiled was used for worship services in Kishinev, Russia for about 25 years at the end of the last century.

These two “*Siddurim*” are very different, perhaps so different that a comparison seems inappropriate. Some Jewish believers in Jesus will insist that a translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* into Hebrew is a gentile Christian phenomenon. However, when Messianic Jews distance themselves from the Christian church they sometimes forget that the liturgy of the Christian church has Jewish roots. Others will insist that Rabinowitz’ liturgy is a Jewish Christian phenomenon. But in saying so they do not realize that when Rabinowitz composed the *Siddur* and Rules of Faith for his congregation in Kishinev, he had a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* in front of him.

Rabinowitz and those who translated *The Book of Common Prayer* into Hebrew had in common their desire to make a liturgy for their worship service. In doing so they challenge those Jewish believers in Jesus today who reject or have scant appreciation of liturgy. The use of liturgy cannot be rejected as being “un-Jewish.” The question that can and should be asked, however, is, “What kind of *Siddur* can Jewish believers in Jesus use?”

Interestingly enough, some of Rabinowitz’ gentile supporters from abroad were also surprised to see how liturgical his worship services were, an attitude which they articulated upon visiting him.<sup>46</sup> Although Rabinowitz did not use the Hebrew translation of *The Book of Common Prayer*, he was influenced by it; as a Jesus-believing Jew he certainly had nothing against liturgy. He showed respect for the Jewish tradition as well as for the Christian, just as he demonstrated

---

<sup>45</sup> Kai Kjær-Hansen has his Ph.D. on Studies in the Name of Jesus. He is the author of several books on Jewish evangelism and the Messianic Jewish movement. Presently he serves as International Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE).

<sup>46</sup> On visitors’ reaction to Rabinowitz’s service, see K. Kjær-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Edinburgh/Grand Rapids: Handsel Press/Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 149-152. John Wilkinson, leader of The Mildmay Mission, who otherwise was a strong supporter of Rabinowitz, was very surprised at Rabinowitz’s theological and liturgical viewpoints. In 1885 he wrote: “Some parts of his ‘Articles of Faith’ have a strong flavour of Sacramentarianism and Sacerdotalism which may be accounted for by his surroundings, and which Evangelical Christians may reasonably hope he will in time outgrow. In the meantime he must not be lectured out of error, but loved into truth”. Wilkinson’, “Preface” in J. Adler (ed.), *A New and Enlarged Edition of The First-ripe Fig. Articles, Creed and Form or Worship of Joseph Rabinowitch* (London, 1885), 46.

independence from the Christian tradition as well as the Jewish.

### **The Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer***

In December 1836, the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* was published in London<sup>47</sup> under the title *The Book of Common Prayer According to the Tradition of the Church of England and Ireland*. A few years later in 1841 the second fully-pointed edition appeared.

The prayer book was published by the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, established in 1809.<sup>48</sup> A. McCaul and J.C. Reichardt were responsible for the text while others took an active part in the translation into Hebrew; M.S. Alexander, professor of Hebrew and Rabbinical Literature at King's College, London being one.<sup>49</sup> Alexander, who was himself of Jewish origin, was ordained bishop in 1841 and arrived in Jerusalem in 1842 as the first protestant bishop.<sup>50</sup>

The translation was not a completely new translation. In front of them the translators had a Hebrew copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* from as far back as 1717, done by the "proselyte" Abraham Bar Jacob<sup>51</sup> and a later one from the beginning of the century, done by a Jewish "convert," Czerskier, in Warsaw.<sup>52</sup>

The publication of the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* was celebrated in London at the beginning of 1837. W.T. Gidney writes that "a copy ... was presented to each of the Archbishops and Bishops of the United Kingdom, as well as the other learned divines and scholars, from whom were received many important testimonies to the accuracy of the translation."<sup>53</sup>

The same enthusiasm for the linguistic quality of the translation was not expressed by Franz Delitzsch in Germany.

The translators' good intentions far exceed their stylistic abilities; they are altogether lacking in the basic principles and the sensitivity to rhythm so necessary for expressing the message of the New Testament in Hebrew forms.<sup>54</sup>

Pinchas E. Lapidé looks at the Hebrew version from a modern Jewish perspective. In doing so he notes the following:

---

<sup>47</sup> W.T. Gidney, *Sites and Scenes (= Mission to Jews)*, part II (London: Operative Jewish Converts' Institution, 2nd ed., 1899), 68.

<sup>48</sup> W.T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. From 1809 to 1908* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, 1908), 100, 152f, 179.

<sup>49</sup> Gidney, *Sites and Scenes*, 72.

<sup>50</sup> Gidney, *History*, 209; a popular biography on Alexander is found in M.W. Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop. The Biography of the Right Reverend Michael Solomon Alexander, Bishop in Jerusalem* (London: The Olive Press, no date); see also K. Crombie, "Michael Solomon Alexander and The Controversial Jerusalem Bishopric", *Mishkan* 15 (1991), 1-12.

<sup>51</sup> J.F.A. de le Roi, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Judenmission seit Entstehung des Neueren Judentums*, part II (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, vol. 3, 1899), 16.

<sup>52</sup> Gidney, *History*, 100.

<sup>53</sup> Gidney, *History*, 152.

<sup>54</sup> F. Delitzsch, *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judentum* (Grimma: Verlag von Julius Moritz Gebhardt, 1838), 308.

- (a) The many anglicisms.
- (b) The technical terms of the Church that are not translated.
- (c) The artificial hebraizing of many theological terms.<sup>55</sup>

Lapide acknowledges the fact that parts of the prayer book are full of Biblical quotes. Despite linguistic deficiencies

the Israeli who thinks in Hebrew can agree with the London Society's *Report* 31 (1839): "The ministrations and liturgy of our Church are peculiarly suited to the mind and habits of the Jews." Actually, there are whole pages which sound like excerpts from the Psalms or the synagogue *Siddur*.  
56

When it comes to large parts of the Hebrew version Lapide shares F. Delitzsch's critique concerning the linguistic quality. Although we shall not judge the linguistic quality of the translation, two questions do concern us: (1) Who was the translation intended for? (2) What does it indicate?

Lapide does ask the relevant question: For whom was this text actually produced? He maintains that the majority of Jews in England at the time did not understand enough Hebrew to read the book, much less use it devotionally. Furthermore, he thinks that rabbis and those familiar with the Torah would have had difficulty suppressing amusement at the awkward attempts to Judaize Christian terminology. Lapide is convinced that the fringe Jews, who according to him were most susceptible to the Jewish mission, would have preferred to use the texts in their original English form. Left then is the group of clergy of the Anglican church, who could use the Hebrew version to stimulate their interest in the study of the biblical language!

This last comment might be amusing. That the London Society had intentions other than providing a study book in Hebrew for the clergy of the church is, however, quite clear; Lapide's comments only demonstrate how facetious is his answer.

By taking a look at the primary sources one will realize that the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* is part of a greater vision which the London Society had in the 1830's and onward. A quote from 1835 holds:

It is well known that for ages the various branches of the Christian Church have had their convents and their places of worship in Jerusalem. The Greek, the Roman Catholic, the Armenian, can each find brethren to receive him, and a house of prayer in which to worship. In Jerusalem also the Turk has his mosque, and the Jew his synagogue. The pure Christianity of the Reformation alone appears as a stranger ... The prejudice of the Jews is against Christianity as a system, as a form of worship; and the only way whereby this prejudice can be overcome generally is by exhibiting Christian worship in its purity. The Liturgy in Hebrew would tend to remove the other part of the prejudice, that Christianity is a Gentile system, and as such be at once rejected.<sup>57</sup>

Or, as it was said in 1839,

Its deep and tender devotion, the evangelical simplicity of its ritual will form in the mind of the Jew an inviting contrast to the idolatry and superstition of the Latin and Eastern Churches; its enlarged

---

<sup>55</sup> P.E. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1984), 81.

<sup>56</sup> Lapide, 81.

<sup>57</sup> Gidney, *Sites and Scenes*, 67-68.

charity will affect his heart, and its Scriptural character demand his homage.<sup>58</sup>

The London Society had a vision to have worship service in Hebrew wherever its missionaries were — including Jerusalem. At the time the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* was celebrated, John Nicolayson was visiting London. He brought with him his plans for building the first Protestant church in Jerusalem. This is how it was expressed by the Society:

It was felt that a well-established Mission at Jerusalem with a church, Anglican Liturgy in Hebrew, Hebrew Christian congregation and the pastoral care of converts, would be the means of great good to Palestine, and of incalculable benefit to all missionary enterprise among Jews of the East.<sup>59</sup>

Nicolayson returned to Jerusalem in 1838 as an ordained minister, and “Services were commenced in the temporary chapel in Hebrew daily.”<sup>60</sup> In 1849 Christ Church was completed and the building dedicated. At that time there was a congregation of Jews worshipping in Hebrew.<sup>61</sup> From 1837 the liturgy was used in London in the chapel of the London Society at Palestine Place.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, with the Hebrew translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* the London Society was giving a clear message. They wanted to work towards a Hebrew-speaking church with a liturgy in Hebrew. Although we should commend the society one may ask if it would not have been better to publish a revised version of the prayer book more suitable in a Jewish context. This critique does not change the fact that the London Society had taken some important steps in the right direction. In a historic evaluation one needs to be careful not to let the standards of the present time influence the judgement of the past.

### **The Effects of the Translation**

Compared to the important signals the Hebrew translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* gave, one can live with Lapide’s comments concerning the reactions to it at the time of its publication. Furthermore, Christian mission and Messianic Jews have not so far let their use of terminology be dependent on what others thought of it.

But other aspects which Lapide does not consider deserve mentioning; the effects the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* might have had. This brings us to Joseph Rabinowitz.

It can be shown for certain that Rabinowitz not only knew the Hebrew translation but also kept it at hand and used it when he wrote his articles of faith for *The Israelites of the New Covenant* in Kishinev.

*The Book of Common Prayer* contains 39 articles of faith. Rabinowitz’ *Tefilah* contains 24 articles placed in the prayer book after the actual *Siddur*. Elsewhere I have shown that not only was Rabinowitz inspired by, but even took over words and phrases from the original 39

---

<sup>58</sup> Gidney, *History*, 153.

<sup>59</sup> Corey, 46f.

<sup>60</sup> Corey, 47.

<sup>61</sup> See Crombie, Michael Solomon *Alexander*, 6-10; cf. K. Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 47-56.

<sup>62</sup> Gidney, *History*, 161; le Roi, 16 and 46.

articles.<sup>63</sup> He must have had the Hebrew translation in front of him when he wrote down his own articles of faith for The Israelites of the New Covenant.

Rabinowitz' leading principle is that when he comes across material inspired by Greek thinking and philosophy rather than by the Bible he tries to express himself biblically. But he still uses words and expressions from the 39 articles and preserves the main biblical content of them.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, the effects of the Hebrew version of *The Book of Common Prayer* can be found in the terminology used by Rabinowitz, the Jesus-believing Jew. This makes one less likely to view the Hebrew version as only a curiosity. Nor have we even considered another question: To what extent have Rabinowitz' expressions of faith been taken over by other Messianic Jews who knew nothing of Rabinowitz' reliance on *The Book of Common Prayer*? Here we don't have sufficient material to answer this question and will have to leave it to others.

On the basis of this, it seems more than an understatement that the main effects of the Hebrew version should have been — as Lapide suggested — its use as a study book in Hebrew for the clergy of the Anglican church.

### **Rabinowitz's *Siddur*.**

Rabinowitz could have chosen to use *The Book of Common Prayer* as his order of service. He did not do that. He felt that too much of its content was un-Jewish. Let us now take a look at his own *Siddur*.

The first edition of his *Tefilah* seems to have been printed in 1885, but written already in 1884. This we know from a visitor to Kishinev in 1884 who mentions that Rabinowitz had drawn up "a Christian *Siddur*." At any rate, G.A. Krøger was able to give a French translation of it in 1885. Rabinowitz's *Tefilah* was republished in Kishinev in 1892 under the title *Tefilah veIakrei Emunah leBenei Israel Benei Brit Hadasha* (Book of Prayer and Principles of Faith for the Israelites of the New Covenant). Elsewhere I have explained the *Tefilah* and also underlined the smaller differences in the liturgy which the sources indicate.<sup>65</sup> No changes were made to the main elements in the approximately 25 years Rabinowitz conducted his service. Looking at the 1892 edition, it can be said that Rabinowitz' *Siddur* is characterized by its simplicity, brevity, and clarity.

Already the introduction words were worth noticing. They resound the words of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry.

The different parts are as follows:

*The Cantor says in a loud voice:* Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matt 3:2)

*Confession of sin:* Come, and let us return unto the Lord ... (Hos 6:1-3, followed by a confession of sin).

*The Lord's Prayer*

The Cantor: Bless the Lord, the only (God)!

---

<sup>63</sup> Kjær-Hansen, 97-103.

<sup>64</sup> An English translation of the 24 articles in James Adler's translation can be found in Kjær-Hansen, 103-107. Some earlier versions of these articles have 25 articles, cf. Kjær-Hansen, 91.

<sup>65</sup> Kjær-Hansen, 153-155.



*Congregation:* Blessed be the Lord, the blessed one!

*Recitation of Psalm 33:* Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.

*The (expanded) Shema (Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18).*

On weekdays, Psalm 103 is recited: Bless the Lord, my soul.

*On Sabbath days, Psalm 92 is recited:* It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.

*The Cantor is handed the Holy Scriptures and says:* Out of Zion shall go forth the law (Torah), and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3c). This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel (Deut 4:44).

*The reading from the Old Testament and the New Testament follows*

Prayer for the Czar (in Russian)

Sermon

Recitation of Psalm 40:4-6: Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.

*On Sabbath day follows singing of the hymn Lekhah Dodi*

Seven Articles of Faith (Creed)

The Aaronic Blessing

By looking at Rabinowitz's Creed and his rewriting of the Sabbath hymn *Lekhah Dodi* one gets a good impression of his independence towards and respect for both the Christian and the Jewish traditions.

### **Rabinowitz' Creed and *Lekhah Dodi***

When he was baptized in Berlin in 1885, Rabinowitz confessed to be in agreement with the Apostolic Creed. However, he still wrote his own creed consisting of Seven Articles of Faith to be used at his baptism. A comparison between the Apostolic Creed and Rabinowitz' creed shows his respect for the main articles of faith and his independence when it comes to expression. The Seven Articles of Faith in James Adler's translation are as follows:

§ 1 I believe, with a perfect faith, that our heavenly Father is the living, and true and eternal God, who created heaven and earth and everything visible and invisible through His Word and His Holy Spirit. All things are from Him, all things in Him and all things to Him.

§ 2 I believe, with a perfect faith, that our heavenly Father has, according to His promise made to our forefathers, to our prophets, and to our king David, the son of Jesse, raised unto Israel a redeemer, Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, in Bethlehem the city of David, who suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried for our salvation, rose again from the dead and liveth and sitteth at the right hand of our heavenly Father, from thence He shall come to judge the world, the living and the dead. He is the appointed King over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His dominion there shall be no end.

§ 3 I believe, with a perfect faith, that by the counsel of God and His foreknowledge, our fathers have been smitten with hardness of heart for sin and for rebellion against our Messiah, the Lord Jesus, in order to provoke the other nations of the earth unto jealousy, and to reconcile all through faith in Christ by the word of His Evangelists, in order that knowledge of Jehovah should cover the earth, and Jehovah be king over the whole world.

§ 4 I believe, with a perfect faith, that through faith in Jesus, the Messiah alone, without the works of the law, a man may be justified, that there is but one God, who justifies the circumcised Jews by faith, and the uncircumcised through faith; and that there is no difference between Jew and Greek,

between bond and free, between male and female. They are all one in Christ.

§ 5 I believe, with a perfect faith, in a Holy Catholic and Apostolic church.

§ 6 I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.

§ 7 I wait for the resurrection and renewed life of the dead, and for the life of the world to come.

Amen

For Thy salvation, I wait, O Lord; I wait, O Lord, for Thy salvation, O Lord, for Thy salvation I wait. <sup>66</sup>

Rabinowitz expresses the same independence and liberty in his version of the popular Sabbath hymn, *Lekhah Dodi*.

*Lekhah Dodi* is, of course, not found in *The Book of Common Prayer* but Rabinowitz includes it in his *Tefilah* just as it is found in *Siddur for Messianic Jews* of 1988.<sup>67</sup>

The author of the popular Sabbath hymn, first mentioned in Moshe ben Machir's *Siddur Hayom* (1599),<sup>68</sup> is Solomon haLevi (= Alkabez) a Safed kabbalist of the early 16th century. The hymn consists of nine stanzas, and as in the Song of Songs, the bride, the Sabbath queen, is praised and welcomed; the people of Israel are the bridegroom. Messianic motives of redemption can also be found in the hymn.<sup>69</sup>

Rabinowitz could have used the hymn following the extant Hebrew text,<sup>70</sup> or he could have omitted it. He does not do either. Instead he includes the hymn with some alterations to the text. By doing so Rabinowitz changes the hymn into a Messianic hymn used during the Sabbath services. It is placed in the liturgy towards the end of the service, before the Creed and the Aaronic blessing. The reason for this is not given; or at least I have not come across any mention of why. One qualified guess could be that if Rabinowitz had gotten the permission from the authorities to celebrate Holy Communion — which he never got — the revised version of *Lekhah Dodi* could have been used very appropriately in connection with the Holy Communion towards the end of the service.

When I wrote a biography on Rabinowitz I neglected certain elements in Rabinowitz' version of this popular Sabbath hymn. Re-reading the sources, however, I have become aware of them.

By introducing a few changes in the traditional Hebrew text Rabinowitz welcomes not the Sabbath, but the Lord of the Sabbath. In the traditional hymn the chorus found both at the beginning and at the end of the hymn runs as follows:<sup>71</sup>

Come, my friend, meet the bride, Let's welcome the presence of the Sabbath.

---

<sup>66</sup> Kjær-Hansen, 96-97.

<sup>67</sup> J. Fischer & D. Bronstein, *Siddur for Messianic Jews* (Palm Harbor, Fl.: Menorah Ministries, 3rd ed., 1988), 14-25.

<sup>68</sup> I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 108.

<sup>69</sup> Bathja Bayer, "Lekhah Dodi", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol.12, 4-8.

<sup>70</sup> In the article, "Lekhah Dodi", Bayer points out, that in "the extant text, there are only slight variations, although one version has five additional stanzas also attributed to Alkabetz" = Solomon haLevi; p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> The English translation is from Fischer & Bronstein, *Siddur*.

In Rabinowitz' version this is changed to:

Come, come my friend come, come the Lord of the Sabbath.

Stanza 2 in the traditional text is

Let's go to meet the Sabbath, For she is the source of blessing from the beginning, anointed from ancient days, Though made last, conceived first.

By adding *Adon ha-* and changing the personal pronoun *Hi* (feminine, referring to the Sabbath) to *Hu* (masculine, referring to *Adon* [Lord] haShabbat) Rabinowitz produces this version:

Let's go to meet the Lord of the Sabbath, for he is the source ....

For Rabinowitz it is the Lord of the Sabbath, who is "annointed from ancient days" and "Though made last, conceived first"!

Stanza 4 in the traditional text is

Shake the dust off yourself, rise! Dress the garments of glory, my people. Jesse's son, the Bethlehemite, Draws near, bringing us redemption.

To this Rabinowitz adds "Yeshua," between "Jesse's son" and "the Bethlehemite" and leaves the rest of the verse unchanged. In this way the traditional Jewish expectation of redemption is re-interpreted in light of salvation history. The final redemption in the future is linked to "Yeshua" and his deeds in the past.

The final stanza in the traditional text is

Come in peace, crown of your lord, come with joy and with cheer, Come to the faithful among the chosen people, Come bride; come!

Rabinowitz has changed this to

Come in peace, man of redemption (Ish haGeulah) Come with joy and with cheer, Come to the faithful among the chosen people, Come, my friend, come the Lord of the Sabbath, prince of peace.

Rabinowitz cannot expect traditional Judaism to embrace his revision, but this does not change the fact that — as far as I can see — he has produced a consistent christological interpretation and that his alterations are legitimate for one who — like Rabinowitz — wants to insist on his Jewishness as well as his faith in Jesus, the Jew.

Also the Sabbath needs to be seen in light of God's salvation history and what Jesus has done.

Above, we referred to the present day *Siddur for Messianic Jews*, which also includes *Lekhah Dodi*. Contrary to Rabinowitz in his *Tefilah*, the modern Messianic *Siddur* mentions also the title, *Lekhah Dodi*, including the hymn in its traditional Jewish text. It is the Sabbath that is welcomed, but after the final stanza the following lines conclude the hymn:

Come my beloved, Come my beloved to meet the bride. The face of Sabbath we receive, the face of Sabbath we receive Sabbath peace in Yeshua, Sabbath peace, Shabbath peace, Shabbath peace in Yeshua, Shabbath peace, Shabbath peace.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Fischer & Bronstein, 25.

This is another way of doing it. Which is best — Rabinowitz's or the one found in *Siddur for Messianic Jews* — we shall not judge. We leave it to others to answer that question.

*Copyright Kai Kjær-Hansen, All Rights Reserved*

# Order of Worship For an Israeli Messianic Lutheran Congregation

Torkild Masvie<sup>73</sup>

With the wave of Romanian Jewish immigrants to Israel 45-50 years ago Romanian Messianic Jews also arrived. Many of them had their background in Lutheran missionary work among Jews in Romania and brought with them a German, Romanian Lutheran liturgy that for many years was the basis for a simplified Hebrew liturgy which was used in three congregations in Israel.

In the late 1970's a group of people under the leadership of Ole Chr. Kvarme, then the pastor of Beit Eliahu, a Messianic Lutheran congregation in Haifa, worked to create a new Hebrew Messianic Order of Worship. The basic concept for the work was later expressed by Kvarme:

The universal Church is in continuity with the people of God in the Old Testament. The early Church developed its liturgical traditions on the basis of the inheritance from the Temple and the Synagogue. This way they expressed the link between the church and the Jewish people and the Jewish inheritance. This way the Church also announced its hope for the salvation of all Israel "in Christo." The goal for the development of indigenous forms of liturgies ... is not the impossibility of trying to return to the early church, even less to take Rabbinic Judaism and make it "Messianic," but rather to try to make alive our biblical inheritance, an inheritance from the early church, in the context of modern Israel and in dialogue with the biblical traditions of modern Judaism.<sup>74</sup>

In other words, the roots of the fellowship of believers, both Jewish and gentile, are the Jewish roots of the church. Therefore the new Order of Worship was to be ecumenical, using the Jewish legacy of the early church that is the basis for all historic churches. At the same time, in a Hebrew fellowship of mainly Jewish believers in Israel, the Jewish tradition was an important source in transforming the liturgy of the Romanian fellowship.

It was decided to use phrases from the prayer language of the Jewish sources but to avoid any transformation of whole segments from the Siddur, as it would be incorrect to use such material against both the intention of the Siddur and the will of the worshipers in the synagogue.

With the fellowship consisting mainly of Romanian Jewish immigrants with meager contact with the synagogue, and with their roots in a German pattern of worship, the aim was to bring the worship closer to the Jewish roots of the church, and making it more Israeli by drawing on the musical elements developing in the new country. It is interesting that this development did not alienate the Hebrew-speaking Arab members of the congregation, but rather brought forth a liturgy less European and thus more meaningful for them. We shall focus on some of the considerations made with regard to prayers, the use of the Bible, holy communion and music and then present an outline of worship as it is today.

---

<sup>73</sup> Torkild Masvie is Director of Caspari Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies in Jerusalem. He holds an M.A. in theology from Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Oslo.

<sup>74</sup> Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, "Gottesdienst unter Judenchristen in Israel.", in *Friede über Israel*, no. 1, 1982, p. 4.

## **Prayers**

The German and Romanian written prayers translated into Hebrew had dried out the prayer life of the congregation. The group approached the rich tradition of prayer in the Hebrew language used in the synagogues, and aimed to promote a combination of written and spontaneous prayers based on this tradition.

Research on the early church, together with the encounter with the synagogue prayers, encouraged greater emphasis on the elements of thanksgiving and praise than the traditional Protestant liturgies had given, especially in the Holy Communion. In shaping doxologies they used elements of the classic Jewish forms of *Beracha* (praising) suitable to a trinitarian and christological context and also found in the liturgy of the early church. The *Selichot* (prayers for forgiveness) from the synagogue gave input to the creation of a suitable Hebrew form of confession of sins.

## **Use of the Old and the New Testament**

The goal was to use the Old Testament extensively together with the New Testament, as this is essential for the identity of Messianic Jews. This would also bring the congregation to a clearer understanding of the Old Testament as pointing to Messiah. As such it becomes a vehicle for evangelism in the Jewish context.

Parts of the liturgy are quotations of Old Testament passages, and there are weekly readings from the Old Testament. The sermon text is taken from the Old Testament more often than gentile churches, though there is not a common reading plan for the congregations.

## **The Holy Communion**

Although the Holy Communion is instituted as a universal communion meal for all believers, it was natural to link it to its original Jewish setting. It meant, among other things, underlining the Holy Communion's link with the Passover meal and the liturgical elements from the time of Jesus.

## **Music**

The multi-lingual character of the Messianic fellowships with a Lutheran background hindered corporate praise, as the songs had to be in Hebrew, Rumanian, English and German. As Hebrew has increasingly become the language in the congregations new Hebrew songs have worked their way into these and other congregations in Israel. The music for different parts of the liturgy is also new.

## Outline of the Order of Worship<sup>75</sup>

The worship starts with a musical prelude and ends with a musical postlude.<sup>76</sup> After the prelude the pastor blesses the congregation, using Paul's opening greeting from Philipians 1: 2. This is followed by a hymn. The congregation then gives praise to God using phrases from the synagogue tradition with the addition of a trinitarian element, followed by the singing of Psalm 100:2-4 and a reading from the Psalms.

The confession of sins is introduced with the congregation requesting God's mercy using the words of the two blind men in Matt. 9:27, also found in the early church, here in the trinitarian form. The pastor then encourages the congregation to come before God with their sins before singing the words of Psalm 139:23-24. Then the congregation reads David's confession in Psalm 51:1-9; a confession of sins incorporating phrases from old Jewish prayer literature, and Isaiah 6:1-5, closing the confession by singing verse 12 of Psalm 51. The pastor responds by reading 1 John 1:7-9, which causes the congregation to praise God for the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. The praise continues using the *Beracha* form from the synagogue with a trinitarian addition, and responsive praises in the classic Hebrew Jewish prayer form, after which John 3:16 is sung.

The *Shema* ("Hear O Israel ..." from Deut 6:4), with a trinitarian addition, is then said by the congregation before the readings from the Old Testament and New Testament. The congregation sings Psalm 42:2 before the announcements and collection. A hymn then leads to the sermon.

The sermon is followed by a hymn and the apostolic creed, and prayer led by one of the congregation members. Prayer requests are mentioned. The prayer is closed with the leader blessing the congregation "God's peace be with you always," and the congregation singing the blessing of Philipians 1:2.

Holy Communion starts with an encouragement of praise and prayers using the words of the old church.<sup>77</sup> Then the congregation uses the church's classic Holy Communion praise, the quotation of Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy ..." and Matt 21:9 "Blessed be ... he who comes," before the pastor leads the congregation in praise using the *Beracha* form and other elements from the synagogue tradition.

After the words of John the Baptist in John 1:29, "Behold the lamb of God," follows the Words of Institution (which differentiate the communion meal from ordinary food), quoting 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 with the incorporation of Matthew 26:26-28. There are two pauses when the congregation sings verse 24 of the Corinthians text for the bread, and then verse 28 of the Matthew text for the wine. Then the bread and wine are blessed, using words from the Jewish tradition of the Passover meal with christological additions.

Then the congregation members come to the altar table where the bread (broken unleavened

---

<sup>75</sup> Order of Worship For a Messianic Lutheran Congregation. The Order has been used in Israel since May 1981, with some variations, in the Beit Eliahu congregation in Haifa, the Immanuel Church in Tel Aviv/Jaffa, and the Shalhevetyah congregation in Jerusalem.

<sup>76</sup> This is obviously a link to the Romanian and German Lutheran background and has no basis in either the old tradition of the synagogue or in the early church; however it has become a custom in churches and in some synagogues in the West.

<sup>77</sup> This is one of the places where the people working with the liturgy translated from what must have been the Hebrew words of the old church, instead of translating from the German that had its links through Latin and Greek back to the Hebrew.

matza) and wine from a cup are distributed to the participants by the pastor and an assistant. Afterwards they are greeted with the admonition of Isaiah 43:1 to fear not.

The Lord's prayer follows Holy Communion. This is different from classic church liturgies in which the Lord's prayer, with its request for "daily bread," is one of the prayers said before the distribution of bread and wine.

The service ends with the priestly blessing from Leviticus 6:24, which is followed by the singing of Psalm 121:5-8 and the postlude.

*Copyright Torkild Masvie, All Rights Reserved*



# Meeting the Needs — Siddur for Messianic Jews

John Fischer<sup>78</sup>

For more than 40 years the late Dr. David Bronstein — the General Secretary for the Americas for the now International Messianic Jewish (Hebrew Christian) Alliance — was involved in ceaseless activities and ministry on behalf of the Messianic Jewish movement worldwide. He shared a deep concern that Messianic Jews be dynamic, informed and well-prepared. He wanted Messianic Judaism to be authentic, consistent and deeply rooted. Out of this concern came a conviction that the movement urgently needed quality materials to help it grow and develop. He laid out a specific challenge to produce worship materials for Messianic synagogues.

With his active encouragement, a project was initiated in 1981. The 1984 publication of the *Siddur for Messianic Jews* was the first step toward fulfilling his challenge. The 1992 publication of *Messianic Services for the Festivals and Holy Days* accomplishes much of the rest of that goal. These volumes have been used extensively by the Messianic Movement throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. There have also been requests for them from Brazil, India, Pakistan, Ghana, and Nigeria. The major usage appears to be by Messianic Jewish congregations and fellowships as part of their regular worship services. A number of non-Jewish, messianically-oriented fellowships have used them for similar purposes, and individuals also use them as part of their personal devotional times. Although several congregations have developed their own worship materials, the only liturgical publication distributed more widely is the *Messianic Shabbat Siddur* by Jeremiah Greenberg (1996). Of the various Messianic Haggadot that appear from time to time, two seem to have achieved broader recognition and distribution. These are *Messianic Passover Haggadah* by Barry and Steffi Rubin (Leaderer Messianic Ministries) and *Messianic Jewish Passover Haggadah* by Michael Schiffman (Teshuvah Publishing).

The *Siddur for Messianic Jews*, now in its fifth edition, is an aid to worship for Messianic Synagogues. But, it can be used for individual or home worship as well. While its main focus is the Shabbat service, it is readily adaptable to daily worship and use also. The Siddur incorporates the basic Shabbat service and includes the elements of both the evening and morning service. So it can just as readily be used for either or both purposes. While it is based on traditional observance, it also contains clear Messianic adaptations and additions derived from the New Testament. For example, a number of the typically Jewish prayer and praise passages found in the Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation (both in Hebrew and English) are integrated into the Shabbat worship. In addition to the basic Shabbat service, several alternate orders of worship are included. And, there is a Shabbat service which has been specially adapted for observing communion, called "Seder haMeshiach" in the Siddur. A *Havdalah* (close of Shabbat) ceremony is also included, with all of its beautiful Messianic anticipation and imagery.

---

<sup>78</sup>John Fischer (Ph.D., Th.D.) is leader of Congregation Ohr Chadash, Clearwater Florida and dean of St. Petersburg Theological Seminary, St. Petersburg, Florida.

The foundational elements of traditional Shabbat worship have not only been included in Hebrew and English, but have all been transliterated (Hebrew in English letters) as well. This, in addition to the explanatory sections in the back, makes the volume very "user friendly." These concluding sections explain various traditions and liturgical selections that are important for meaningful Shabbat worship. The traditions and worship liturgy are not only described, their purpose and use are also explained, and the biblical lessons and Messianic implications found in each are expounded. All of this — the suggested orders of service and the transliterations and explanations — mean that those just starting out in Messianic congregational worship can use the Siddur and begin Shabbat services almost immediately.<sup>79</sup>

*Messianic Services for the Festivals and Holy Days*, now in its second edition, is a prayer book and worship guide that is both a mahzor for the High Holy Days and a siddur for the Festivals, plus more.

While it aids worship in Messianic synagogues, it can also be used to assist worship in the home. This volume is specially designed for the celebration and commemoration of those holy days, festivals and special occasions which make our lives as Jewish people and as Messianic believers unique and dynamic.

As a mahzor, *Messianic Services for the Festivals and Holy Days* includes a variety of basic services for the High Holy Days: Rosh haShanah evening and morning services and Kol Nidre, morning and Neilah (closing) services for Yom Kippur. In addition, there is a section containing alternate order of service for these observances as well as a number of alternate liturgical selections which can be used as part of these services. As a festival siddur, this volume includes an order of worship and celebration for each of the festivals and holidays: Sukkot, Simhat Torah, Shavuot, Hanukkah and Purim. In addition, there is material for the ceremonies of bar and bat mitzvah, and the consecration and naming of the newborn.

There are a number of unique features to *Messianic Services for the Festivals and Holy Days*. The services are built on a traditional foundation but with distinctly Messianic emphases that are brought out in several ways. In some cases older traditional prayers which clearly point towards Yeshua such as the familiar "Oz Melifnai Bereshit" which incorporates imagery from Isaiah 53, and the striking prayer at the sounding of the shofar which mentions Yeshua — are included. In other cases, distinctly Messianic traditional liturgy is highlighted. And finally, fresh Messianic creations or additions — based on the New Testament — are incorporated into the traditional observance and celebration of these holidays.

There are other unique features as well. Built on the existing selections for Roah Hodesh (new month) a special service has been drawn up for the commemoration of this significant biblical observance (cf. Num 10:10, Ezra 3:5, and others) which traditionally already has distinctive Messianic emphases. It could easily be used as the basis for communion. There are also special additions which can be used to observe Yom haShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and Yom haAtzmaut (Israel independence Day). In addition there are introductions to each of the Holy Days and Festivals — as well as the Jewish calendar as a whole — which highlight

---

<sup>79</sup> As a further aid to conducting Messianic Jewish Shabbat services, *Synagogue Songs for Messianic Jewish Congregations* is available from Watkins Publications. The basic traditional and Messianic chants used in Shabbat services are written in musical notation so they can be "played" on the piano and thus learned more easily. A teaching tape accompanies the book.

the Messianic pictures, implications and significance of these celebrations. Finally, special services were created to commemorate the birth and resurrection of Yeshua. These — called Rishon and Hag haTkhiyah — are done with a distinct Jewish style and a unique Messianic flavor.

Both volumes are arranged so they can be used either by novices or experts in the traditions and liturgy or by Jews or gentiles alike; they contain both Hebrew and English, translation and transliteration. And the services are such that they can be adapted by either more traditionally or less traditionally oriented congregations.<sup>80</sup>

*Copyright John Fischer, All Rights Reserved*

---

<sup>80</sup> These volumes and other materials are available from Menorah Ministries, P.O.Box 669, Palm Harbor, FL. 34682, (813) 726 1472.

# The Development of a Messianic Jewish Theology — Affirmations and Questions

Harald Hegstad<sup>81</sup>

The very existence of Messianic Jewish congregations is in itself an important fact. There have been many examples through the centuries of Jews accepting Jesus as Messiah and Savior, but such acceptance has often led to assimilation into a non-Jewish environment. The convert — or at least his children — lost their Jewish identity and instead became Christian. For the first time since the early church, we now find groups of Jews regarding themselves as followers of Jesus, while maintaining their Jewish identity. To become a believer in Jesus does not mean one ceases to be a Jew. As David Stern states: “Believing in Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah, is one of the most Jewish things a Jew can do.”<sup>82</sup> This conviction has led not only to individual Jews becoming members of gentile churches, but also to the founding of congregations with a Jewish identity. And it has led to a movement which calls itself “Messianic Jewish” in order to stress its Jewishness.

In my opinion the very existence of Messianic Jews and their communities as well as the self-understanding of this movement represent an important challenge for the Christian church and Christian theology. It is important because it challenges the church's understanding of the Jewish people, as well as fundamental aspects of the traditional self-understanding of the church.

In its thinking about its relation to the Jewish people the church has traditionally been dominated by replacement theology: the conviction that the church has replaced Israel as the chosen people of God. Following that developed the opinion that being a Jew has no theological meaning anymore, no more than being a Norwegian or an Englishman. Although this opinion still exists within the church, it has been much harder to maintain in recent decades. Through the Holocaust the church had to open its eyes to the anti-semitic consequences of replacement theology and it has discovered the importance of the Jewish people as a present reality, not only something to be read about in the Bible.

More recently, replacement theology has been supplanted by two-covenant-theology. If the church hasn't replaced the Jewish people as the people of God, then Jews should be recognized as possessing a means to salvation equal to that of Christians. The Jews are saved by the law, the gentiles by faith in Jesus. As a consequence the Christians should stop evangelizing the Jews, and instead relate to the Jews in religious dialogue.

For both replacement theology and the two-ways/dialogue-theology the existence of Messianic Jews and of a Messianic Jewish community is a most disturbing fact. This group

---

<sup>81</sup> Harald Hegstad (Dr. Theol) teaches systematic theology at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in Oslo. He is also working with the Church of Norway Research Center.

<sup>82</sup> David Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Jerusalem: 1988), p. 24.

simply does not fit into the scheme in either way of thinking. During the last years a great number of books have been written about the relationship between Jews and Christians, but it is striking that in these books the Messianic Jews are almost ignored. They do not fit for more liberal-oriented theologians nor for the more conservative (as represented by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, among others). The Messianic Jews are not fitting in, which is a sign that these theologies that exclude them do not fit the New Testament either.

The present challenge is to give a theological interpretation of the reality the Messianic Jewish movement represents. This includes the burning question of an adequate self-understanding for the Messianic Jews, but also what this means for the self-understanding of the church. In my opinion these two fundamental challenges should not be treated as two different and separate challenges, but as two aspects of one basic challenge, common for Messianic Jews and for gentile Christians. I am inclined to believe that David Stern is right when he states that “without Messianic Judaism ... both the Jewish people and the church will fail to achieve their proper and glorious goals.”<sup>83</sup>

### **Contextualization and Restoration**

In the following I will take as my point of departure David Sterns distinction between contextualization and restoration applied to the relation between the Jews and the gospel.<sup>84</sup> The concept of contextualization has for some time been a key concept in theological debate and thinking, especially related to the proclamation of the gospel in a cultural setting different from one's own. What is often forgotten is that also one's own theology is a result of a contextualization, also in its European and North American fashion. That should make us more humble when preaching in other cultural settings, and eager to go to the *sources* for our faith and theology.

One fundamental aspect of this source is that it is *Jewish*. It is the good news about a Jew who is talking in the name of the God of Israel, an event that has been witnessed to us by the Jewish apostles. The existence of Messianic Jews and a Messianic theology reminds us that the gospel is not originally Greek, German or Norwegian, but was originally expressed in a Jewish setting. To preach the gospel today in a Jewish setting is therefore something other than preaching the gospel in any other setting. Because the gospel is Jewish in its origin, it has to do not primarily with contextualization, but with a restoration of the Jewishness of the gospel. As a restoration and not only a new contextualization, this process is of great interest for every other process of contextualization. Perhaps we could propose as a criterion for any formulation of Christian doctrine in any context, that it might be communicated and understood in a Jewish-Messianic setting. If not, it is doubtful that this theological idea can be regarded as an expression of New Testament faith.

A couple of examples might illuminate this: Both the Bible as well as Jewish tradition recognize *saints*: heroes of faith that serve as examples for the believers of today (cf. Heb 11). In parts of gentile Christian tradition this idea has been elevated to consider the saints mediators

---

<sup>83</sup> Stern, p. 3

<sup>84</sup> Stern, pp. 239ff.

between God and man, and the saints have become objects of veneration. In my opinion this idea — and not least the practice that follows from it — would be very difficult to formulate as a genuine expression of a Messianic-Jewish faith.

While my first example is taken from primarily a catholic/orthodox context, the other is primarily a Protestant phenomenon. In the Bible as well as in Jewish tradition the questions of ethics and morality are linked to the idea of divine commandments. Modern Protestant theology has instead often based its ethical thinking upon general *principles*, expressed by philosophical concepts. Although these principles often are ascribed with Biblical legitimacy, the question of the concrete morality often is disconnected from explicit Biblical commandments. (This method is today leading to a widespread acceptance of homosexual relations within Protestant churches). In my opinion this method as well as its consequences are very difficult to unite with a New Testament faith expressed in a Jewish context.

### **Jewish or Rabbinic Traditions?**

Even if I agree with the perspective of a restoration of the gospel in a Jewish setting, I think it is important to recognize that preaching the gospel to Jews today also should include contextualization. A basic reason for this is the fact that today's Judaism is not identical with the Judaism of the first century. Not only Christianity, but also Judaism has undergone a development, and neither of them have developed independent from each other. From being one of many rival factions in first century Judaism, Pharisaism became the dominating Jewish tradition, and found its normative expression in the Talmud. During this development Judaism changed, and in some aspects in opposition to the Christian interpretation of the Scriptures. One might for instance interpret the rabbinical emphasis on the Torah at the expense of other aspects (for instance the Messiah) as an expression of this tendency.

This signals a problem for the restoration project which must be taken seriously: When using concepts and habits from contemporary Judaism, Messianic Jews are running the risk of including in their thinking and practice elements both unknown and maybe also incompatible with the thinking of the first-century Jews which we meet in the New Testament.<sup>85</sup> When Stern in his book is talking about Torah as the rallying cry of the Messianic movement, it is appropriate to ask if the model for this is to be found in the New Testament, or rather in the rabbinical tradition.<sup>86</sup> However, I totally agree with Stern that the concept of Torah will be an important issue in the project of restoring the Jewishness of the gospel. Here it is clear that the thinking of the New Testament represents a corrective both vis-a-vis the antinomism of the church and vis-a-vis the nomism of the synagogue.

The main point of the preceding has been to stress that the Jewish context of today's Messianic Jews is not identical with the Jewish context of the first believers. This insight should have consequences for the restoration project. But today's Messianic Jews are also part of another context, which should not be ignored: They are — even if they do not always admit it —

---

<sup>85</sup> This question is discussed in A. Boskey's article "The Messianic Use of Rabbinic Literature", *Mishkan* 8&9, 1988, pp. 25-64.

<sup>86</sup> Stern, p. 187. Cf. T. Elgvin: "Torah of the Messiah and Torah of the Rabbis", in *Israel and Yeshua* (Caspari Center: Jerusalem 1993), pp. 143-152.

dependent upon gentile Christian tradition. Their faith in Jesus as the Messiah has not been handed over to them directly from the Jewish believers of the first century, but through church history, of which today's Jewish believers are a part. I think it is important to be aware of this fact, and to draw its consequences.

Especially striking for a Norwegian Lutheran are the links between the Messianic Jewish movement and Anglo-Saxon (especially American) left wing protestantism/evangelicalism (in spite of the declared will of the Messianic movement to be independent of all gentile confessional traditions). I think it a paradox that I first learned the concept of dispensationalism from discussions within the Messianic Jewish movement in Israel! A recent American school, a fringe phenomenon in the history of theology, has received a remarkable attention in discussions of Messianic Jewish theology.<sup>87</sup> Another example is the strong influence of Brethren theology upon the preaching in Messianic congregations in Israel. These trends reveal a de facto Christian-confessional background for Messianic theology which should not be ignored. It seems this dependence upon American evangelicalism is found in various shades both in those Israeli congregations which mainly are Hebrew editions of Western relatives, as well as those congregations which maintain a more Jewish flavor.

A common weakness in this left-wing protestantism has been the idea of the possibility of an easy return to New Testament Christianity without sufficient consideration of the history in between. I fear that this might be a danger for the Messianic movement as well. When Stern in his books lists elements in a curriculum for educating Messianic Jews, why is Jewish history included, but not church history?<sup>88</sup>

An aspect of this anti-traditionalist attitude has also been a very negative evaluation of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. I have the impression that some of this left wing Protestant perspective is typical at least for parts of the Messianic movement. Especially in the Middle Eastern setting where the majority of the indigenous Christians belong to Catholic and Orthodox churches, this is an important issue. It is also a fact that the liturgical traditions of many of these oriental and orthodox churches have included many Jewish elements from the liturgy of the early church. It is also worth mentioning that in the veins of Arabic-speaking Christians in Israel and its neighboring countries probably runs a great portion of Jewish blood, due to the historical links of these communities with the Jewish-Christians of the early centuries. I think it is important that the gentile-Christian counterpart of Messianic Jewish theology should not be only the American Protestantism, but also these local Christian communities.

In Jewish thinking tradition plays a great role. Not only the holy scriptures, but also the history of interpreting these scriptures is important. It is a paradox if a Jewish-rooted movement takes an anti-traditionalist position in the relation to Christian tradition and classical Christian texts, including the creeds from the old church.<sup>89</sup>

It is evident that also these texts should be understood as contextualizations of New

---

<sup>87</sup> Cf. the articles by D. Juster and J. Schulam about "Covenant and Dispensation", *Mishkan* 2, 1985, pp. 24ff.

<sup>88</sup> Stern, p. 209.

<sup>89</sup> Regarding the Jewish and biblical basis for the Nicene creed, cf. O. Skarsaune, "The Christological Dogma of Nicea — Greek or Jewish," *Mishkan* 1, 1984.

Testament faith, and of course these expressions of dogma have been formed by their context. In a Messianic-Jewish setting the same biblical truths should of course be formulated in new (both Jewish and contemporary) ways. As attempts to formulate the one Christian faith in a given setting, they have to be taken into consideration when trying to formulate the same faith in a new setting, even if this setting is the Jewish one. The reason for this is that of ecclesiological character. As creedal basis for the majority of the churches of the world, one at least has to answer the question of the relation between these creeds and one's own faith. Being conscious of confessing the same Lord, we can also have community with each other as brothers and sisters in this Lord.

As parts of the one body of the Messiah, Jewish and gentile believers should be willing to give each other an account for what they believe and how they formulate this belief. That might mean a greater Messianic Jewish sensitivity toward classical issues from the Christian tradition. I think that could help our Jewish brothers in the faith in the development of their own expression of faith in the Messiah. It also suggests a challenge to the traditional churches not only to rethink its understanding of the Jewish people, but also its own theological tradition in the light of its Jewish origins and its indissoluble bonds to the Jewish people, which our Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters embody.

*Copyright Harald Hegstad, All Rights Reserved*



# *Jewish Prayer in the Time of Jesus*

Frederic Manns

Studium Biblicum Franciscum: Franciscan Printing Press, 1994, Pp. XI, 291.

Reviewed by Hilary le Cornu<sup>90</sup>

This book is a further addition to the well-established class of works whose aim is to contextualize Jesus and his ministry in its Jewish setting. It is also a contribution to the time-honored tradition of descriptive identification according to the theme. Manns' volume therefore serves as a useful introduction to Jewish prayer forms and contents contemporary with and "environmentally-friendly" to Jesus and the early Messianic community.

Manns takes his examples of "Jewish prayer" from a wide range of sources. While he stresses the propriety of situating Second Temple period prayer patterns in the Biblical context, he also adopts a highly schematic style to deal with the subsequent historical periods. He divides Jewish prayer history into the Hasmonean period, the period until the destruction of the Temple (70 AD), the period extending to the end of the Tannaim (c. 220), the Amoraic period (200-500), the tractate *Soferim*, and the Gaonic period. He identifies two principal textual traditions, the Palestinian and the Babylonian, and breaks down their principal sources in turn:

Palestine	Babylon
Mishna	Talmud
Talmud	Gaonim
Tractate Soferim	Siddur Rav Amram Gaon
Cairo genizah texts	Rambam (Maimonides)
Seder Hibbur Berakhot	Sephardi rites, Yemenite
Ashkenazi, Romanian	

To these are added the various targumim.

Readers seeking introductory access to the nature, form, and content of Jewish prayers recited in the Second Temple period will find this a useful resource. Although Manns acknowledges that the book is designed as an elementary enterprise, the legitimacy of the enterprise is justified by the fact that "prayer legitimately expresses the soul of a people" (p. 6). This attitude characterizes the overall thematic approach of the book: Manns is far more interested in what he terms the "conceptual" study of Jewish prayer than in either philological and literary aspects of the texts or historical dating.

Since the conceptual approach allows the reader to "decipher the theology" of the documents

---

<sup>90</sup>Hilary Le Cornu has lived in Jerusalem for several years and is doing post-graduate work at The Hebrew University in comparative literature.

(p. 5), the book is an attempt to provide a descriptive survey of the central theological characteristics of Jewish prayer. He consequently picks out “key concepts” such as *kavana* (intention), *kiddush haShem* (martyrdom), intercession, names of the temple, and specific prayers such as the *Shema*, *Aleinu*, *Kaddish* etc. Since he emphasizes that Jewish liturgy was focused on and in the temple and synagogue, he also devotes chapters to examining the physical surroundings in which prayers were said, together with the vestments which accompanied specific prayer practices: the temple, synagogue, and house of prayer and *tefillin* (phylacteries), *tzitzit* (tassels), *tallit* (prayer shawl), and *kippah*.

Manns' volume can be usefully compared with Kaddushin's work *The Rabbinic Mind*, a book to which it exhibits many similarities. Kaddushin advocated the idea of “value concepts,” by which he referred to value ideas (including prayer) which are not fully formulated yet, as a group, shape the form of society. Manns follows the same format, with the added dimension of contextualizing early “Christian” liturgical practices into their original milieu. The book is designed less to demonstrate parallels between the New Testament and contemporary Jewish prayers than to introduce New Testament readers to the world of Jewish prayer in which its writers lived and thought. Consequently references to the New Testament are quite sparse. Nor (apart from an extended section devoted to examining the presence of a Passover Haggada in Revelation) does Manns promote the view that the New Testament texts are in themselves examples of “Jewish prayer in the time of Jesus” — perhaps simply to avoid confusion.

For an introductory volume, the book possesses some unnecessary deficiencies, however. The most grievous is the want of a subject index, further compounded by a lack of an index of names other than those of modern scholars. A glossary is provided, however. Hebrew scholars can refer to the Hebrew texts in the appendices, leaving the main body of the book uncluttered for the lay person.

*Copyright Hilary le Cornu, All Rights Reserved*

## *Jewish Identity and Faith in Jesus*

**Kai Kjaer-Hansen, Editor**  
**Caspari Center, Jerusalem, 1996, Pp 171**

**Reviewed by John Ross<sup>91</sup>**

That an increasing number of Jewish people are coming to believe in Jesus is a fact of which readers of this journal need not be reminded. It is a cause of great rejoicing to daily see the evidence that God has not rejected his people. His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is inviolable and through the life, death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus brought to reality in the experience in thousands of Jewish people. However in the minds of some, Jews and gentiles alike, this very fact poses great questions.

What is the real identity of Jews who believe in Jesus? In what sense, if at all, are Jewish believers justified in considering themselves Jews? How is the predominately gentile world Church to view them? Are they to be allowed to define themselves or is the definition to be made by others? Is the presence of Jewish Christianity in the fellowship of the Church disruptive and sectarian or a wholesome influence adding to rich diversity that forms the body of Messiah?

Through a series of 17 helpful essays the contributors to this book seek to tackle the issues surrounding Jewish identity and faith in Jesus. They address these topics from a variety of viewpoints and represent diverse presuppositional frameworks, some of which may be mutually incompatible. What is clear is that some of these questions may prove incapable of total resolution to everyone's satisfaction.

Kai Kjaer-Hansen and his colleagues deserve our sincere thanks for being ready to tackle these complex and controversial issues. It is to be hoped the book will be widely read and the subject thoroughly aired. The editor's ultimate essay brings us back to the final authority of Scripture and reminds us that the question of Jewish identity within the community of those who believe in Jesus must be resolved by the Messiah himself. These writers, like Paul, affirm the authenticity of Jewish Christian (Messianic Jewish) identity. As we continue to discover that new individuality Jesus gives to all his people may we, Jew and gentile, cultivate that corporate identity recognizing that "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace."

*Copyright John Ross, All Rights Reserved*

---

<sup>91</sup> John Ross is Chief Executive of Christian Witness to Israel (CWI). He is also the European Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.