MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Content

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Introduction

Dear readers,

Welcome to the spring/summer 2015 issue of *Mishkan*.

This issue's main topic is Torah and Torah observance among Messianic Jews today. The diversity inside the movement in Israel and the US, from Torah observance to non-observance, is striking. "To do or not to do" is the question, as Vered Hillel says in her article.

Statistics can also tell us a lot about how the Messianic movement is developing. Andrew Barron gives us a survey of American Messianic Jews in this issue of *Mishkan*.

And as always, you will find book reviews and "From the Israeli Scene."

Happy reading!
Caspari Center staff
Jerusalem, June 2015

To Do or Not to Do?

Dr. Vered Hillel

Were the early Jewish believers in Yeshua Torah observant? The answer to this question is like walking through a minefield. Our starting point and the path we choose to take determine the outcome. The mines are the presuppositions with which we approach the question and the text. Traditionally, the terms *Judaism* and *Christianity* have been anachronistically applied to the first century, falsely creating the idea of two competing religious groups and religions. This presupposition constructs two artificial categories of "us," those who believe in Yeshua as Messiah, and "them," those who do not believe. These two uniform entities are juxtaposed against one another in a zero-sum mentality, causing one to be correct and the other wrong. Differences are explained theologically. The challenge is that first-century Jewish belief and practice focused on the correct interpretation of Torah for the proper way of life, not for proper theology. It is important to remember that the early Yeshua-believers, whether Jewish or from the nations, were connected with the synagogue in one way or another. The categorization of "us" and "them," Christianity verses Judaism, and the "Adversos Judaeos" tradition (Christian teachings against the Jews) have led to the view that Torah and Torah observance are harsh, legalistic, works righteousness, and burdensome. Since the aftermath of the Holocaust, New Testament scholars have put aside "Adversos Judaeos" traditions and have begun trying to understand it in its first-century Jewish context. This article side-steps this presuppositional mine, and seeks to understand how the early Jewish believers in Yeshua viewed and practiced Torah in light of first-century contemporary Jewish tradition.

A second presuppositional mine is the diversity within Second Temple Judaism. In the first century, Judaism was not monolithic. Its beliefs and practices were variegated. There was no single, universally recognized authority when it came to interpreting the Torah or to determining "proper" Torah observance. Nevertheless, all Jews stood in the framework of the people of Israel and of the importance and sanctity of the temple, whether in agreement or disagreement. Each group believed that they had the authority to interpret Scripture. Thus, each had the proper interpretation of Torah for daily life. This led to passionate disagreements, arguments, and polemics between the various Jewish groups. Jews were intolerant of other Jews' opinions. One example is the condemnation of the Pharisees in the Qumran documents as "seekers of smooth things" and "builders of the wall" (CD 4:19), who had misleading interpretations of Scripture. The scrolls state that the Pharisees claimed proper observance of Torah, but in reality they "looked out for gaps in the Torah" for their own purposes. Consequently, they were seekers of deceit (*Thanksgiving Scroll* 2, 32). In 4QMMT, the Qumran sectarians accuse the priests in Jerusalem of having the wrong interpretation of Torah in regard to the transference of impurities in relation to water, and the wrong calendar and other legal rulings for daily life. The language and tone of the letter are extremely strong. So much so that it makes Paul's strong language to his opponents seem

mild. Diversity was typical, but dangerous. It needed to be corrected.[1] Intra-Jewish debates were a normal part of first-century life and culture. Yeshua, Paul, and the early Jewish Yeshua-believers fall within these parameters. This article first seeks to read the conflicts about Torah observance in the *Brit Hadasha* as intra-Jewish debates or polemics.

The last presuppositional mine is the message preached by the early Yeshua- believers. First-century believers preached a Jewish message drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. It was filled with Jewish themes such as bodily resurrection, divine judgment, and messianic redemption. Apocalyptic expectations and wisdom traditions affected their interpretation of Torah and its themes. But the conflict was about the interpretation of the Torah, not about the Torah itself. The gospels depict Yeshua as frequently arguing with his contemporaries over the correct interpretation of the Torah. Yeshua disputed the interpretation of the Torah within the Jewish traditions of his day. Yeshua's preaching focused on the imminent coming of the kingdom of heaven, and not on the observance of the Mosaic Torah. His preferred mode of expounding Torah was wisdom, not halakhic debate. Though Yeshua disagreed with the Pharisees and scribes (Jewish experts on the interpretation of Torah) about their interpretation of the Torah, he never abrogated the Torah. That he respected first-century Torah practices and rules of worship is evidenced in his trial before the Sanhedrin. Try as they might, no pretext could be found to condemn Yeshua for transgressing the Torah. Furthermore, the community of James, who observed the Torah meticulously, testifies to Yeshua's faithfulness to Torah. They followed his teaching. Had Yeshua irreparably broken with Torah, the emergence of such a party would have been incomprehensible.

Paul must also be set within the context of first-century intra-Jewish debates. He repudiated any Yeshua-believer who construed the gospel in a way different than his own. Paul taught with an apocalyptic urgency that focused on the death, burial, resurrection, and imminent return of Yeshua, which meant the imminent redemption of Israel. As he took this good news into Asia Minor he encountered a new social reality: the significant number of Gentiles in Diaspora synagogues. The early Jewish Yeshua-believers did not know how to proceed. Paul advocated that these non-Jewish believers be accepted as Gentiles, as long as they held to specific public Jewish behaviors. They were to worship ADONAI alone. This meant abstaining from idol worship, from eating meat sacrificed to idols or improperly butchered meat, and from blood, as well as from all forms of sexual immorality (Acts 15:29; cf. Acts 21:25). Paul's Jewish believing opponents agreed on these specific public behaviors, but insisted on more, e.g. circumcision of males, kashrut (food laws), and adherence to Israel's calendar, as well as the "traditions of the Fathers." James, and the other leaders of the Jerusalem believing community, accepted Paul's interpretation that Gentiles were not required to keep the Torah. The decision to accept Gentile converts into the Yeshua-believing community without requiring Torah observance does not negate such observance for Jewish believers in Yeshua. There would have been no reason to debate whether Gentiles in the Yeshua community needed to be circumcised or keep kosher, etc., if the Jewish members were not doing so. The issue of Torah observance for Jewish believers in Yeshua was taken for granted, it was not debated. This decision served as the norm until the second century, when the church became predominately non-Jewish, and Jewish believers in Yeshua were required to put aside all Jewish practices.

This article seeks to understand the Torah observance of first-century Jewish believers in Yeshua in light of contemporary Jewish tradition. It reads the conflicts about Torah and Torah observance as intra-Jewish debates or polemics over the interpretation of Torah, and not about its validity. Often Shabbat, kashrut, and circumcision are singled out as particularly important Jewish

[1] The complaint about and repudiation of diversity is found in many Jewish texts from the Prophets to the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Dead Sea Scrolls.

practices in the first century. Other prominent practices are the wearing of *tzitzit* (fringes) and *tefillin* (phylacteries), the use of stoneware implements, and *mikvaot* (ritual baths). But Torah observance is so much more than cultic and ceremonial practices, or halakhic debates and rulings. The Torah also says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5) and to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18). People are to care for the poor by not gleaning the corners of their fields (Lev 19:9). Any discussion on Torah observance by Jewish believers in Yeshua must include both cultic/ritual commands and ethical commands. Yeshua stressed the "weightier matters of Torah," which are often called "moral" or "relational" commandments, stressing justice, mercy, and faith, without negating the cultic/ritual commands.[2] Since the early Jewish believers in Yeshua built their community on Yeshua's teachings, we will start with his view toward the Torah and Torah practices. From there we will move on to James and the Jerusalem community of Yeshua-believers, and finish with a quick look at Shabbat observance and some examples of Torah observant Jewish Yeshua-believers in the *Brit Hadasha.*

Yeshua: Torah and Torah Observance

The Gospel of Matthew presents Yeshua as the definitive teacher of Torah.[3] In Matthew 5:17–19, Yeshua assures his followers that he did not come to abrogate the extant corpus of Judaism (the Torah and Prophets), but to fulfill it (i.e., live according to its precepts). He calls upon his followers to fulfill all that the Torah requires of them.[4]

> Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.[5]

Notice that Yeshua makes a distinction between the greater and lesser commandments. In doing so he emphasizes that when there is a conflict between the two, the greater (or weightier) commandment takes precedence (cf. Matt 9:13 and 12:7, which cite Hos 6:6, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice"). Yeshua's interpretation of the Torah stresses the ethical and relational in light of the imminent kingdom of heaven. These verses spark readers' attention, signaling them to listen to what Yeshua is about to teach (5:21–48; cf. Matt 6–7). It is the correct interpretation of the Torah for those desiring to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Scholars have considered verses 21–48 the antithesis to the affirmation of Torah in the preceding verses, suggesting that Yeshua opposes Torah. Many have struggled to reconcile and/or to harmonize the apparent discrepancy between the affirmation (5:17–20) and the antithesis (5:21–48; i.e., do not murder, hate your brother, commit adultery, or swear falsely). There is no need for reconciliation or harmonization. The so-called antithesis does not abolish the Torah, but

[2] In the discussion that follows, the statements attributed to Yeshua are accepted as his statements. Even if the statements reflect the ideas of the gospel writers, and not those of the historical Yeshua, the writers taught that this is what Yeshua said and meant.

[3] See Mark Kinzer, *Post Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 59.

[4] For a good interpretation of these verses, see Philip Sigal, *The Halakah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew* (SBL Studies in Biblical Literature 18; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 24–27; repr. of *The Halakah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).

[5] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the *Tree of Life Version,* a Messianic Jewish translation of the Scriptures.

extends it. Yeshua expounds the teaching already explicit within it. Yeshua's assurance that he wants all Scripture to be fulfilled (i.e. observed) does not preclude adjusting or changing individual items according to his interpretation. Yeshua establishes a foundation of love and respect for the Torah.

The Shema—the Core of the Torah

Mark 12:28–34 records an encounter between Yeshua and an unknown Torah scholar. When asked which is the greatest of the commandments, Yeshua responds, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: ADONAI[6] is our God, ADONAI is one; and you shall love (v'ahavta) ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Deut 6:4–5). The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18). There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28–31//Matt 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–27). Matthew's gospel presents these two commandments as a summary of the Torah and the Prophets (22:25–35). It has been said that "Deut 6:4–5 summarizes or speaks for the commandments which govern relations between humans and God," and "Lev 19:18 . . . govern[s] relations among humans."[7] The Torah scholar acknowledged the double love command[8] as the core of the Torah, and much more important than all the burnt sacrifices and offerings. His response demonstrates that Yeshua's views toward Torah were in agreement with the general Jewish teaching of his day.[9]

Yeshua's citation of the Shema, which draws its name from the opening words "Hear (*shema*) O Israel," expresses his reverence for Torah, as well as his acceptance of its precepts. The Shema consists of three paragraphs, Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Deuteronomy 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41. The three paragraphs are called "Accepting the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Deut 6:4–6), "Accepting the Yoke of the Commandments" (Deut 11:13–21), and "the Exodus from Egypt" (Num 15:37–41). The Shema was, and still is, the supreme affirmation in Judaism of the unity of God. It presents some of the core ideas about and commands of God. The Mishnah states that the priests in the temple recited the Shema, together with the Ten Commandments and a few other passages, twice daily after the whole-burnt offering (*m. Tamid* 4.3, 5.1). It is known from Josephus that the daily two-fold recitation of the Shema was not limited to the temple. He remarks that Jews recite the Shema when they rise and when they go to bed. The purpose for the twice daily repetition was to thank God for his bountiful gifts in the past and for those they will receive in the future. The Nash papyrus, emanating from Egypt in the second century BCE, concurs with Josephus. The Nash papyrus, which contains the Shema and the Ten Commandments, is a single sheet that is not part of a scroll. This is striking, as it indicates that the papyrus was used for devotional or educational purposes. The importance of the Shema can also be seen in its inclusion in the *tefillin* from Qumran.

When Yeshua cited the first two lines of the Shema, he proclaimed to his first-century audience that he accepted the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the Torah. Though the Shema in its entirety is not cited in the gospels, his first-century Jewish audience would have known the fuller context that enjoins Israel to

[6] ADONAI in Jewish practice, and in this article, acts as the surrogate for the tetragrammaton.

[7] E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law From Jesus to the Mishnah* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International, 1990), 70. He points to Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.234, 2.63; 1.299–300 and 1.324 as references.

[8] Much has been written on the double love commandments. For example, see Serge Ruzer, "The Double Love Precept" in *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 71–100, esp. 72, n. 5 for bibliography.

[9] cf. *Jubilees* 36:4–8. For its use at Qumran see S. Ruzer, "From 'Love Your Neighbor' to 'Love your Enemy,'" in *Mapping*, 35–70; idem, "Double Love Precept," 90–94.

> keep the words, which I am commanding you today, on your heart. You are to teach them diligently to your children, and to speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they are to be as *totafot* between your eyes, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:6–9)

The command to place God's word on one's heart, hand, forehead, and doorposts was probably meant metaphorically as a command to constantly meditate upon God's word (Torah). By the second century BCE, Jews interpreted these commands literally, giving rise to *tefillin* and *mezuzot.* Archaeological evidence demonstrates that Jews bound Bible verses on their hands and between their eyes through the use of *tefillin* and wrote them upon the doors of their houses and gates in *mezuzot*.[10] We know from the gospels that the Pharisees and Torah scholars wore *tefillin* and *tzitzit*. Yeshua criticized them for making "their *tefillin* broad and their fringes long" (Matt 23:5). Whether Yeshua or his early Jewish followers wore *tefillin* or put *mezuzot* on the doors of their houses cannot be stated unequivocally. The likelihood that they did is two-fold: 1) *tefillin* and *mezuzot* were common first-century Jewish practices, and there is nothing to indicate that the early Jewish Yeshua-believers looked or acted any differently than other first-century Jews in terms of ritual and everyday actions; 2) the Christian Council of Laodicea in the late fourth century issued a prohibition against laying *tefillin*, indicating that some believers continued to do so.[11]

A related Torah command that Yeshua, like his contemporaries, did observe is wearing *tzitzit*. The third paragraph of the Shema, Numbers 15:37–40, commands Israel to wear *tzitzit* on the corners of their garments:

> ADONAI spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the *Bnei Yisrael*. Say to them that they are to make *tzitzit* on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they are to put a blue cord on each *tzitzit*. It will be your own *tzitzit*—so whenever you look at them, you will remember all the mitzvoth [commandments] of ADONAI and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. This way you will remember and obey all my *mitzvot*, and you shall be holy to your God."

Yeshua wore *tzitzit.* When touched, people were healed. The woman with the twelve-year hemorrhage touched Yeshua's *tzitzit* (Matt 9:20//Luke 8:44).[12] Moreover, wherever Yeshua went, whether in villages, cities or countryside, the sick would touch the *tzitzit* on his garment, and they would be healed (Mark 6:56//Matt 14:36). The fact that Yeshua criticizes the Pharisees and Torah scholars for making their *tzitzit* long indicates that he wore a different style of *tzitzit* that were shorter. Thus Yeshua not only taught Torah but practiced its commandments.

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[10] Evidence for *mezuzot* has been discovered at several first-century sites in Israel, including Qumran and Jerusalem. *Tefillin* have been recovered from Qumran. *Tefillin* are small boxes attached to leather straps that contain Deut 6:4–9; Exod 13:1–10; 11–16; and Deut 11:13–21 written on parchment. A few different verses were found inside the *tefillin* at Qumran. See, for example, Yigal Yadin, *Tefillin from Qumran* (Israel Exploration Society, 1969) and Noah Weiner, "Qumran Phylacteries Reveal Nine New Dead Sea Scrolls," *BAR*, biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/dead-sea-scrolls/qumran-phylacteries-reveal-nine-new-dead-sea-scrolls/ [accessed March 26, 2015].

[11] Canon 36. See Peder Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 289; Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 399–400.

[12] Though the Greek word κράχπεδον is often translated "border or hem" of his garment, in the LXX it translates the Hebrew word *tzitzit* in the Torah.

Hear and Do

The Shema links hearing (belief) and doing (obedience). The verse directly before the Shema (Deut 6:3) spells out this link: "Hear, therefore O Israel, and take care to do this, so that it may go well with you and you may increase mightily, as ADONAI the God of your fathers has promised you. . . ." The Mishnah picks up on the link of hearing and obeying:

> Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korha said, Why was the section of *shema* [Deut. 6:4–6] placed before that of *v'hayah im shamoa* [Deut. 11:13–21]? So that one should first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven [by proclaiming *shema*—the unity of God] and then take upon himself the yoke of the commandments [by saying, *v'hayah im shamoa*—"If you shall diligently hearken to all My commandments"]. (*m. Ber.* 2.2)

Rabbi Yehoshua is asking why "Hear O Israel" is placed before "you shall diligently pay attention to all my commandments." This mishnah stresses that belief in God and acceptance of God as the only true king should precede Torah observance. In other words, obedience to Toraic commands is a result of being submitted to God as king. Yeshua's words in Matthew 7:21–24 are similar to those of Rabbi Yehoshua; the one who hears and does Yeshua's words will prosper. A person who hears only is like one who builds his/her house on the sand, and one who hears and acts on Yeshua's words is like a wise person, who builds his/her house on the rock. For early Yeshua-believers, belief in God and acceptance of Yeshua as the Messiah and King was to precede Torah observance, but not exclude it. Both hearing (faith) and doing (Torah observance) as interpreted through Yeshua were necessary.

Yeshua fulfilled the command to diligently teach the Torah to his children. In this case, children refer to his followers both near and distant. In Matthew 28:20, Yeshua commissions his disciples to teach everything that he commanded them. This charge applies to his teaching on both the weightier and lighter aspects of Torah.

James and the Jerusalem Community

The early Yeshua-believing community in Jerusalem exemplifies Yeshua's directive in Matthew 28:20. James, the brother of Yeshua and head of the Jerusalem community, stresses the concept of both hearing and doing (faith and works). In his letter,[13] he addresses what he perceives to be lapses in the observance of important Torah precepts derived from Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (Jas 2:5, 19; 4:12).[14] Like Yeshua, he links one's professed belief in God with one's Torah observance. Before looking at the Epistle of James, it is prudent to note that the early

[13] This article accepts that the Epistle of James is a paraenetic encyclical sent by James the Just to the Diaspora. This cannot be conclusively proved. Other options are that its form as a paraenetic encyclical is simply a literary convention, either written by James himself or by an unknown person written in the name of James. Whether it is pseudepigraphic or penned by James himself is not important for discovering Torah observance, because the letter is representative of James's community.

[14] See Serge Ruzer, "The Epistle of James as a Witness to Broader Patterns of Jewish Exegetical Discourse," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 1 (2014):69–98; idem, "James on Faith and Righteousness in the Context of a Broader Jewish Exegetical Discourse," in *New Approaches to the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jointly Sponsored by the Hebrew University Center for the Study of Christianity, 9–11 January, 2007*, eds. Gary A. Anderson, Ruth A. Clements, and David Satran (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 106; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 79–104, esp. 86. For further discussion see, David H. Edgar, "The Use of the Love-Command and the *Shema* in The Epistle of James," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 23 (2003): 9–22.

Yeshua-believers in Jerusalem were Torah observant. Luke's gospel states that the believing community in Jerusalem attended public prayers in the temple twice daily at the times of the burnt-offerings (2:46, 47; 3:1, 11).[15] As noted above, this is when the Shema and Ten Commandments were recited. This example of cultic piety probably accounts for their generally favorable reputation among the people of the city (Acts 2:47a). In fact, when James was stoned to death at the order of the high priest Ananus II and the Sanhedrin for breaking the Torah, citizens of the city came to James's defense (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.200).[16] Furthermore, the early believing community in Jerusalem assembled daily in the outer court of the temple to hear the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42, 46; 5:12), as well as in smaller house-groups (2:46; cf. 4:23–31; 12:5, 12). To enter the temple courts, every person had to ritually immerse in a *mikva* in order to be cleansed from all ritual impurity. This indicates that the believing Jewish community in Jerusalem observed ritual purity laws.

Two further examples of Torah observance among the early Yeshua-believers in Jerusalem are 1) the ruling by James and the Jerusalem leadership on the acceptance of non-Jews as Gentiles; and 2) the letter of James (especially 2:8–13). Earlier we mentioned that the decision to accept Gentiles into the Yeshua movement without demanding complete Torah observance did not affect the status of Jewish believers. The issue of Torah observance for Jewish believers was taken for granted. It was not debated. In his letter, James refers to the Torah as "the perfect Torah (νόμος) of freedom" (1:25) and the "royal Torah (νόμος)" (2:8).[17] The closest parallel to the phrase "perfect Law of freedom" is Psalm 19:8 (MT v. 7). "The Torah of ADONAI (תורת ה׳) is perfect, restoring the soul." The Septuagint (Ps 18:8) translates תורת ה׳ as ὁ νόμος τοῦ κυρίου. Thus, νόμος in this phrase refers to the entire Torah. The same interpretation applies to the phrase "royal νόμος." James 2:8 states, "If you fulfill the royal law (νόμος) according to the Scripture, 'You will love your neighbor as yourself . . .'"

In both the Septuagint and the *Brit Hadasha,* νόμος most often applies to the whole Torah. Only rarely does it apply to a single command. Consequently, it is unlikely that "royal νόμος" refers specifically to the command to love your neighbor (cf. Lev 19:18). Rather, it summarizes the whole Torah as that of the kingdom of God (cf. 2:5). This interpretation coincides with Yeshua's teaching on the imminent advent of the kingdom of heaven, and with the acceptance of both the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and the commandments as seen in the recitation of the Shema. Moreover, the interpretation reflects the biblical and post-biblical Jewish writings that consistently portray God as king, and attribute royal language to him, as well as the royal attributes assigned to the Torah in rabbinic literature and Jewish liturgy. The connection of royal Torah with the command to love one's neighbor echoes Yeshua's citation of the double love command, as well as that of Paul, "For the whole Torah can be summed up in a single saying: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14; cf. Rom 13:8–10). These summaries witness to the broader Jewish exegetical tendency that started in the Second Temple period and continued into the rabbinic period.

The letter of James reflects Yeshua's teaching on Torah and adopts his principles of interpretation, focusing on the weightier matters without neglecting the lighter matters of Torah. James's letter expounds the Torah paraenetically. One example is the manner in which it combines

[15] On James and the early Jerusalem community of Jewish believers, see, for example, Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Community" in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 55–95, and the bibliography listed there.

[16] The Hebrew Scripture specifies stoning as the method of execution for apostasy (Lev 20:2; Deut 13:11; 17:5), blasphemy (Lev 24:14, 16, 23; 1 Sam 21:10), sorcery (Lev 20:27), breaking Shabbat (Num 15:35–36), and for disobedient sons (Deut 21:21). Bauckham suggests that the only plausible offenses could have been blasphemy or apostasy, i.e. being a *maddiah*, Deut 13:6–12 (Bauckham, 77).

[17] On the use of *νόμος* as *Torah* in the Epistle of James, see Ruzer, "James." For further discussion on "perfect Torah of freedom" and "royal Torah," see Ruzer, "Epistle."

the concepts of hearing (accepting/believing in God's dominion) and doing (the obligation to fulfill Torah commandments), as seen in the Shema (Deut 6:3, 4–5; cf. Deut 11:13–21). James links "one's professed belief in one God with one's readiness to fulfill the Torah's precepts."[18] These words are reminiscent of Yeshua's words in Matthew 7:21–24. The one who hears and does will be blessed.

> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror . . . but the one who looks intently into the perfect Torah, the Torah of freedom and continues in it . . . he shall be blessed in what he does. (Jas 1:22–25)

> But someone will say "you have faith and I have works." Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works. You believe that God is one, you do well. The demons also believe—and they shudder! But do you want to know, you empty person, that faith without works is dead? (Jas 2:18–20)

The Epistle of James teaches total submission to the Torah. Together faith and observance of the Torah's commands bring freedom. According to the Epistle of James, Torah is freedom, not bondage. Serge Ruzer demonstrates that the presentation of the Torah as the law of freedom in James invokes an existing and established Jewish motif of Torah as liberator.[19] Some scholars hold that the emphasis on the ethical commandments of Torah, and the absence of any mention of cultic/ritual observances such as circumcision, Shabbat, and festivals, indicates that the letter of James is a polemic against Paul's theology, specifically Galatians 2:4 where he juxtaposes Torah (νόμος) with freedom. Paul's views toward the Torah are complex, and need to be interpreted in light of his intended audience. In Galatians 2:4 he is talking to Gentile believers, who are not required to keep the "works of the Torah," i.e. circumcision, kashrut, and Shabbat. Galatians 2:4 does not refer to Torah itself, but to specific "works of the Torah," which Gentile believers are not required to undergo.[20] Thus the absence of any mention of ritual/cultic observances in the letter of James does not indicate that it is a polemic against Paul.[21] The letter of James is a paraenetic interpretation of Torah that requires total submission to the Torah. Like Yeshua, the author of the letter stresses the weightier matters of the Torah, without disregarding the cultic or ritual elements.

This is borne out by Paul's participation in the ending rituals for the fulfillment of a Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18b; 21:21–26).[22] James and the leadership of the believing community in Jerusalem asked Paul to participate in these rituals to quell the rumors that Paul was teaching against the Torah, telling Jews not to circumcise their sons or to live according to their customs (Acts 21:21–24). Paul and the other four men purified themselves, meaning that they underwent ritual immersion in a *mikva* (21:24) and offered sacrifices. Paul's participation in these events

[18] Ruzer, "James," 90; cf. idem, "Epistle," 82.

[19] Ruzer, "James," 91–96; cf. idem, "Epistle," 83–88. He corroborates Shlomo Pines's proposal that Jewish tradition internalized the concept of freedom as a key religious value in late antique Jewish tradition (S. Pines, "על גלגולים של המונח חירות" [On the Metamorphoses of the Notion of Freedom], *Iyyun* 33 (1984): 247–265. Ruzer cites Philo, *Every Good Man Is Free*; *m. Avot* 3:5; 6:2; *Num. Rab.* 19:26; and *Lev. Rab.* 18:3 to show the continuing trajectory of the notion of Torah as freedom.

[20] See Ruzer, "James," 94, where he refers to John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

[21] This is a minority opinion. See, for example, Maren R. Niehoff, "The Implied Audience of the Letter of James," in *New Approaches*, 57–77.

[22] For a concise explanation of Paul's vows, see Reider Hvalvik, "Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts" in *Jewish Believers,* 139–143.

demonstrates that he was Torah observant. Had Paul believed that Torah observance was wrong, he would not have followed the leadership's request. Furthermore, the passage demonstrates that Paul and the Jewish believing community in Jerusalem participated in cultic and ritual practices after the resurrection of Yeshua.

Shabbat

Now that we have established that Yeshua did not abolish the Torah, but rather expanded it through his interpretation, and that the early Jewish believers emulated him, let's take a quick look at Shabbat. Yeshua would have honored Shabbat, and kept it holy as required in the Ten Commandments. The appropriate question is not, "Did Yeshua and his initial followers keep Shabbat?" but, "How did they keep Shabbat?" The simple answer is, "With joy and delight."

> If you turn back your foot from Shabbat, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call Shabbat a delight, the holy day of ADONAI honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, not seeking your own pleasures, nor speaking your usual speech, then you will delight yourself in ADONAI, and I will let you ride over the heights of the earth, I will feed you with the heritage of your father Jacob. (Isa 58:13–14)

Immediately after Yeshua's wilderness experience, Luke's gospel says that Yeshua returned to the Galilee, where he began teaching in the synagogues on Shabbat "according to his custom" (Luke 4:16), and was praised by all (Luke 4:14). While in the synagogue in Nazareth, he read from the scroll of Isaiah, including excerpts from the lines preceding the Shabbat text cited above.

> Is not this the fast I choose: to release the bonds of wickedness, to untie the cords of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to tear off every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will spring up suddenly. (Isa 58:6)

Once again Yeshua emphasizes the weightier, ethical aspects of Torah without annulling the lighter cultic/ritual matters. Through the Isaiah passage he associates Shabbat with freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, caring for the poor, and healing. Yeshua is confronted for doing these very things on Shabbat. He freed the oppressed (Mark 1:21–26//Luke 4:33–35; Luke 13:10–17); his disciples "plucked grain on Shabbat" (teachers were held responsible for the behavior of their disciples; Matt 21:1–8; Mark 2:23); and he healed on Shabbat (Matt 12:10–13//Mark 3:1–6, Luke 6:6–11; Mark 1:29–31//Matt 8:14, Luke 4:38–39; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6; John 5:1–9, cf. 7:23; chapter 9). Yeshua challenged what appears to have been the prevailing view on Shabbat observance. Intra-Jewish challenges such as this were the norm in first-century Jewish culture. Yeshua would have expected to be challenged, and to issue his own challenges. Sometimes he would have agreed with the majority decision, sometimes the minority, and sometimes he would have stood alone in his interpretation.

How to honor and keep Shabbat was one of the hotly debated topics in Yeshua's day, and still is for that matter. Here we must be mindful of the presuppositional mines mentioned above. The tendency has been to view Yeshua's teaching on Shabbat through anti-Jewish lenses, concluding that Yeshua completely revised the way Shabbat was observed. It is claimed that Yeshua

changed Shabbat from a sanctimonious day of restraint and rules to a day of rest and spiritual edification for the new creation/new humanity/new people of God that began with the resurrection of Yeshua.[23] This interpretation is incorrect on many different levels, but only one concerns us here. The conflict in the Shabbat healing narratives is over the healings themselves, and not over the fourth commandment to "honor Shabbat and keep it holy." All Shabbat laws may be suspended for *pikuach nefesh* (preservation of life; cf. Lev 18:5; *b. Yoma* 85b). In fact, the preservation of life takes precedence over all other commandments in Judaism. But none of the Shabbat healings appear to be life and death situations. So why didn't Yeshua simply wait until the next day? Sometimes he did. Mark 1:32 states that after sundown on Shabbat, i.e. after Shabbat had finished, they brought all of the sick to him to be healed. Yet Yeshua clearly taught that healing takes precedence over Shabbat. Not all agreed with him, but some did. The narrative in Luke 13:10–17 informs this position.

> Now Yeshua was teaching in one of the synagogues on Shabbat. And behold, there was a woman with a disabling spirit for eighteen years, bent over and completely unable to stand up straight. When Yeshua saw her, he called out to her and said, "Woman, you are set free from your disability." Then he laid hands on her and instantly she stood up straight and began praising God. But the synagogue leader, indignant that Yeshua had healed on Shabbat, started telling the crowd, "There are six days in which work should be done—so come to be healed on those days and not on Yom Shabbat!" . . . When Yeshua said these things, all His opponents were put to shame; but the whole crowd was rejoicing at all the glorious things done by Him. (Luke 13:10–14, 17)

Yeshua's action of touching the woman on Shabbat does not contradict any Shabbat practice, nor does it constitute work.[24] It was, however, opposed to the synagogue leader's understanding of Shabbat observance. Some congregational members agreed with the leader of the synagogue, but not all of them did. The crowd (i.e. the Jewish majority) had no objection to Yeshua healing the woman on Shabbat.[25] Yeshua's teaching and actions upheld Shabbat observance filled with joy and delight.

One example of Shabbat observance among Yeshua's followers is the Galilean women who brought spices to anoint Yeshua's body after his death. Mark relates, "When Shabbat was over Miriam of Magdala, Miriam the mother of Jacob [James] and Salome brought spices . . ." (Mark 16:1–2). Luke's gospel provides more detail:

> Now it was the Day of Preparation, and Shabbat was approaching. The women who had come with Him from the Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. **But on Shabbat, they rested according to the commandment**. (Luke 23:54–56; emphasis mine)

[23] Verses usually cited are Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:18; Gal 6:16; and Mark 2:27–28.

[24] For a background on Shabbat halakah in the *Brit Hadasha*, see Lutz Doering, "Sabbath Laws in the New Testament Gospels," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature,* eds. Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt and Peter J. Tomson (SupJSJ 136; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 207–253.

[25] Amy-Jill Levine develops this narrative more fully. See *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins), 29–31, esp. 32–33.

Despite the crisis that had just occurred, as well as their personal sorrow, they chose to observe Shabbat. They prepared the spices and perfumes on Friday, but did not work on Yeshua's corpse until after Shabbat had passed. They are a fine example of Shabbat observance among early Jewish believers in Yeshua.

Examples of Early Torah Observant Jewish Believers in Yeshua

The *Brit Hadasha* provides further examples of Torah observant Jewish believers in Yeshua, other than those mentioned above. Five examples are presented below.[26]

Unknown Torah Scholar: Matthew 8:19 records a discussion between Yeshua and an unknown Torah scholar. The Torah scholar was willing to follow Yeshua wherever he might go. Yeshua responds, and that is all we know. The Torah scholar drops out of the text. The conversation continues between Yeshua and "another disciple." The Gospel of Matthew does not tell us whether the Torah scholar became a disciple of Yeshua or not. The mention of "another disciple" (v. 21) implies that this Torah scholar was also a disciple of Yeshua. Regardless of his status, the Torah scholar's eagerness to follow Yeshua implies that Yeshua was also Torah observant. First-century Torah scholars were strict observers of the Torah. Therefore, one of them would not have willingly followed Yeshua unless he too was Torah observant.

Ananias: Acts chapter 9 recounts Paul's encounter with Yeshua on the road to Damascus, and his subsequent encounter with Ananias. This account does not tell us much about Ananias, except that he was a Jewish disciple of Yeshua who lived in Damascus, and that he was obedient. Despite his objections, and the possible harm that he might incur for delivering Yeshua's message to Paul, Ananias obeyed Yeshua's command, and went to Paul so that Paul might be healed of his blindness. However, when Paul reiterated the story to the crowd on the Temple Mount just before the Romans intervened and arrested him, Paul explains that Ananias was a "devout man according to the Torah, well spoken of by all the Jewish people living there" (Acts 22:12). Ananias is another good example of a first-century Torah observant Jewish believer in Yeshua.

Zealous Believers in Jerusalem: Despite the warnings of his impending imprisonment, Paul set out for Jerusalem (Acts 21:10–15). When he arrived, the believers warmly welcomed him. The following day, Paul met with James and the elders, and reported everything that had been happening among the Gentiles. In response, James points out the myriad of Jewish believers that were "all zealous for the Torah" (Acts 21:17–26). The author's choice of the word "myriad" indicates that this was a large number of people. David Friedman estimates that this was approximately 20 percent of the Jewish population in Jerusalem at that time.[27] Whether we accept this estimation or not, the number indicates that not all of the Jews in Jerusalem were hardhearted toward the Yeshua movement. Many, possibly up to 20,000, were Torah observant Jewish disciples of Yeshua.

Joseph of Arimathea: All four gospels record Joseph's request from Pilate to take the body of Yeshua down from the cross in order to bury the corpse before Shabbat began (Matt 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; 16:1; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38). Matthew's gospel tells us that Joseph was a wealthy man (27:57), Mark's and Luke's convey that he was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43; Luke 25:50), and John's and Matthew's that he was a disciple of Yeshua (John 19:38; Matt 27:57). Luke's gospel also calls Joseph a *zaddik*, i.e. a righteous man. From this little bit of biographical information, we know that Joseph was from the Jewish town of Arimathea in Judea, and that he was a Torah observant Jewish believer in Yeshua. To be a member of the Sanhedrin one

[26] The examples in this section are adapted from David Friedman, *They Loved the Torah: What Yeshua's First Followers Really Thought About the Law* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer). Kindle Edition, location 1431–1472.
[27] Friedman, Kindle Edition, location 1451.

had to be strictly Torah observant. This does not mean that everyone in the Sanhedrin agreed or had the same idea of what this meant. The Sanhedrin comprised different parties and factions, each vying for their own authority and interpretation of Torah for daily life. At the very least, the members of the Sanhedrin scrupulously adhered to the cultic, ritual, and purity laws of the Torah—they met in the chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple Mount. Furthermore, as a *zaddik*, Joseph would have been meticulous about Torah observance.

Nicodemus: According to the Gospel of John, Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare Yeshua's corpse for burial and place him in the tomb (John 19:39–40). The appositive, "who had first visited Yeshua at night" (19:39), specifies which Nicodemus the gospel intends. The author is referring to the Nicodemus whose rendezvous with Yeshua is recorded in John 3:1–9. From this passage we learn that Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a seeker of God and his kingdom. Later in the gospel, Nicodemus answers Yeshua's Pharisaic adversaries with their own interpretation of Torah, implicitly defending Yeshua (John 7:45–52). While this hints at Nicodemus being a "secret disciple" of Yeshua, it is not explicit. His participation in the burial of Yeshua, however, confirms that Nicodemus had become a disciple of Yeshua. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus would have been a scrupulously Torah observant Jew. He would have followed the dietary laws, as well as the purity and cultic customs, according to strict Pharisaic interpretation. His position in the Sanhedrin also confirms his adherence to the Torah. Thus, Nicodemus is yet another example of an early Jewish believer in Yeshua who was Torah observant.

Conclusion

The above study attests that early Jewish believers in Yeshua were Torah observant. They looked and acted the same as their Jewish contemporaries in terms of ritual and everyday actions, so much so that it would have been hard to distinguish a Jewish believer in Yeshua from any other Jewish person. Certainly their method of observance differed, and there were challenges and counter-challenges over the correct interpretation of the Torah for daily life. But diversity of Torah interpretation was the norm in first-century Judaism, engendering virulent debates, challenges, and polemics. Sometimes Yeshua and his followers agreed and sometimes they stood alone in their decisions. However, all of the challenges and conflicts were about the interpretation of Torah, and not about the Torah itself. Like Yeshua, the early Jewish believers emphasized the weightier matters of the Torah (i.e. ethical and relational) without neglecting the lighter ritual and cultic rules.

The proper question to ask, then, is not *if* early Jewish believers in Yeshua were Torah observant, but *how* they observed the Torah. The most glaring answer is that they adopted Yeshua's teaching on and practice of Torah: faith in God through Yeshua the Messiah and Torah observance. According to the *Brit Hadasha,* as exemplified above, the early Yeshua-believers fulfilled both the ethical and ritual matters of Torah. They honored and respected the Torah, as well as the Jewish customs and traditions of their day as interpreted through the teachings of Yeshua.

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The Diversity of Ideas and Torah Praxes Today Within the Messianic Jewish Movement*

Rabbi Elliot Klayman, JD

There were problems in the Orthodox synagogue with two factions. It seemed like they could not agree on anything. One tended toward the conservative practice of the Jewish branch, desiring that the mekhitzah (the veil separating men and women) be removed, while the other adhered to the orthodox way of the founders who separated men from women in the synagogue during services. One day they argued over one matter, and the next day over another. On this particular day, they were arguing over the issue of whether the congregation should stand when the first Shema was recited, when the ark was not open. The argument was so heated that it threatened to split the congregation down the middle. In an effort to resolve the dispute peaceably, they decided to consult an elderly man who had been associated with the congregation for 65 years. "Haim," they asked, "What was the tradition regarding the recitation of the first Shema in the services on Shabbat morning? Did the congregation stand?" Haim quickly retorted, "No, that was not the tradition!" They then responded, "Well then, was the tradition to sit during the first recitation of the Shema?" Haim quickly responded with, "No! That was assuredly not the tradition!" One spokesperson pleaded with Haim, saying, "Then what was the tradition? This issue is threatening to split the congregation. It is serious. The two factions are up in arms and constantly quarreling, angry, and shouting epithets at one another loudly during the service with a vengeance," to which Haim replied: "That's the tradition!!"

Introduction

The place of Torah in the Messianic Jewish movement is such: There is no universal tradition, only a wide diversity of thoughts and praxes.[1] The movement is young compared to over 2,000 years of halakic development inside mainline Jewry, where sages, rabbis, and scholars addressed issues over time, and majoritarian consensus was built. Here in the Messianic Jewish movement, superimposed upon the Hebrew Scriptures is the New Covenant revelation of Yeshua, our Guide. Given that it has only been a generation since the beginning of the revival of Messianic Judaism in the late 1960s, it is not surprising that the experiment of the place of Torah continues in a fluid state. Look at the disputes between the opposing schools of Shammai and Hillel and the second-century schools of Ishmael and Akiba. The early goings were a bit rough in those circles, yet over time those debates helped shape halakah, the "way Jews were to walk." It takes time to smooth out the rough edges

* This article primarily focuses on the Messianic Jewish movement in North America.

[1] Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009), 140–222.

and settle into a normative sphere of halakic consensus. The destruction of the temple in 70 CE certainly complicated matters and necessitated a creative response to keep Judaism alive and relevant. How must we now live without a temple and sacrifices and priesthood? Yavneh began the process for the majority of the world of Jewry. The synagogue replaced the temple; the rabbis replaced the priesthood; and prayer and *mitzvot* replaced animal sacrifices. The struggle after Yeshua's appearance and departure 2,000 years ago continued among Jewish believers in Yeshua, encompassing issues of the divinity of Yeshua, the canonical books, the place of Gentiles in the body of Messiah, dietary laws, conversion, Shabbat-keeping, circumcision, and the relevance of Torah. Two thousand years later, we find that the Messianic Jewish movement continues to wrestle with many of these same issues, while mainstream Jewry is largely free from them, having rejected Yeshua and the New Testament and having settled into branches that over time have constructed their own halakic process, rulings, and application. Yet the Messianic Jewish movement is still in its embryonic stages when it comes to solidifying a halakic process and rulings on issues. Aside from the fact that the movement is only a generation old, there are other reasons for its current state of limbo with regard to Torah.

Messianic Jewish Positions on Torah: Influences

The early Jewish believers' growth and practice of their faith was hindered by a number of external forces. The first century witnessed the birth of a Jewish faith in Yeshua that was stunted when the temple was destroyed in 70 CE. Their withdrawal from the Bar Kochba revolt in 132 CE further alienated them from the mainline Jewish community. Compounding the problems, Rome persecuted the Jewish believers; the Gentile believers overpowered the Jewish believers culturally; the church did not accept any Jewish distinctiveness for Jewish believers, requiring them to conform to Roman Christian culture; and the synagogue doors were shut to them because of their faith in Yeshua. Although throughout the rabbinic and medieval periods Jews continued to accept Yeshua as Messiah, the loyalty test was their fealty to Christian dogma. Hence, from 70 CE to the mid–19th century, Jewish believers in Yeshua were disguised as Christians culturally, with few exceptions. The history of the modern Hebrew Christian/Messianic Jewish movement is detailed in a number of works.[2] However, in the 18th century, another oppositional force was in effect—the predominance of evangelical influences which substituted missionary fervor for ritual, making little space for Jewish particularity and distinctiveness for Jews who accepted Jesus. Then, in the 19th century, the rise of dispensational theology cut out Israel and the place of the Jews as a present reality in the plan of God, though recognizing that they would show up in the latter days. Until then, it was the "church age show." Superimposed upon the thrust of evangelicalism and "Darby" dispensationalism was the evil of supersessionism, a belief that the church displaced Israel as God's vehicle for blessing the world. These forces strongly discouraged Jews who believed in Yeshua from identifying as Jews. The label of "galatianism" followed any attempts to practice a Torah-centered faith rooted in Jewish tradition. Only for missionary purposes was it acceptable. Even evangelicals

[2] See, e.g., Hugh Schoenfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity: From the First Century to the Twentieth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1936), 109–166; David Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1982); David Rudolph, "Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and in the Modern Era," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. David Rudolph & Joel Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 26–36; Michael Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant: The Rebirth of Messianic Judaism* (Baltimore: Lederer Publications, 1992), 23–35; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London: Continuum, 2000), 15–85.

who denied they were supersessionists took on crypto-supersessionist attitudes, denying Jewish distinctiveness within the body.[3]

The influence of the various denominations of evangelical Christianity further fractured the unity of the Jewish Jesus movement that erupted quite demonstrably in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Jewish revival hit in the midst of the Jesus movement. Many of the young Jewish believers went to Bible schools or attended churches where their theological outlook was in formative stages. Christian books were the mainstay, and Jewish books discouraged. There were Jewish Presbyterians, Jewish Pentecostals, Jewish Baptists, all believing in Yeshua, and all viewing Torah through the lens of the supersessionistic or crypto-supersessionistic denominational grouping. There was unity in thought concerning the place of Yeshua for the most part, but any identification with the Jewish community—except for outreach purposes—was considered divisive and a break in fellowship with the Christian community and its "scriptural culture." After all, "there is no Jew or Gentile within the body but all are one," so the argument ran. It was a "flat earth" of believers where there was no validation for those out of step with the Christian culture of the gospel.

The bent of the Messianic Jewish leaders formed when they were young, and continued in their "mature" state as they led the movement through congregations and Messianic organizations with the indelible mark of exoteric Christian cultural influences. We are left with the by-product of the "wild world of Messianics" conflated with a syncretistic admixture of Jewish and Christian praxes. In addition, the "battle" for normalcy was always set in disequilibrium by having to explain the *why* of the faith. The rabbis and Jewish community were on the offensive, which put the Messianic community constantly on the defensive. Family, loved ones, friends, and the Jewish community further exerted pressure on the Messianic Jew by torturing him/her with polemical arguments and emotional pleas to "return to Judaism." That return was never good enough as long as Yeshua was on the lips of the "convert." This was true even if the Jewish Yeshua believer sought a more Torah-positive lifestyle out of conviction or in order not to be marginalized from Jewish relatives, friends, and community. All of these pressures and challenges congealed the Messianic Jew into both a strong force and a fractured vessel. This is the state of affairs today; it reflects the diversity due in part to these ongoing exogenous influential forces.

Within the Messianic Jewish movement, there is simply no consensus on the relevance and application of Torah for today. The range of theological views spans a continuum from "the law has been rendered inoperative and no longer needs to be obeyed" to "the Torah is in full force and effect and every jot and tittle needs to be observed." There is not even agreement on the definition of Torah, which is considered as expansive as inclusion of the Hebrew Bible, the traditions, and the New Covenant, and as narrow as the laws contained in the Five Books of Moses. We are in an era when the Messianic Jewish movement appears extremely comminuted, so that there are really a number of Messianic Jewish movements which break down similarly to the branches of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and others. However, it is even more discombobulated than that. It is like in the days when there was no king and everyone did what was right in his own sight. There are no uniform standards of praxis when it comes to the issues of Shabbat, kashrut, and Jewish tradition. Perhaps we are awaiting a king to set us straight. Yet the King has arrived, and apparently has not set us straight on the place of Torah in the life of the Jewish believer. Or perhaps he has, and we are not listening.

[3] Stuart Dauermann, *Inconvenient Truths: Cryptosupersessionism—Dispensationalism's Sad Legacy*, messianicjudaism.me/agenda/2011/05/19/incovenient-truths-crytposupersessionism/ [accessed May 4, 2015].

When the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, Israel was in crisis. For all practical purposes the glory had departed from Jerusalem. It appeared that the Jewish people could no longer keep the sacrificial system demanded by Torah. It was like in the days of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC; then, for 70 years, there was no way of keeping the letter of the sacrificial commands. That did not signal the end of the sacrifices, because the Babylonian captivity ceased and Jews returned to build the temple under Zerubbabel. In both instances, the Jewish leadership found creative ways to "keep" Torah through the sacrifices of prayer, study, and good works. By analogy, when Yeshua died, the Messianic community was in crisis. The pleasant ways of Torah were disturbed by the "new day" that unfolded because of the loss of the Torah Teacher. The question was, "How must we now live true to God and Torah, now that the Messiah has come and gone and the Holy Spirit and the New Covenant writings have descended?" In both cases, for mainline Jews and Messianic Jews, the quandary brought them to a creative solution adapted to the community. For mainline Jews the discussion, the experimentation, the working out of the pragmatics continued (and still continues) through tradition over a period of 2,000 years. For Messianic Jews, circumstances intervened to halt their focus on adaptation and only now, 2,000 years later, is there a Messianic grouping that is revitalized and challenged to engage in the "experiment."

Studies on the diversity of ideas and praxis have been tackled.[4] The scholars break down the different views by the local synagogue and/or leader's view. Although there are a few significant associations of Messianic Jewish congregations, these associations do not dictate theology and practice to their adherents. Although each comes with a theology statement, in practice, the sovereignty of the congregation rules. Within each of the organizations, diversity still reigns supreme. There have been some attempts to regulate the area through standards of halakah, but even there the adherents are small in number and have not been able to influence the larger group of Jewish Yeshua believers. There are Hebrew roots congregations comprised largely or wholly of Gentile believers who seek a lifestyle based on Torah. These groups are marginalized by mainstream Messianic Jewish groups. The question remains, "How long will the experiment continue?" And, "What places one inside the Messianic Jewish movement and what places one outside?"

Sampling the Torah Views

In his book *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*,[5] Richard Harvey does us a service by examining the widespread world of Messianic Jewish theological thought and practice. Harvey painstakingly seeks to categorize the various theological strains within the Messianic Jewish movement. When examining the place of Torah, he breaks the categories into Torah-negative and Torah-positive views. He does this not by inductive observation of the actual praxes but by the writings and statements of those within the movement who have had significant input into the theological underpinnings of a Messianic Jewish theology. It is fruitful to examine the range of these positions.

[4] Elizabeth Ames, "Messianic Jewish Liturgical Practices," digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1505&context=honors [accessed April 20, 2015]; Michael Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant: Rebirth of Messianic Judaism* (Baltimore: Messianic Jewish Resources International, 1996); Gabriella Reason, "Competing Trends In Messianic Judaism: The Debate Over Evangelicalism," kesherjournal.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=422 [accessed April 20, 2015]; Shoshana Fehr, *Passing Over Easter: Constructing the Boundaries of Messianic Judaism* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 1998).

[5] Harvey, 140–222.

Torah-Negative Camps

Torah-negative views reject or minimize the relevance of Torah for today. When Yeshua came, it changed the landscape, according to Torah-negative adherents. Believers are not bound by Torah prescriptions, although some adherents recognize the freedom to observe some Torah laws, as long as they are New Testament neutral, meaning that they do not violate New Testament prescriptions. Such is the position Harvey characterizes as being exposited by Arnold Fruchtenbaum.[6] Dr. Fruchtenbaum sees Torah observant Jewish believers in Yeshua as a type of "galatianism," or legalism, and accuses Torah-positive views of being the cause of the fractured movement, since the law has been "rendered inoperative." According to this characterization, since the dietary laws and Shabbat have been annulled by the New Covenant, Jewish believers in Yeshua are free from these practices. Those who are strict dispensationalists tend toward this "Torah-negative" view.

Bruce Maoz, according to Harvey, argues strongly against letting the Mosaic covenant, oral law, or rabbinic Judaism influence the Jewish believer. Judaism has value for culture and nationalism, but is defunct as a religion that bases its fidelity upon Torah observance and rabbinic tradition. As evidence, he cites the railings of Yeshua against the Pharisees.[7]

Harvey identifies still another Torah-negative viewpoint, held by Israeli leader Gershon Nerel.[8] Accordingly, this view, like Maoz's, divorces Jewish tradition and the oral law from biblical law. Although Nerel is not against halakah, he believes that it should be derived from canon, with particular attention to the New Testament, rather than from the rabbis and sages who rejected Yeshua. He sharply distinguishes between, for example, the keeping of Shabbat according to the Bible and according to the rabbis.

In summation, Torah-negative proponents do not see a legitimate line of continuity of tradition thrusting toward modernity etched by those post-Yeshua sages/rabbis who did not accept Yeshua. Instead, they sharply distinguish between the New Testament, which is relevant to Yeshua believers today, and the rabbinic oral law devised to interpret Mosaic Law.

Torah-Positive Camps

Within Torah-positive camps there is also diversity. Scholar David Stern recognizes that the law did not end upon the coming of the New Testament, but that the gospel is the aim of the law (*telos*). He does not accept the rabbinic authority of halakah, but rather sees halakic importance as interpreted through the lens of the New Testament.[9] It could be argued that Harvey's characterization of Nerel's negative approach to Torah is not really much different from Stern's Torah-positive approach. The subtle shades may be indistinguishable in practice. That is not the case with some scholarly views stating that the rabbis do have authority over Messianic Jews. The authority that Arye Powlinson describes is a secular type of authority, which serves as a cultural distinction. However, Powlinson takes the "experiment" a bit further in the realm of Torah for today, maintaining that rabbinic tradition should be incorporated into our Torah praxis.

The late Dr. Louis Goldberg saw rabbinic tradition as relevant when it was New Testament neutral, for cultural and non-legalistic purposes, and thus embraced the "freedom of the New

[6] Ibid., 143–144.

[7] Ibid., 144–46; see also Baruch Maoz, *Judaism Is Not Jewish: A Friendly Critique of the Messianic Movement* (Fearn, UK: Mentor/Christian Focus Publications, 2003). As regarding Yeshua's dialogue with and accusations against the Pharisees, note the counter-explanations: in places Yeshua and his disciples found affinity with the Pharisees, and the strong accusations against the Pharisees were a "family" argument (consistent with the family norm of the day) over what traditions were proper.

[8] Ibid., 147–50.

[9] Ibid., 150–54.

Covenant" in this connection.[10] Dan Juster adopts a New Covenant halakic approach in which the 613 laws would be re-examined through the original intent of the Hebrew Bible, as modified and applied within the spirit and intent of the New Testament.[11] Michael Rudolph actually applies Juster's approach by examining each of the 613 commands, and divides them into covenant-dependent and covenant-transcendent categories. He adopts only those commands which could have been performed during the New Covenant era, and thus are covenant transcendent.[12] Dr. John Fischer takes the oral law to a higher plane when he advocates for the practice of halakah, not under the authority of the rabbis but under the authority of the Bible. Noting that Yeshua observed tradition and some of the commands of the Pharisees, he supports a measure of compliance with the traditions of the rabbis, although he would say that we should add to and subtract from them based upon New Testament Scripture.[13] Joseph Shulam, congregational leader of Roeh Yisrael in Jerusalem, believes that a Messianic halakah would be right, but questions the timing of its development. It cannot be constructed in the heat of passion but must allow for time, the right builders, and careful dissemination to the spectrum of Messianic Jewish adherents.[14] Dr. Mark Kinzer, perhaps the most cogent theological thinker within the movement, extends Shulam's approach by recognizing that the oral law is part of the Jewish world of halakah and should be adopted within a Messianic Jewish tradition. That tradition may draw upon the orthodox halakic renderings, but Kinzer finds greater connection with the Conservative and Reform approaches to halakah, which are more flexible in their accommodation to the world in which we live. He seeks to navigate a course that would give credence to halakic rulings made by rabbinic unbelievers and fidelity to Yeshua's expressions.[15] In his book *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, Kinzer draws a sharp distinction between the Hebrew Christian mission movement and the post-missionary Messianic Jewish movement.[16] It is fruitful to examine this distinction from Dr. Kinzer's perspective.

Kinzer on Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism

Kinzer identifies three distinctions between missionary Messianic Judaism and post-missionary Messianic Judaism. First, post-missionary Messianic Judaism treats Jewish observance as a matter of covenant fidelity rather than missionary expediency. The motivation for keeping Torah is not principally for outreach, but rather because it is part of the obligation upon Jews who have recognized their continuing loyalty and relationship to the Jewish people. Second, post-missionary Messianic Jews believe that their primary home is in the Jewish world, as opposed to feeling that their principal residence is in the church world. It is in this setting that Messianic Jews exhibit an inner mission to their Jewish family, of Yeshua's presence among the Jewish people. Third, post-missionary Messianic Jews are called to link the church of the Gentiles to Israel, as opposed to being subsumed by the church.[17] In this manner, Kinzer sees post-missionary Messianic Judaism as

[10] Ibid., 156–57.
[11] Ibid., 157–60.
[12] Ibid., 160–61.
[13] Ibid., 163–65.
[14] Ibid., 167–69. "Rooted in Torah, Instructed by Tradition, Faithful to Messiah Yeshua," ourrabbis.org/main/ [accessed April 28, 2015]. The Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council has been engaged in the endeavor of constructing a Messianic Jewish halakah since 2006.
[15] Ibid., 170–73.
[16] Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 265–203, 299–302.
[17] Ibid., 12–16.

the instrument of healing for the sicknesses of supersessionism and the schism between the church and Israel.[18]

When it comes to Torah fidelity and practice, Kinzer distinguishes the Hebrew-Christian movement of the past and the Messianic Jewish movement of the present from post-missionary Messianic Judaism. However, he does not discount the previous Messianic movements but sees them as a natural progression eventuating in a bilateral ecclesiology.[19]

Shortcomings of Studies and Writings

We are living in a dynamic, organic, melodic movement where the permutations and combinations of our thought processes and praxes are in a constant state of flux. People are influenced by others. People change their views. Language is abstract and meaning is not always easily distilled by mapping out words on a page. People do not always mean what they say, nor is what they say always interpreted in the manner intended by the speaker or writer. When two people dialogue on a subject it is easier to identify their differences and similarities. However, people do not always "practice what they preach."

The Messianic Jewish movement is very diverse in its theological teaching when it comes to the application of Torah and tradition. It is similarly diverse when it comes to the actual praxes. Tradition is essential. We cannot deny it and be true to our convictions. As Dr. Kinzer explains, it is inextricably connected to Scripture. Even the choice of the books in the Bible, both Hebrew and New Covenant, and the arrangement of those books, are based upon a process of community selection and tradition.[20] Even the choice of which manuscripts to use in the construction of Scripture is based upon tradition. Second, the work of the Masoretes imposed their interpretation upon the manuscript by employing vocalizing marks and using trope for delineating groupings and emphases of wording.[21] (The notations may even guide exegetical interpretation.) Third, the selection of the translation is dictated by tradition.[22] David Stern's translation and now the Tree of Life Family Bible are works, for the most part, that were translated by adherents of the Messianic community to fit its theological stance. Fourth, many Bibles come with study guides, introductions to the books, cross-references, and explanatory notes, all of which are influenced by some tradition.[23]

Moreover, all Messianic believers celebrate Passover. All keep Shabbat in one form or another. All actually apply rabbinic tradition, including oral law, whether they realize it or not.[24] They do this when they light Shabbat candles, practice circumcision, celebrate weddings, observe the customary mourning practices, and celebrate the holidays of Passover and Sukkot, Hanukah and Purim. Even eating practices follow traditionally acquired tastes, and Yiddishkeit and Jewish jokes are part of a learned tradition passed down through the generations. Jews cannot walk in Jewish faith without Jewish tradition. Without it, any Judaism ceases to be Jewish. To overthrow Jewish tradition is to destroy Judaism. If we principally drink from evangelical tradition, then we will be seen as rooted in evangelical culture.

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[18] Ibid., 303–310.

[19] Ibid., 263–302, 159–71.

[20] Mark Kinzer, "Scripture and Tradition," in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, ed. Dan Cohen-Sherbok (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 2001), 30–31.

[21] Ibid., 31.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 32.

[24] Elliot Klayman, "The Spoken Word: My Journey," *The Messianic Outreach*, Vol. 31:4 (Summer 2012): 15–16.

Without tradition, "all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness, so that the person belonging to God may be capable, fully equipped for every good deed" (2 Tim 3:16–17), has no understandable application. Also, our position on Torah requires that we explain the granddaddy of them all, when Yeshua clearly stated:

> Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17–19)

We also have to confront Yeshua's saying recorded in Matthew 23:2–3: "The Torah scholars and Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses. So whatever they tell you, do and observe. But don't do what they do; for what they say they do not."

How one exegetes these Scriptures turns principally on one's theological position on the place of Torah. Scripture interpretation is ordinarily result-oriented—explained in a way that supports the person's penchant for a particular theological position. What is more important is not what a person says but what a person does, and even more so, how that person acts in conjunction with a defined community to which he or she belongs.

Messianic Jews are part of a long conversation which has been going on for at least two thousand years. We are progeny of the evangelical and Jewish traditions. Like good children, we need to honor them both and facilitate their reconciliation.[25] Our formulation of a sound canonical narrative is essential for us to navigate the murky waters in which we find ourselves.

The Canonical Narrative

Our canonical narrative is shaped by how we formulate and interpret the Genesis to Revelation story. We get one result if we think that the law was given to Moses at Sinai, to be obeyed until Jesus came, and then we were free from it and Israel's place in God's salvific history was over. We get another result if we believe that the law was given to Moses and that Jesus' advent was part of the redemptive history of Israel and the nations, that the Mosaic covenant continues and Israel's place in the plan of God survived Jesus' advent and is intact as part of ongoing salvific history.

The Standard Model

In *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, Kendall Soulen analyzes the traditional shape of Christian theology through the lens of the standard canonical narrative.[26] God as Consummator created Adam and Eve to bring them into eternal life; however, God's work was thwarted when Adam and Eve fell, thereby unleashing the destructive powers of sin, death, and evil. God then engaged humankind as Redeemer, through Jesus, to rescue mankind from the consequences of the fall and to fulfill God's original purpose of consummating creation. On the redemptive prong of the narrative, God initiated salvation in Jesus by prophetic and definitive forms, with the prophetic spanning from Abraham to the Incarnation, and the definitive from the Incarnation to the Judgment.[27]

[25] Kinzer, "Scripture and Tradition," 32–36.

[26] Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

[27] Ibid., 15.

Soulen finds semi-Gnosticism endemic to this narrative. The standard narrative, and the construal of the Hebrew Bible, makes God's identity as the God of Israel largely indecisive for shaping theological conclusions about how God's purposes engage creation in universal and enduring ways.[28] The role of Jesus' work as Consummator is undermined and, as Redeemer, heightened, rendering the narrative a divergence from a covenantal history (and thus semi-gnostic) where God's relationship with the Jewish people is central and enduring.[29] It departs from a right biblical orientation where Israel is prominent, and upon whom the nations must depend for blessing, thus leading to a loss of creative theological engagement with human history.[30] This all produces a distortion of the gospel of Messiah Jesus, hyper-focused upon Jesus as Redeemer while essentially ignoring his role in the economy of consummation, as read theologically through the long sweep of history.

"The God of Israel has acted in Jesus Christ for all the world"[31] sums up the standard canonical narrative, but as interpreted, it decentralizes the Hebrew Bible and Israel, stripping them of circumcision, promises, blessings, law, history, distinctiveness, Shabbat, and holy days, leaving only a "prophetic" instrumental appendage that disappears upon the realization of its object. Israel is de-emphasized, leading to neglect of how her enduring presence really works out in God's playbook on consummation. It is as if the standard canonical model bookmarks Israel but omits her historical significance, exhibited prominently throughout the "witnesses." This parochial, distorted "universal" view approaches Gnosticism.

A second problem of the standard model is that supersessionism is inherent in the narrative, giving impetus to a triumphal approach toward Israel. It is not simply the problem of the narrative's tendency toward economic supersessionism, where Israel is merely a prophetic pointer toward the Redeemer, having fulfilled her carnal role and now rendered obsolete by the Incarnation. Neither is it simply the problem of resigning Israel's fate to a punitive supersessionism, which finds Israel's rejection based on judgment. The greater problem is that fused to the narrative is a structural supersessionism[32] that almost wholly neglects the Hebrew Scriptures, moving at "blinding speed" across millennia of history and skipping from Genesis 1–3 to the apostolic witness, a kind of "silent" Marcionism. The narrative leaps over Genesis 12:3 and its progeny, quickly introducing Jesus as Redeemer, thereby snubbing the essential role God gives to the Hebrew Scriptures and Israel, which is fundamental in the consummation purpose of God's mutual economy of blessings in the company of Israel and the nations.

Finally, the standard canonical narrative pushes a homologous national universalism to the foreground, while forcing a particularistic Israel to the background. God's work as Consummator and Redeemer, while engaging creation in a universal way, emasculates Israel and the Hebrew Bible when it comes to any express and enduring role in the consummation rung of the canonical narrative. This renders Israel and the Hebrew Bible irrelevant for shaping conclusions about God's plan for his creation, thereby infecting the way in which Christians understand the theological and narrative unity of the canon as a whole[33]—in other words, how they read the Bible.

[28] Ibid., 16, 31.
[29] Ibid., 17.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 19.
[32] Ibid., 30–31.
[33] Ibid., 13, 33.

Rethinking the Canonical Narrative

Soulen re-designs the understanding of the canonical narrative: "God's history with Israel and the nations is the permanent and enduring medium of God's work as the Consummator of human creation, and therefore it is also the permanent and enduring context of the gospel about Jesus."[34] He expands this "nutshell" narrative by defining the economy of consummation as "God's providential management of and care for the households of creation."[35] By recognizing from the beginning (before sin and redemption) God's economy of desire, and the consequences of mutual blessings of the various groupings, including male and female, parents, brothers, children, families, generations, Jews and Gentiles, and nations of the earth,[36] Soulen highlights Israel as the one whom God chose as the catalyst, and upon whom the families of the earth depend, for mutual blessings.[37] This supports a good-sense reading of Scripture where God's work engages humankind in a historically decisive way through God's election of Israel as a blessing to the nations, thus rendering null semi-Gnosticism, supersessionism, and associated unbiblical hermeneutics in one fell swoop.[38] God's focus from the beginning has not been to confine Israel as a mere "pointer"; it is rather an instrument to fulfill God's economy of mutual blessings among the families of the earth, à la "in thee all families of the earth shall be blessed."[39] This corrects a distorted view of God as Redeemer where the Fall is isolated as the sole reason for redemption, rather than recognizing the need for redemption from the forces that interfere with God's economy of mutual blessings.[40]

Finally, Soulen recasts the apostolic witness as "good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"[41] as it looks toward an eschatological *shalom* kingdom.[42] This future kingdom ties back to God as Consummator, who through Yeshua's life, death, and resurrection defeats the forces antagonistic to the fullness of the economy of mutual dependency and blessings of Israel and the nations.[43] Because of God's triumph to come, Soulen urges us to live out a cruciform life today in conformity with what the kingdom will look like in the final victory over the evil interference with God's mutual economy of blessings, facilitated by Israel's central catalytic purpose.

Although most Messianic Jews would rather embrace Soulen's understanding than the standard model, what is important is "not what they say but what they do." And there does seem to be a disparity between the two.

Messianic Jewish Praxes

To date there have not been any comprehensive studies on Messianic Jewish praxis within and without the congregational settings. There have been piecemeal studies from which one can glean patterns, but no recent studies or surveys that categorize and delineate the various flows of Torah

[34] Ibid., 110.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 118.
[37] Ibid., 125.
[38] Ibid., 111.
[39] Ibid., 114, 121.
[40] Ibid., 112.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 130–31, 141.
[43] Ibid., 158.

application.[44] Generally speaking, all that can be said is that, like the various theological viewpoints, we have a variety of praxes.

Liturgical Practice

Liturgical practice and the style, content, and expression of worship among Messianic Jews inside and outside the congregation are as varied as the theological positions that define them. There are a few widely published siddurim that are outliers of congregational worship,[45] as well as non-published siddurim tailored by individual congregations to meet their particular needs. For example, Sha'arei Shalom in Cary, North Carolina, uses its own "electronic siddur," which follows the traditional siddur in order and sequence while taking liberty to interlineate New Covenant songs and Scripture within the context of the traditional parts. Through this approach, the worshippers are led in a seamless union from recitation of prayers to participation in worship music. What is common to many is that there are attempts to adapt the worship service and recitation of liturgy in a way that honors Yeshua and the New Covenant while maintaining some semblance of Jewish tradition. This results in worship services that vary widely, from a strictly traditional service that adheres almost wholly to the Orthodox or Conservative siddur to a more freelance service that incorporates only the Shema and a few traditional rudiments of Jewish tradition.

Life-cycle events

Jewish life-cycle events range from crib to casket. Birth, *brit milah* (circumcision), baby naming, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first born son), bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings, and funerals are all part of the rhythm of Jewish life. Yeshua kept the life-cycle events, and Messianic Jews and Messianic congregations participate in some or all of these events in one way or another.[46] Here too diversity abounds.[47] There is no one organization or "Messianic *shulhan arukh*" to which Messianic Jews can look for guidance. It is not rare for a leader to put out a call on the UMJC leaders' list for helpful materials and guidance for life-cycle ceremonies. Even though there are Messianic Jewish umbrella organizations, these do not dictate or even lay out a uniform position for their adherents on the praxes of life-cycle and lifestyle. Neither is this so unusual in the wider Jewish world, where diversity also abounds, from various Hasidic styles to Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and other emerging branches and groups of Judaism. The stripes vary, especially when we are speaking about different traditions.

Sabbath

Shabbat is God's gift to Israel to remind it of God's creation and to enjoin a rest on the seventh day, just as God rested on that day after creation. As such, it is a peek into the world of the Almighty and a preview of that which is to come, when peace and rest in Messiah will reign supreme. Virtually all Messianic Jews agree that we ought to keep the Sabbath. The question is how to do that. For most,

[44] See, e.g., Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant*, 117–52.; Jeffrey S. Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregations: Who Sold this Business to the Gentiles?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 62.

[45] Barry Budoff, trans. & Kirk Gliebe, ed., *A Messianic Jewish Siddur for Shabbat* (Skokie, IL: Devar Emet Messianic Publications, 2006); John Fischer and David Bronstein, *Siddur For Messianic Jews* (Palm Harbor, FL: Menorah Ministries, 1988); Jeremiah Greenberg, *Messianic Shabbat Siddur* (Gaithersburg, MD: Messianic Liturgical Resources, 2000).

[46] David Rudolph & Elliot Klayman, "Messianic Jewish Synagogues," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 39–40; see also Barney Kasdan, *God's Appointed Customs: A Messianic Jewish Guide to the Biblical Lifecycle and Lifestyle* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1996).

[47] Harvey, 186–188. Surveys of Messianic Jewish praxes attest to this.

the liberty of grace takes precedence. For many a reinterpretation of biblical precedent prevails over the orthodox halakah.

As with other Torah observance, Messianic Jews observe the Sabbath in a variety of ways, of course dependent upon their theological view.[48] For one grouping there is a serious attempt to keep the feast as commanded in the Bible. However, there is little prescription in the Hebrew Bible as to how to do this. Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out that biblically, on the Sabbath, the priest worked in the temple and the laity rested at home. It was not a day of corporate worship with a service. He sees great contradiction in the way that Jewish believers keep the Sabbath by having a worship service on Shabbat.[49] Expanding the Scripture to include the New Covenant, many Messianic believers seek to follow the teachings of Yeshua and the ways in which he kept Shabbat. This would include doing good on the Sabbath, and putting into practice the teaching that the Sabbath was made for man. Here, freedom rules within the bounds of the sacredness of the Sabbath. For the vast number of congregations, the congregants do not refrain from cooking or using electricity by, for example, turning on lights. They drive to services, and are not totally restrained from purchasing goods and services, although they are perhaps a bit more self-restricted than on the other days of the week.

A number of congregations keep some of the traditional rabbinic practices associated with Shabbat.[50] This includes the lighting of Shabbat candles (before sundown on Friday) with the traditional prayer that asserts that God has commanded us to light them; employing weekly the traditional Shabbat service liturgy; processing the Torah; Torah readings; the blessing over the challah and the wine; a Sabbath meal; and *havdalah*[51] at Shabbat's end. These are all part of tradition, rabbinic additives that many Messianic Jews follow as part of their rich heritage and as Jewish identity markers. Of these congregations, many modify parts of the liturgy and incorporate New Covenant Scripture to pay homage to the presence of King Messiah.

What we have is an admixture of New Testament and rabbinic tradition, in different ratios, governing the practice of Shabbat-keeping.[52] This is somewhat analogous to the various approaches by the branches of Judaism and the variations among their member congregations.

Passover

Messianic Jews celebrate biblical feasts and non-biblical feasts, depending upon the congregation with which they are affiliated and the theological bent of the leadership. Since the 1970s, there has been an increasingly greater attempt by Messianic Jews to identify with the Jewish community by following the cycle of the festival calendar. This has led to greater participation in some of the major feasts and in some of the minor feasts as well.[53] The mainstay feasts impressed upon a child's mind are those that come with the fondest memories: Passover, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Hanukah, Purim, and Simchat Torah. However, today it is not unusual for a congregation and its participants to celebrate other feasts, including Shavuot, Yom HaAtzmaut, Yom HaShoah, and Tu'Bishvat. As Messianic Judaism ages, it is making more space for Jewish celebrations, identity, and tradition for cultural and religious reasons. One thing is clear: the celebrations are as varied as the congregations and their leaders.

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[48] For a typical Shabbat service, see Rudolph & Klayman, "Messianic Jewish Synagogues," 37–38.

[49] Harvey, 190.

[50] The Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council has adopted some halakic standards for Sabbath-keeping: ourrabbis.org/main/documents/MJRC_Standards_Mar2011.pdf, 16–24 [accessed May 2, 2015]; see also Kasdan, 1–23.

[51] This is a celebration of the departure of the Sabbath. See Kasdan, 6–7.

[52] Harvey, 188–203.

[53] For a helpful guide to the biblical and traditional feasts, see Kasdan, *God's Appointed Customs*.

Passover is the consummate biblical feast; it brings the celebration as prescribed in Leviticus into juxtaposition with New Testament significance and application. Yeshua is our Passover Lamb who died for us. "Therefore purge out that old leaven that you may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7). Today, Messianic congregations have a variety of Haggadahs from which to choose.[54] Most of them inject New Testament significance and Scripture into the Seder (order) of events. Some congregations use a traditional Haggadah and adapt it to bring out the richness of the Passover of the New Covenant. Hence, some adopt the *afikomen* as a valuable tradition and apply it to our "dessert that satisfies" that points to Yeshua, the "one who came." Many see the breaking of the middle piece of matzah as referring to the Son, Yeshua, whose body was broken for us. Almost all recognize that Yeshua implemented Communion at the Passover and in some way incorporate it into their celebration. Elijah's cup is often alluded to as significant for the fulfillment of Yeshua's drinking of the cup in the Garden of Gethsemane or using the cup to implement Communion. Some see the Passover as flexible and open. For example, just as the Jewish community is prone to add another piece of matzah or another cup to the feast to recognize, e.g., the subjects of genocide or the plight of women, Messianic Jews also take that liberty to add to the celebration elements that speak of current Jewish concerns. As with other Torah and traditional practices, there is no fixed way among Messianic Jews for conducting the Passover, with variations dependent upon one's theological position.[55]

Kashrut

When asked by a friend why he had four sets of false teeth, Morris, an elderly Jewish man, answered, "I have one set for milk products, one set for meat products, and one set I use for Passover." Puzzled, Morris's friend inquired, "But what about the fourth set?" to which Morris angrily exclaimed, "Is it any of your business if I want to eat a ham and cheese sandwich once in a while?" Such is the full variation of the state of Messianics when it comes to eating. Although most Messianic Jews do keep a modicum of biblical kashrut laws, there is great variance here, too, depending upon how one interprets New Testament Scripture and the place of the laws of kashrut for today. There are a variety of interpretations that control one's behavior when it comes to dietary laws.[56] For one theological reason or another, many Messianic Jews outside of Israel do not keep traditionally kosher. Some believe that the verse, "This he said making all foods clean" clarifies Yeshua's position.[57] One prominent Jewish believer in Jesus goes so far as to say, "I have no problem eating a ham and cheese sandwich in Harlem where the culture is not against it."[58] Those who adhere to this position, and there are many, believe the Old Testament is no longer operative,

[54] Elliot Klayman & Michael Schiffman, eds., *Messianic Jewish Passover Haggadah* (Columbus, OH: Messianic Publishing Co., 2010); Barry Rubin & Steffi Rubin, *The Messianic Passover Haggadah* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publisher, 2005). Downloadable versions of Messianic Haggadahs may be found at David, Sargent, A Messianic Passover Haggadah, godandscience.org/apologetics/haggadah.html; Messianic Passover Haggadah (Phoenix, AZ: Jewish Voice Ministries International), jewishvoice.org/assets/pdfs/08-03-01-03-haggadah.pdf; Messianic Haggadah, messianicseder.com/messianic_haggadah.html; Passover Seder for Believers in Messiah, hearnow.org/CNV0MKN1CR/HLeader_06.pdf.

[55] Maoz avoids the *afikomen* because it is not inspired; Fruchtenbaum eats lamb, not chicken, at the Passover since that is biblical; Juster balances tradition with New Testament prescription, giving greater weight to the latter; Kasdan focuses heavily on the redemption side of the Passover story and its fulfillment in Yeshua when conducting the ceremony; and Stern calls for deliberation and care when adapting tradition to the New Covenant application so as to avoid offense and theological errors. Harvey, 212–220.

[56] Ibid., 203–12.

[57] Ibid., 204–205.

[58] Ibid., 205.

thus nullifying the necessity of eating kosher food. Even here there are shades of subtlety. Some congregations keep kosher as far as not mixing meat and milk or eating Levitically forbidden foods. However, not all of their members necessarily keep kosher outside the congregational setting. Even those who do not feel an obligation to keep kosher may feel at liberty to do so for cultural or outreach reasons.

Barney Kasdan and those who line up with his position do not believe that Yeshua did away with Torah or the kashrut laws. They adhere to "biblical kosher" laws, refraining from eating *treyf* (Levitically unclean foods), but not adopting the rabbinic practice of separating meat from milk or even eating only foods that have been declared clean by rabbinical certification, marked by the Kosher sign. He does feel we are free to keep stricter laws but that Yeshua did not reject the biblical laws of kashrut, only the application of Pharisaic extra-biblical injunctions.[59] David Rudolph avoids the Mark 7:19b "made all food clean" obstacle by an exegetical application that demonstrates that this was addressed to Gentiles only, making it clear that the Gentiles were not under Levitical kashrut laws.[60] Finally, Mark Kinzer equates the abolition of the dietary laws with the abolition of Judaism. Dietary laws are a "cornerstone of Torah observance" and an "identity marker," and therefore necessary for the spiritual and physical continuation of the Jewish people. As a member of the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council he takes, for the most part, the Conservative branch of Judaism's approach when deciding what foods to eat. Abstaining from Levitically impure meats and separation of meat from milk are essential. Although it is preferable to eat animals that have been killed in a kosher way, he does relax such practices when it is impractical to keep them.[61]

Why should we expect more conformity in the area of kashrut than what exists in the Jewish community at large, where we also see the gamut from "reckless disregard" for kosher law to "strict adherence" to rabbinic tradition? For any kind of conformity within the Messianic movement there would need to be a "Yavneh" type council to provide it. That simply does not exist at this stage.[62]

The Relationship to Gentiles

The mystery of the union of Jew and Gentile, which were to combine to form the components of the prototypical Messianic congregation, was implicit in Hebrew Scripture and realized in the New Covenant. The prophet Ezekiel pronounced a "new covenant" was coming, different from the Mosaic covenant, in that the law would be placed in the believer's heart. The prophet Joel says there will be a great outpouring of the Spirit upon both Jew and Gentile in the "last days." The Hebrew Scriptures spoke of a coming Messiah and one of God's promises to Abraham was that his seed would bless all "families" of the earth. The apostle Paul recognized the "seed" as Yeshua, the Davidic King. Many Jews accepted Yeshua as the Messiah. The Jerusalem Council decided that Gentile believers did not have to become Jewish in order to be admitted to the "new faith." They had only to keep a semblance of kashrut laws and refrain from sexual immorality, which made table fellowship possible for Jews and Gentiles. Although Jews and Gentiles still remained distinct, with a radically different cultural base, it was quite natural for them to worship in the same space together, each cleaving to faith in the risen, promised Messiah. It was quite natural for these new Jewish and Gentile believers to congregate together now that they had both embraced the Jewish

[59] Kasdan, 107.

[60] David J. Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b," *Evangelical Quarterly* 74/4 (October 2002): 311. Note that the Acts 15 council did establish minimum kashrut standards for Gentiles (Acts 15:19–29).

[61] Harvey, 210–211.

[62] To date, the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council has not demonstrated the clout within the Messianic Jewish movement necessary to attract widespread adherence.

Messiah. They gravitated toward a synagogue model familiar to the Jews, who far outnumbered the Gentile believers. James, the brother of Yeshua, had a large congregation in Jerusalem. There were 15 successive Messianic Jewish bishops in Jerusalem. The Messianic congregation was initially made up of mainly Jews, but also Gentiles, upon whom God expressed his love for both. This one new man is the prolepsis of his plan for the nations, the Jews, and all humanity in the eschaton.

However, we know what happened. By the fourth century, the Gentile Roman Church became so large that it smothered the development of the Jewish believers, who were almost wholly subsumed within the church. They ceased to be influential, not even appearing at any of the councils, and they lost their identity as Jews as they were swept away by the flood of Gentile culture and the requirement that they refrain from "Jewish legalism." This reality is a conundrum today, and the place of Gentiles is once again on the front burner of theological and practical concern.[63] The constellation of Messianic congregations continues to wrestle with this issue, and they address it in different ways. The bulk of the congregations welcome Gentile believers to join them in the movement, only expecting that they "behave" by conforming to the Messianic Jewish culture of the congregation. For some of those congregations, Gentiles cannot participate fully in the life of the congregation. They cannot wear a *tallit*, read from Torah, or sit on the congregation's board. Those congregations seek to keep the identity markers intact. In other congregations Gentiles are full participants, and the theology of the "one new man" worshipping together on the olive branch provides the rationale for their position.

There is a growing minority of congregations that believe there is theological support for a model where the "one new man," though made up of Jew and Gentile, nevertheless comprises two "lungs" of the body of believers. The Jewish lobe of the body of Messiah worships within Messianic congregations; the Gentile lobe of the body worships in churches. This group believes that the two are together in vibrant spiritual harmony and balance. They relate to each other and need each other for fullness of "breath of life." Yet they are called to maintain their separate cultures within the local bodies where they worship. In this way, the Gentile "lung" of the church is not a threat to the Jewish "lung."[64] In order to accommodate those Gentiles who, like Ruth, are called to Messianic Judaism, some of these congregations recognize a conversion process.[65]

The Advantages of Diversity

God created diversity everywhere. Whether one looks at the heavens above, the seas below, or the earth where we live, diversity abounds. Out of diversity of ideas comes good. The scholarly world attests to this. It is discussion over time and the healthy interplay of thoughts that distinguish humans from the animal world. Through it we have used God's resources, combined with our world of ideas, to do good. Look at the Mishnah and the Talmud as they developed over the millennia. With the sharpening of the discussion across the pages, adding other exegetical voices to Torah, Judaism has clarified its understanding and emerged with a more thorough treatment of Torah. Even today, not all of the t's have been crossed and not all of the i's have been dotted. There is much left to understand. But it is the journey into the endeavor and the preoccupation with the

[63] The ratio of Jews to Gentiles in a Messianic congregation varies by geography, style of worship, and theology. The cities with larger Jewish populations appear to have a proportionately greater number of Jews than Gentiles within the congregation. One Messianic congregation in Boston boasts 75% Jews, whereas the membership of a large congregation in Dallas contains 20% Jews. Those congregations which have a recognizably greater Jewish flavor to their services tend to attract a greater number of Jews, although they also tend to be smaller. Some Messianic congregations actually discourage non-Jews from attending unless they can demonstrate a unique calling to identify with Israel and the Jewish people.

[64] Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*.

[65] ourrabbis.org/main/articles/24-conversion [accessed May 3, 2015].

task that provides the fodder for Torah focus. We all want to know God's will here, and he has designed it so that only through a cacophony of expounding voices will we get closer to understanding truth, God, and man. We are God's agents for understanding on earth. Even in the secular world of, for example, medicine, we see peers sparring over approaches, with a diversity of ideas but a united desire to tackle diseases and medical problems. Out of this struggle comes success. In short, it is the journey that is the important entrée into the solution.

God did not simply hand us the solutions on a platter. He requires that we engage and work together, not necessarily starting with the same outlook, but nonetheless starting in order to close the gap between the search and the object. Diversity is the vehicle toward that end. Out of "chaos" comes order. There is no better example than our existence.

The Disadvantages of Diversity

Diversity breeds alienation. It gives rise to a lack of coherency. When diversity abounds within a group, the individuals within the group tend to be at odds with one another, causing separation. This is human nature. We tend toward those who have a similar outlook. That is why the young tend to congregate socially with the young, and why Swedes generally feel a greater affinity toward Swedes. The old adage "birds of a feather flock together" rings true. Diversity of opinions can be responsible for wars, animosity, and acrimony between countries and people groups, and a salient cause in marital break-ups. In short, the best way to disharmony is through disagreement.

Tension between Unity and Diversity

The theologian, like the traveler, must be ready for tomorrow. Adaptation to new and varying circumstances ensures survival. It is the tension between the *status quo* and the *modus ad quem* that facilitates change, challenges the status, and moves us through dynamic tension to moderating norms. It is really the journey together that ensures unity at the end of the road. This is true even through the vicissitudes of experimentation and trials. When the commitment is to a higher ideal than the division that separates, a way in the wilderness becomes an adventurousness road together, eventuating in closer-knit communities. Open communication is essential. We must be quicker to listen than to speak, and substitute humility for pomposity, love and patience for condescension and impetuosity. Yeshua provides the vehicle for the journey.

Conclusion

This article is not intended to take a position on the place of Torah but only to snap a picture in time and to opine, based upon what that picture portrays, on the current state of the Messianic Jewish movement with regard to the place of Torah for Messianic Jews today.

We know the pages of the past; they cannot be changed. We have examined the state of Messianic affairs on the place of Torah today and found them to be quite diverse in thought and practice. If we are to be a Jewish movement that finds itself in biblical prophecy, we need to be Jewish. We will need to be the "Israel of God," part of the "remnant" that swells to "all of Israel." For that to be the case, Torah relevancy to our life and community is just as important as it is to the branches of Judaism expressed in the major synagogue affiliations and movements. We must locate ourselves somewhere between "Torah bound" and "Torah friendly." We must have the Torah in our hearts, which manifests the love of God to the world. We must ensure in some way that our grandchildren will follow in the tradition of a Jewish life in Messiah Yeshua. Without that, it is hard to see how ten Gentiles will grab hold of the fringes of a Jew's garment and say, "We will go with you because you know God." It will be difficult for our successors to be part of the repairing of the Jewish cisterns and to usher in the coming of the Lord to Jerusalem, where he will sit on the Jewish

throne of David and rule with a Jewish hand. It will be difficult to see any distinction between the "sheep nations" and the Jewish believing "brethren."

It is yet to be seen which way the movement will drift. Will it lean in the direction of evangelical influence and march to the beat of Christian instruments, or will it lean in the direction of synchronized notes consistent with the continuity of Jewish sound? We should know within the next generation. But be assured: As with the admonition to Queen Esther, God will raise up another if we are not faithful to the call.[66]

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[66] One Catholic cardinal has suggested that the "other" may be the Jewish Catholics of the state of Israel; Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 20. Other possibilities are the lost tribes of Israel who are being discovered in Ethiopia, India, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and other parts of the world. Many of these "tribal members" have accepted the Messiah Jesus, and seek to maintain or reclaim their Jewish identity.

Jesus, Key and Keeper of the Torah: A Messianic Reading of the Bible

Raymond Lillevik

Introduction

If there is a certain way for Messianic Jews to read the Bible, be it year 50 or today, I can't help but think that it must be important for any believer in Jesus, even a non-Jew like me. The following collection of thoughts is a revised version of my trial doctoral lecture in 2013, where I described and commented on Richard Harvey's book *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*.[1] Here I turn to the slightly arrogant and significantly naïve task of suggesting how Messianic theology could find a way out of the situation Harvey depicts. To my defense, it must be said that in *Mapping*, Harvey invites his readers to suggest theological analyses as well as suggestions for a fruitful framework for theological discussions. However, I also want to follow up on something I missed in the book itself, namely how Jesus' relationship to the Torah influences our understanding of the Bible itself. I believe this approach is essential to grasping the relationship between the New and Old Testaments, and therefore our ideas about Torah-observance and Christian unity.

Jesus as Key to the Bible

In his otherwise excellent overview of the different theological standpoints within the Messianic movement, Harvey seldom states his own opinion concerning the different theological issues discussed. An important exception is that he rejects anti-Trinitarian ideas.[2] In addition, two doctrines he claims to be *a priori* unquestionable for Messianic Jewish theology are: 1) the belief in the continuity of the covenant between God and the Jewish people; and 2) the uniqueness of Jesus.[3]

The first point draws a line against supersessionism, a key element in traditional anti-Judaism in the churches. Here salvation history has been (and in many places may still be) understood as God forsaking Israel because of its collective guilt for executing Jesus. Instead, the church has been handed the privilege of being God's people and the heir of all the promises of the Old Testament.

When it comes to the questions of observing Torah and how to understand the Bible, Harvey's second point gives the most fruitful perspective for Messianic Jewish theology as well as Christian theology in general. In *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, Christology is discussed in relation to the concepts of the Incarnation and the Trinity. This is natural, considering the weight these issues have in the ongoing debate within the movement. Still, that Christology is described in such an isolated manner makes me somewhat suspicious. Early in my theological education, the

[1] Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009).
[2] Richard Harvey, "Worship and Witness to the Deity of Yeshua," 4-6, 29; chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2010/RichardHarvey.doc [accessed February 23, 2015].
[3] Harvey, *Mapping*, 264.

teachers at the low-church Lutheran Bible school in Grimstad taught us the hermeneutic principle that all exegesis of the Bible could be paralleled with cutting a cake. It is best if all the pieces—that is, the relevant topics—always include a bit from the middle, which of course is Jesus and the gospel. This principle can, of course, be misunderstood; it does not open up for allegorism, nor does it imply that every sermon should be a gospel presentation. The point is to avoid discussing biblical themes in isolation from what the New Testament holds to be the Archimedic point of the Bible. This is about letting oneself be led by what Jesus says in John 5: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me."[4]

Of course, this perspective is important for several of the persons Harvey's dissertation surveys. However, it is a hermeneutical concept that deserves to be dealt with in its own right.

Can "Jesus for All" Be the Messiah for the Jewish People?

When Christian mission toward Jews has been described as a spiritual holocaust, it is because of the historical fact that many Jesus-believing Jews ceased to identify as Jewish, whether freely or not.[5] In particular, this has been the case regarding Torah observance, which has been direly connected with Christology in both the New Testament and traditional Christian theology. This is highlighted in Joseph Ratzinger's (Pope Benedict XVI) book *Jesus of Nazareth*. Here Ratzinger refers directly to the distinguished scholar and rabbi Jakob Neusner's discussion of the Sermon of the Mount. In spite of the respectable and unquestionable Jewish character of the preaching carried forward by Jesus, Neusner claims that Jesus still cannot be accepted by Jews as Messiah. The reason is that Jesus' self-consciousness and his universalization of the Torah lead to the disintegration of the Torah as a social framework for the Jewish people.[6] According to Neusner, an embrace of Jesus by the Jewish people would make the people cease to exist as a nation.

The Messianic movement is, in many ways, an attack on this idea of Jesus as a supersessionist theologian, although they do not quite agree on the alternative in every detail, as Harvey's dissertation points out. In fact, I believe that this reflection about supersessionism and Torah observance is of great value for the rest of the universal church. A general awareness that there are Jews with a Jewish identity who believe in Jesus will prevent the spread of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, nominalism, and neglect of the Old Testament in the church. In addition, it will increase the understanding that the Jesus-believing community of the church is multicultural and that there is something God-willed in every ethnic culture, not least the Jewish. At the same time, one must warn against any tendency to give one's own culture or nationality, be it Jewish, Norwegian, or Chinese, a position on the same level as Jesus and the gospel.

Jesus + the Torah Is True

As I see it, it would be best for the Messianic movement as well as the traditional churches to take the bull by the horns, beginning with Neusner's own discovery of the relation between the Christology of the New Testament and the Torah. "I now realize only God can ask of me what Jesus is asking," Neusner says.[7] In life and speech, Jesus places himself in the place of God, the giver of the Torah, in the Sermon on the Mount as well as in his other teachings. Something that the New Testament points out as unique to Jesus is that all the holiness we need now comes from he who

[4] John 5:3, ESV.

[5] Axel Torm, *Israelsmission og Israels mission: Om kirkenes nybesindelse på sit forhold til Israel* (Århus: OKAY-BOG, 1990), 209–214.

[6] Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 103–122.

[7] Ratzinger, 115.

fulfills the Torah along with being its Lord. This insight changed the understanding of Torah for Jesus-believing Jews in the New Testament, and also opened up citizenship in the people of God to Jesus-believers from all nations.[8] All in all, Peter's experiences in Acts 10–11 and the meeting of the apostles in Acts 15 are manifestations of the last point. Nowhere in these places is it said that Jesus-believing Jews can or should give up, for example, kashrut. The perspective is about how one can become part of God's people and what can be the foundation for this, for Jews as well as non-Jews.

This can be summarized by the Lutheran expression that the one who believes in Jesus has already fulfilled the law.[9] However, this understanding is not particularly Lutheran, nor even Protestant. In a larger and ecumenical perspective this view is, among others, related to Thomas Aquinas' insight that Christ in the most intimate way identifies himself with the whole Torah, which is God's every commandment in the Old as well as New Testament.[10] As the believer in Jesus is united with him, she cannot observe the Torah in the same way as one who does not believe in him. The believer who seeks to be obedient to God's will is therefore supposed to observe his ethical will, as stated for example in the Ten Commandments—in other words, what tradition has named the Moral Law. Sacrifices for sin and rules for spiritual purity (the Ceremonial Law) are fulfilled by Christ, and there is therefore no need to practice them. In other words, these customs were not disposed of as outdated or as something God rejected. Instead, they are laws which are connected to God and Jesus in a different way than the laws that deal with ethics.[11] As the Aquinas scholar Holly Taylor Coolman points out, the church's rejection of the observance of these laws was not based on the idea that the New Testament had replaced the Old. Instead, the increasingly strong warnings against the observance of Jewish customs were given because observance of the Ceremonial Law was seen as disrespecting the sacrifice and purification accomplished by Jesus, since their purpose was to point forward to him.[12] On the other side, Coolman suggests, in the same way the observance of these laws and customs once pointed forward to the Messiah, can they not now point back to what he has done?

To me this makes sense; otherwise, it would be difficult to understand the church's bitter struggle against Marcion's rejection of the Old Testament around 200.[13] As we know from canon history, the result of this strife was that the full Greek version of the Septuagint was embraced, with even more material than was accepted by the rabbinic tradition. It also makes sense in another way: When, during my years as a student, I first experienced liturgical prayer and its use of the Psalms as carried forth by the traditional church, I liked the idea of thanking God for teaching me how to live. This included Psalms like 119—but why should we express David's and the other psalmists' joy in *every* commandment in the Old Testament when we didn't observe them? That Jesus identifies himself with the different dimensions of the Torah also explains why Christian

[8] Antoine Levy, "Tying and Untying Shoes: A Church-Jew Messianic Approach to Torah Fulfillment" (lecture at the Helsinki Consultation in Oslo, June 2013), helsinkiconsultation.squarespace.com/storage/oslo-2013-papers/Levy-2013-shoes.pdf, 18–19 [accessed February 18, 2015]. Levy argues from a "Hidden Messiah" perspective that I personally find difficult to defend, but on this reading of the Bible he is very to the point.

[9] Consider, for example, the pedagogic structure of Martin Luther's *Little Catechism*, where the content of the faith is regarded as a response to the Ten Commandments.

[10] Holly Taylor Coolman, "Christological Torah," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 5 (2010), 1–12; 5.

[11] Coolman, 10.

[12] This is correct, but it must be added that many of these warnings and laws were about drawing borders between Jews and Christians socially, often in multi-religious communities with more social interaction than the leaders of the church and the synagogues had stomach for.

[13] Marcion was a presbyteros/pastor in Rome; his rejection of the Old Testament and many parts of the New Testament as un-Christian won many followers around the Mediterranean.

doctrine has held on to the paradox that though it is only by faith in Jesus that one enters the kingdom of God, the law should nevertheless be observed, even exalted.

This paradox of God's grace and the demand for our obedience can also be understood relationally: one who loves God will care about what is important to God. It is probably no coincidence that Luther's little book to the pope, *The Freedom of a Christian*, relates freedom from Torah observance to the demand that every Christian follow the law, with help from bridal mysterial terminology.[14] This is dynamite in my own life, as well in mainstream Western churches that, by their ethical teachings or fear of addressing issues that might provoke the increasingly secularized society, for many decades have moved in an antinominalistic direction. In spite of an often admirable engagement in several crucial biblical issues like poverty, nature, violent conflicts, and social ethics in general, the pick-and-chose theology in which biblical commandments on increasingly provocative issues like sexuality or church life are neglected may become destructive for the churches' relationship to the Bible as well as to Jesus.

Christian Liberty and Jewish Survival

The relationship between Jesus and the Torah or the Bible is therefore not an issue for certain theological disciplines, but a question about the life of believers and how this life should survive. For the Messianic movement, however, it is also a matter of Jewish survival.

In her article on Aquinas' discussion about the relationship between the Torah and Jesus, Coolman says that if the church does not demand that non-Jewish believers in Jesus follow Jewish customs, then it cannot demand this from *anybody*. Consequently, this demand cannot be made of Messianic Jews. This is essential in the term Christian liberty, and is, as I see it, the main purpose of the letter to the Galatians and Romans 14–15: In answering the question of whether one belongs to God or not, Torah observance cannot be regarded as mandatory even for Messianic Jews.

This preliminary conclusion admittedly comes close to what Michael Novak calls "soft supersessionism," the idea that Jews need to believe in Jesus in order to live in a complete covenant community with the God of Israel.[15] At the same time, I believe that the words "supersession" or "replacement," etc., miss the point. It is not that Torah observance is now annulled, but rather relativized. In Romans, Paul teaches that those who want to observe Torah can do so in the form they wish, as long as it is not made mandatory for anyone else.[16] The case is that the uniqueness of Jesus checks any tendency to give Jewish tradition (and certainly other traditions) authority equal to the revelation of Jesus in the Bible.

Messianic Jewish theology is, as Harvey has pointed out, characterized by strong disagreements between those who believe that Jewish tradition, including oral tradition, is not equal to the Bible in authority, and those who in different ways accept this authority. Harvey lines up the different theological positions on an axis, where leaders like Maoz/Fruchtenbaum and Kinzer serve as opposite poles, with the positions of individuals like Stern and Juster as different versions of compromise between the two. I follow the main points of Harvey's analysis of this situation, and believe that every one of these positions has its own difficulties, although here I focus on the

[14] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 62–64.

[15] Coolman, 1.

[16] With this, I mean both in the form of contemporary versions of Judaism (Orthodox, Reformed, Conservative, etc), and regarding the question of whether one should follow biblical or rabbinic tradition. It is often difficult to define what in the rabbinic tradition was known at the time of Jesus, and to decide whether this tradition was the background for the New Testament, or if the rabbinic tradition rather is a response to early Jesus-believers' interpretation of the Torah and Israel. See Oskar Skarsaune, "Who Influenced Whom? Contours of a New Paradigm for Early Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Chosen to Follow: Jewish Believers through History and Today*, ed. Knut H. Høyland and Jakob W. Nielsen (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 2012), 35–52.

matter of biblical hermeneutics. While Maoz's views have fewer problems in communicating with traditional Christian doctrines, they may seem alien to people with a strong consciousness of their Jewish background and identity. True enough, the gospel will always be alien to non-believers, but it has been characteristic of traditional theology to see a connection between the Incarnation and contextualization so that the biblical message "becomes flesh" and is able to put on different cultural garments without abandoning biblical doctrine and its worldview. On the other hand, I find Kinzer's postmissionary Judaism to be in danger of relativizing the role of the Bible as a theological authority and source, where Jewish tradition and the concept of "the hidden Messiah" become analog with the Messiah who is *not* hidden.

Interestingly, Harvey describes an accusation that both Kinzer and Maoz/Fruchtenbaum have in common against the positions between them on the axis: Those who observe some Jewish customs but without an established halakah are in danger of being colored by a pick-and-choose approach (eclectic) without a biblical foundation. For myself, I have no doubt that the motivation for this strategy is founded on the same ideas about freedom in Jesus ("Christian liberty") I mentioned above. But, from a pedagogic perspective, this approach nevertheless may give the impression that the divine revelation is in the hands of the congregation or even the individual, and that one may follow what feels right there and then. From that perspective, this is close to what has been going on in the Western churches for some time on ethical issues. The idea has been something like this: "If the church historically has replaced the Sabbath of the Bible with Sunday as the day of worship and rest, why can't we now replace biblical teachings about sexuality and family life with something more in harmony with the modern sense of love?" If a practice of relating to biblical commandments serves to strengthen this mentality, it is worth reconsidering at least how one communicates the theological platform this practice is based upon. A slightly relevant digression may be in order here: It was for just the same tendency to create a mentality of pick-and-choose that Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein (1825–1908) criticized the leadership of the Reformed Hungarian Jewish community around 1900. As he saw it, the strategy of neglecting Jewish customs according to contemporary sentiments and time-bound ideas would only create a sort of spiritual decay, even hypocrisy, in the Jewish community.[17] For a Jew, the only legitimate reason to leave out a commandment would be that he was told so by God. This was what he held to be the case for Jesus. But this did not mean that Jewish customs should be neglected. His point was that if anybody were to change Jewish Torah observance, it could be done by none other than the Jesus of the New Testament.

United in Essence

My suggestion is that one regard the extra-biblical part of Jewish tradition as universal revelation. In a Lutheran context, this opens up for dealing with elements outside the scriptural revelation (like national customs, cultural elements that at times have their origin in non-biblical world-views) as valuable, and at the same time lets the apostolic tradition of the New and Old Testaments have the upper hand in theological issues. I am aware that the interpretation as well as the application of this principle is a matter of controversy, but I still believe this distinction is fruitful when discussing how to understand the Bible, for two reasons:

First, this distinction leaves the authority of the Bible unquestioned (in principle, at least) in relation to Jewish tradition, and therefore helps form a platform or framework for theological

[17] I. Lichtenstein, *Die Liebe und die Bekehrung* (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1886), 13, 26, 30. See also Raymond Lillevik, *Apostates, Hybrids, or True Jews: Jewish Christians and Jewish Identity in Eastern Europe 1860–1914* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock/Pickwick, 2014), 212.

discussion that gives the debates a certain structure.[18] Second, this is helpful for lay people, inside and outside the Messianic movement, who in their everyday life struggle to live according to God's will. The Jesus-believing community not only consists of people who have different cultural and national backgrounds; those with the same background often have different attitudes to those backgrounds. In other words, how to adapt the gospel within a certain religious or cultural background is not just a Jewish problem, although Jewish tradition after the time of Bible is, to a much greater degree than most other cultures and civilizations, occupied with biblical issues. Nevertheless, we are supposed to be followers of Jesus.

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[18] This is one of the things Harvey calls for in his dissertation.

A Profile of North American Messianic Jews
A study conducted by Jews for Jesus

Andrew Barron and Beverly Jamison

Introduction

There are Jewish people in North America who have come to faith in Jesus as Savior of the world and as the Messiah of Israel. Our interest is in surveying a group of these people in order to understand their lived experience.

From June 1, 2013, through December 1, 2013, Jews for Jesus carried out a broad study of Messianic Jews in North America. This study was a follow-up to a similar study conducted in 1983. The 2013 study involved a sample of 1,567 respondents and, like its predecessor, covered a variety of aspects through quantitative questions covering age, family background, education, religious observance, and vocation.

The purpose of this study is to aid those of us involved in the wider Messianic community. Our challenge is to critically understand our evolving movement in order to provide resources and stimulate strategies for outreach, fellowship, and edification.

Through this study we explored:

1. The representation of the experiences of a group of Jews who believe in Jesus.
2. How this group of Jewish people experienced cultural influences during their decision to follow Jesus.
3. How one generation's experience compares with another's.

Qualitative questions covered observance of religious traditions, Jewish and general beliefs and values, and Jewish identity. A new section of analysis covered the respondents' experiences as they heard and responded to the gospel. The distinguishing range of this study and a comparison of its findings were made with those of the previous study (Jews for Jesus, 1983), the Pew study (Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research, 2013), and the Steinhardt study (American Jewish Population Estimates, 2012).

Key Findings of Comparative Data

The Pew Research Foundation published their report on American Jews, which contains valuable comparison data for the American Jewish community and, where appropriate, the general US population.

American Jews say they are proud to be Jewish and have an awareness of belonging to the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Jewish identity is changing in America, where one in five Jews (22%) now describe themselves as having no religion. The percentage of US adults who say they are Jewish when asked about their religion has declined by about half since the late 1950s and currently is a little less than 2%. The number of Americans with direct Jewish ancestry or upbringing who consider

themselves Jewish, yet describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or having no religion, is rising and is now about 0.5% of the US adult population.

The changing nature of Jewish identity stands out sharply when these results are analyzed by generation. Ninety-three percent of Jews in the aging generation identify as Jewish on the basis of religion; just 7% describe themselves as having no religion. By contrast, among Jews in the youngest generation of US adults, 68% identify as Jews by religion, while 32% describe themselves as having no religion and identify as Jewish on the basis of ancestry, ethnicity, or culture.

This shift in Jewish self-identification reflects broader changes in the US public, who increasingly shun religious affiliation. The share of US Jews who say they have no religion (22%) is similar to the share of religious "nones" in the general public (20%), and religious disaffiliation is as common among all US adults ages 18–29 as among Jewish millennials (32% of each). Sixty-two percent say being Jewish is mainly a matter of ancestry and culture, while 15% say it is mainly a matter of religion. Even among Jews by religion, more than half (55%) say being Jewish is mainly a matter of ancestry and culture, and two-thirds say it is not necessary to believe in God to be Jewish.

Compared with Jews by religion, however, Jews of no religion are not only less religious but also much less connected to Jewish organizations and much less likely to be raising their children Jewish. More than 90% of Jews by religion who are currently raising minor children in their home say they are raising those children Jewish or partially Jewish. In stark contrast, the survey finds that two-thirds of Jews of no religion say they are not raising their children Jewish or partially Jewish—either by religion or aside from religion (Pew, 7–8).

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) produced an expansive study of the Jewish population in North America in 2012. There are an estimated 6.8 million Jewish adults and children in the United States: 4.2 million adults who self-identify as Jewish when asked about their religion; nearly 1 million adults who consider themselves Jewish by background and other criteria; and an estimated 1.6 million Jewish children. Just over 1 million (24%) are aged 65 years and older. They are more than twice as likely as other Americans to be college graduates. The portrait of American Jewry described by the 2012 SSRI findings is of a population, at least numerically, in ascent (SSRI, 7–8).

Abstract of Findings

The statistics from this survey have been compared with the previous survey of Messianic Jews in 1983 as well as with other available demographic data. Messianic Jews in North America have a wide-ranging Jewish temperament. Messianic Jews say they are proud to be Jewish and have an awareness of belonging to the Jewish people. A majority consider themselves part of the Jewish people, based on nomenclature preferences and lifestyle. More than 90% feel an association with Jewish tradition, observe some Jewish practices and life-cycle rituals, and mark at least some Jewish festivals.

We see in Tables 10, 11, and 12 that Messianic Jews are overrepresented in our survey in education credentials and professional and specialized vocations. Respondents are underrepresented in the Northeast and overrepresented in the South, Midwest, and West. Seventy-five percent of respondents married people who are not Jewish.

Respondents in Tables 14, 15, and 16 heard the gospel in the marketplace. As expected, the most common way for someone to hear the gospel in the Jewish community is in direct conversation. However, there has been growth in the numbers of those who hear the gospel in a church, a Messianic congregation, or in conversation with a relative.

We see a consistent representation of the influence of the Bible, New Testament, and prophecy across age groups. *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey is not significant among

responders under 50. C. S. Lewis is the most well-represented author of influence across all age groups.

An equal number of respondents responded positively and negatively when they first heard the gospel. The median age that Jews hear the gospel is 17, and the median age of becoming a Messianic Jew is 22. Across the age groups we see this five-year period as typical. We can see that older respondents responding to the gospel trended in a negative way whereas younger respondents exhibited similar but less severe reactions. Jews who hear the gospel confront issues of loyalty to community, culture, family, and friends. They think about the Holocaust and are afraid of change. As these people think about Jesus and his relationship to the Jewish people, they read the Tanakh and the New Testament. They confront the words of our prophets. They read books and they talk to God and their friends. They are convicted of sin.

The lifestyles, values, and identity of most of our respondents reflect efforts to maintain a connection to Jewish distinctiveness and tradition, on the one hand, and choice, on the other. The results show a broad consensus that reflects a representative commitment to the wider Jewish character, culture, and continuity.

"Jewish identity is complex and fluid" (SSRI, 24). We see Messianic Jews and their families express their Jewishness in a variety of ways. The relationship of the Messianic Jewish community to the North American culture at large and the Jewish community in particular is a reflection of this myriad of options.

Socio-psychologist Bethamie Horowitz is a research assistant and professor of Jewish education at NYU. She has conducted research about major issues and problems facing the Jewish people for more than two decades. Horowitz says that "Jewishness unfolds and gets shaped by the different experiences and encounters in a person's life. Each new context or life stage brings with it new possibilities. A person's Jewishness can wax, wane, and change in emphasis. It is responsive to social relationships, historical experiences and personal events" (Horowitz, viii).

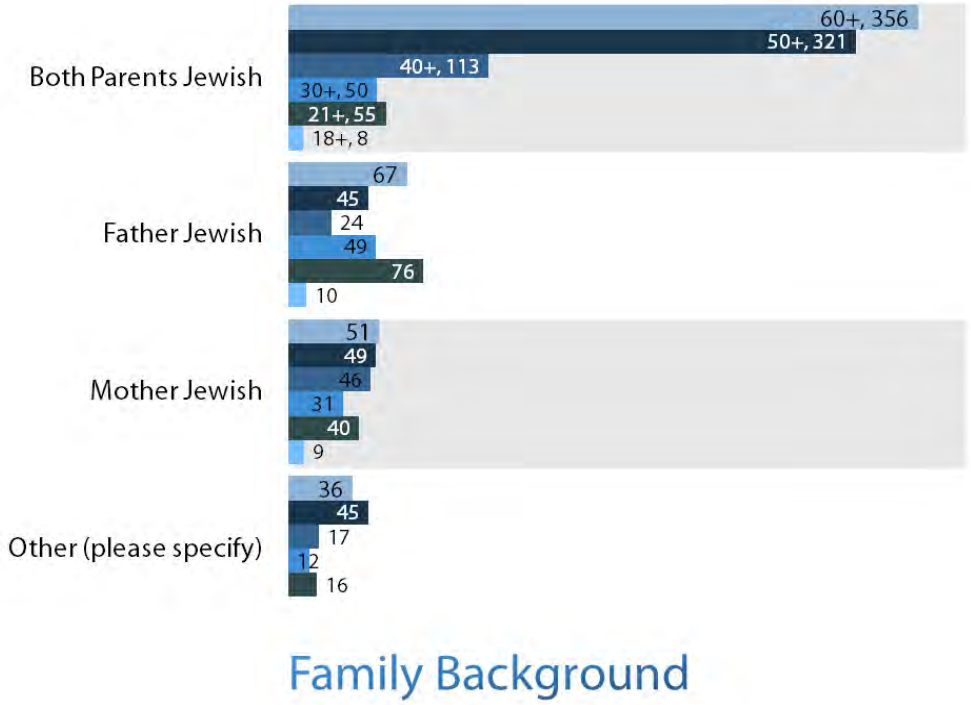
Messianic Jews orient themselves in new and refreshing ways to their Jewish community. We see increases in various Shabbat activities and observances, interest in Hebrew and Israel, and participation in Jewish issues that affect Jews around the world. They become more generous in their attention and resources to issues of Jewry. Most significant is the increase in their interest in giving to Jewish causes, going to Israel, and *tikkun olam*. This Hebrew phrase that means "repairing the world" (or "healing the world") describes our common responsibility to heal, repair, and transform the world.

Section I: Quantitative Results

Family Background

The survey opens with a question about the background that defines the respondent as Jewish. More than 75% of those in the 50 and older age groups report both parents as Jewish. For those born after 1980, we found that just under one-third came from households with two Jewish parents. This is likely influenced by the larger number of second-generation Messianic Jews among the youngest respondents, reflecting the mixed marriages of Messianic Jewish parents.

Table 1 Family Background



Location

These questions involve the location of the respondents. The larger states and larger Jewish population centers have the highest number of Messianic Jews. California and New York have the largest communities, followed by Texas, Illinois, and Florida. The D.C. metro area also represents strongly. The Brandeis study (SSRI, 16) provided population estimates for the major population centers. We see Messianic Jews overrepresented in the West, Midwest, and South, and underrepresented in the Northeast.

Table 2 Location of Respondents by State

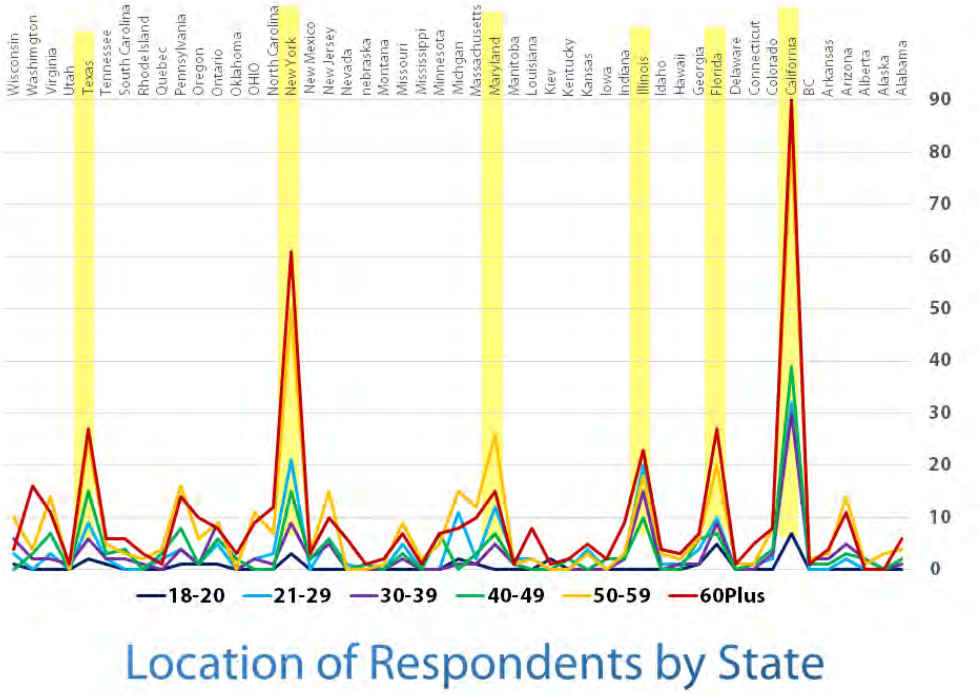


Table 3 Location of Respondents by Region

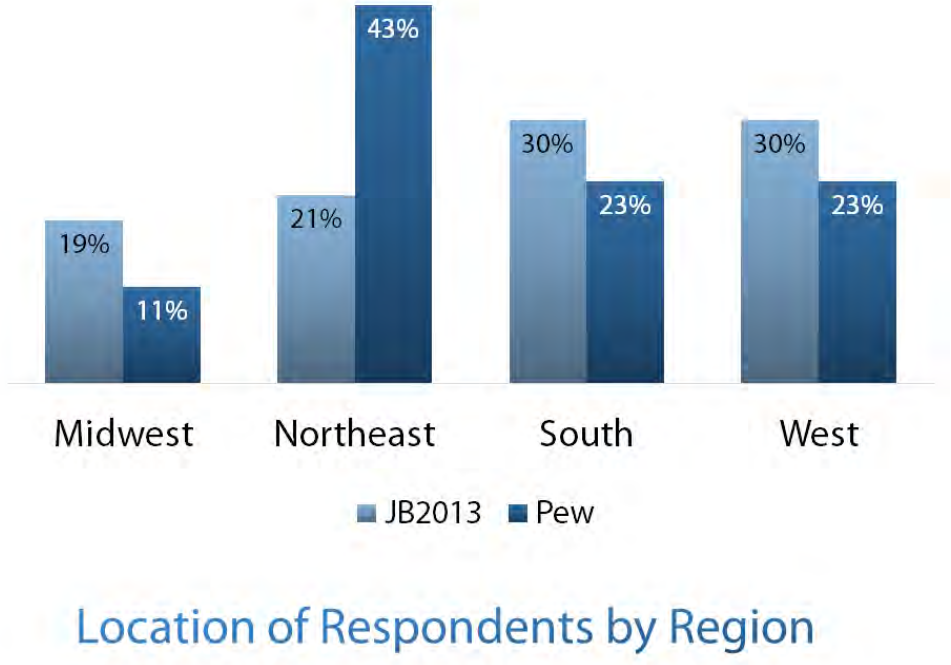
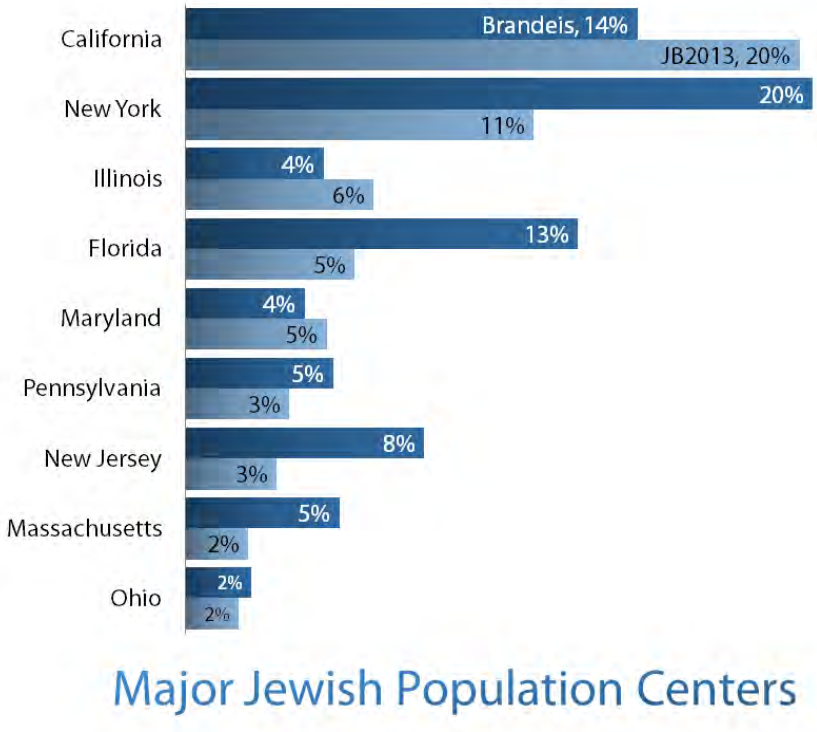


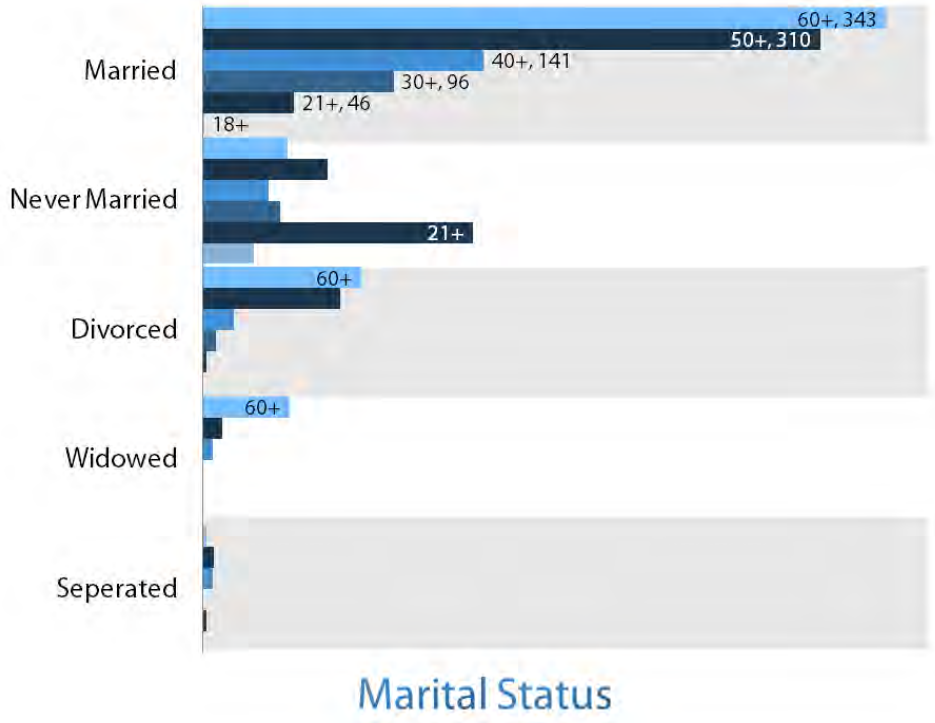
Table 4 Major Jewish Population Centers



Marital Status

The variation between married and single respondents reflects the expected larger number of never-marrieds among the 29-and-under populations. The small numbers of widows/widowers is also a reflection of the age categories on the whole.

Table 5 Marital Status



Intermarriage

These results show that the intermarriage rate is higher in the Messianic Jewish community than in the categories listed in the Pew study. There was a slight increase from 1983 to 2013, though not as much as in other categories in the general Jewish population. Table 7 indicates a small change in the intermarriage trend among second-generation Messianic Jews.

Table 6 Intermarriage

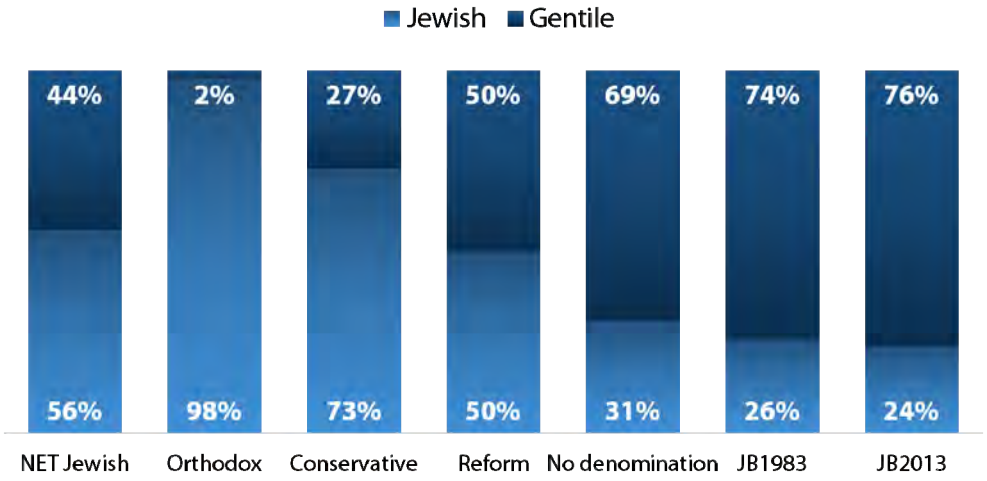
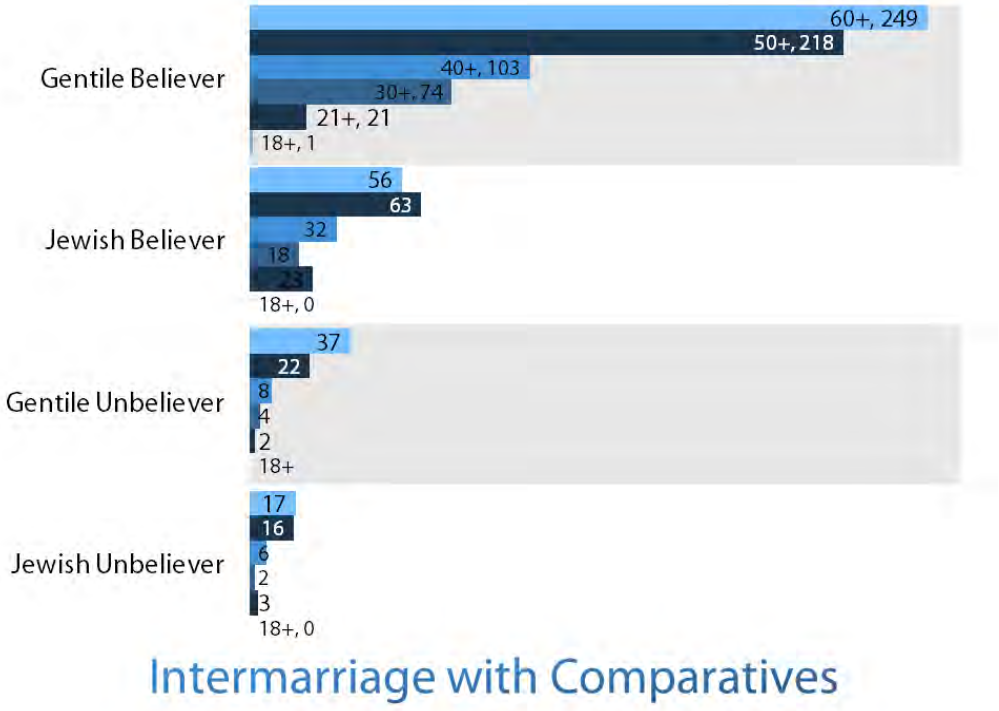


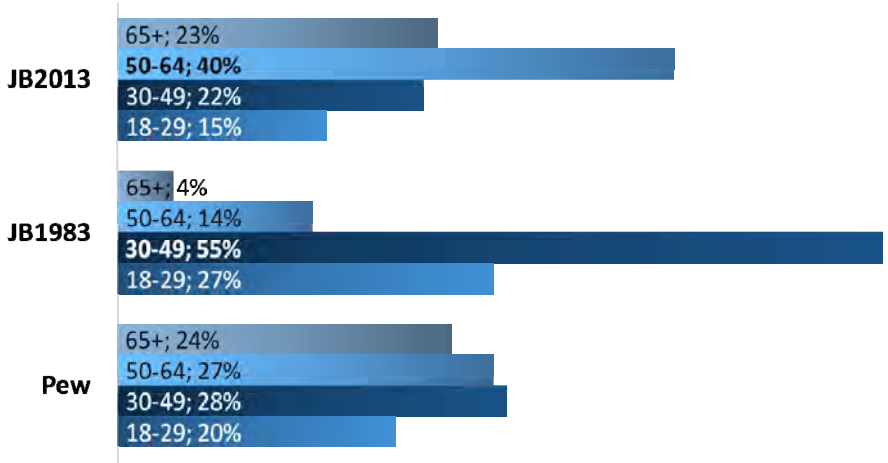
Table 7 Intermarriage with Decadal Comparatives



Age Group

The majority of the respondents were in the older decades, though there is still a reasonable representation of the younger groups. The Pew study has a more even distribution across their chosen age categories, while the 1983 and 2013 surveys reflect the evolution and growth of the movement, with more pronounced spikes in each survey.

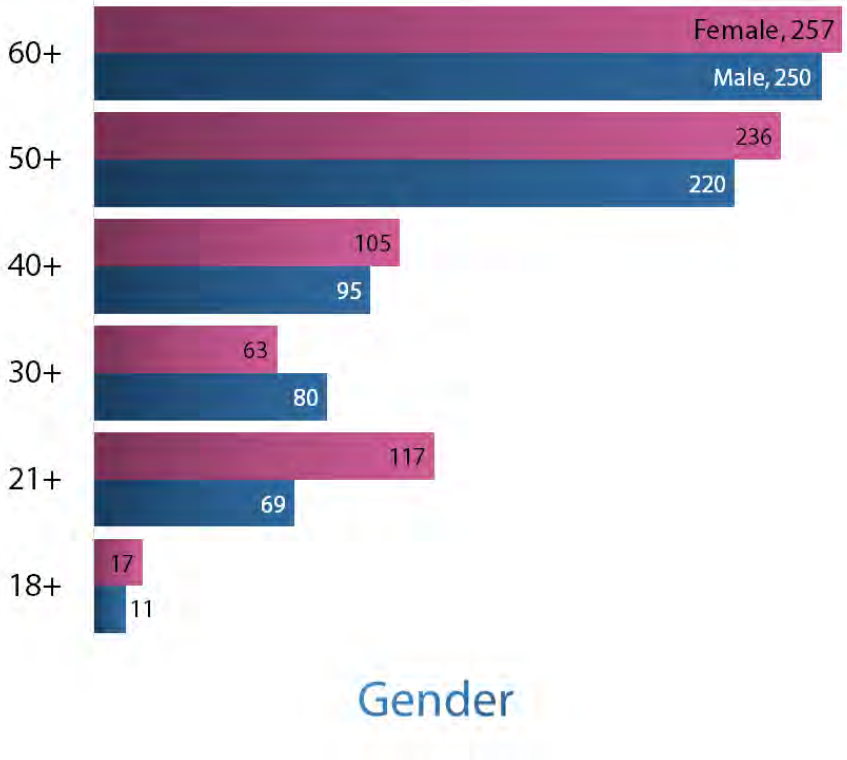
Table 8 Age Group



Gender

The gender of the respondents was evenly distributed, with 52.4% female and 47.6% male. The ratio varied slightly with the decades. Forty-nine percent of American Jews are male, 51% female, the same as the total US population.

Table 9 Gender



Occupation

We compared our 2013 and 1983 results. A wide range of options were given. The first graph uses the categories provided in the Jewish believer surveys. The Jewish believer population has a higher representation in the management, science, business, and arts categories than the general population, with an additional increase from the 1983 study to the 2013 one. The second graph normalizes the responses in order to compare them with categories used in a survey by the US Census Bureau. Some of this additional increase probably reflects career path growth due to increased representation in the higher age brackets.

Table 10 Occupation 1983 vs. 2013

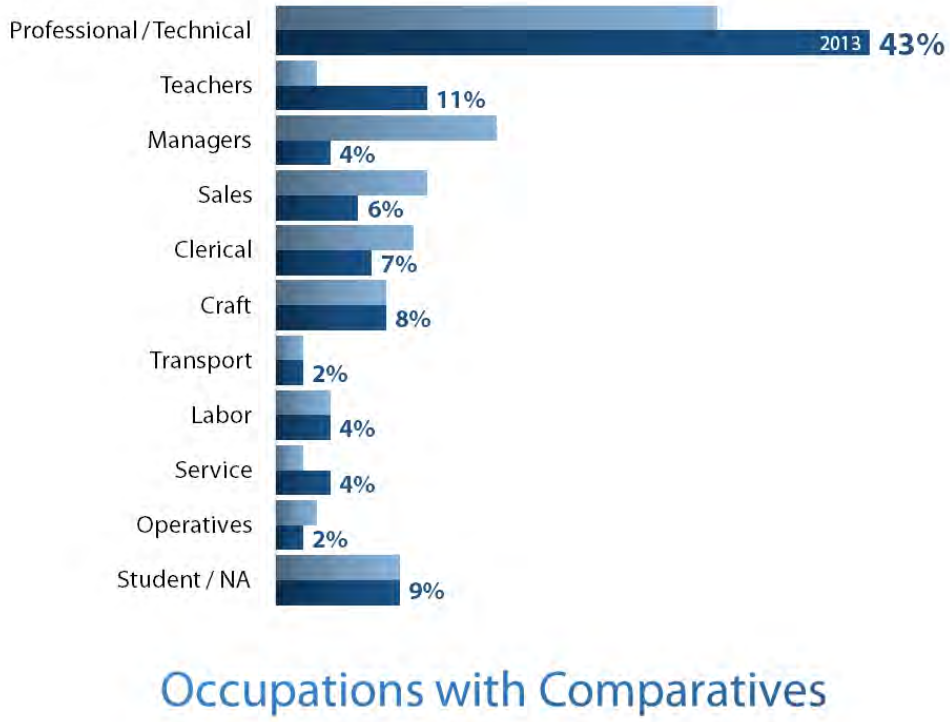
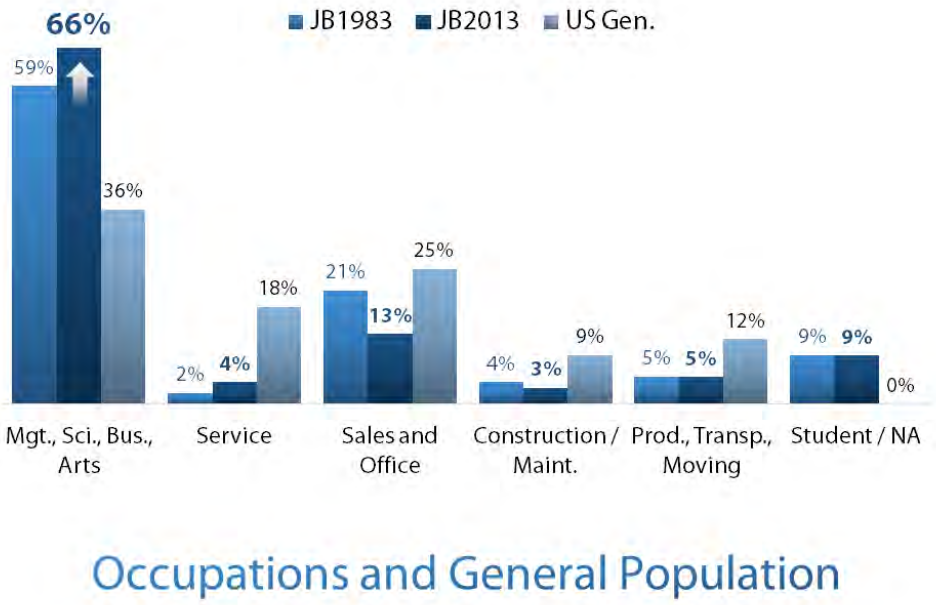


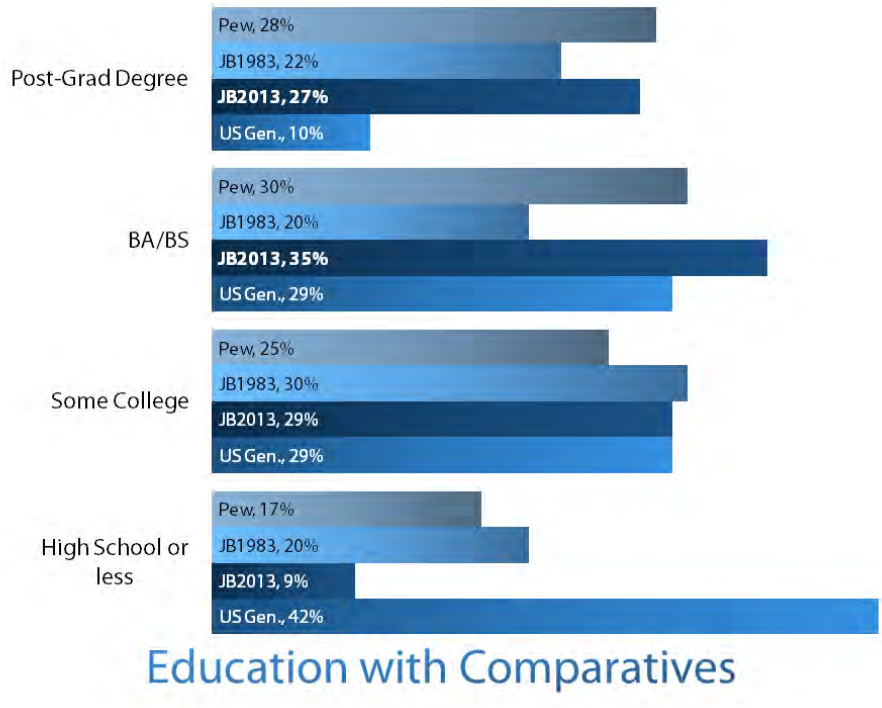
Table 11 Occupation and US General Population



Education

There is a commitment to education among Messianic Jews that is more significant than in the general population and at par with or greater than the wider Jewish community, as shown in the following graph. We compare the Pew survey with the 1983 survey, the most recent survey, and the general population.

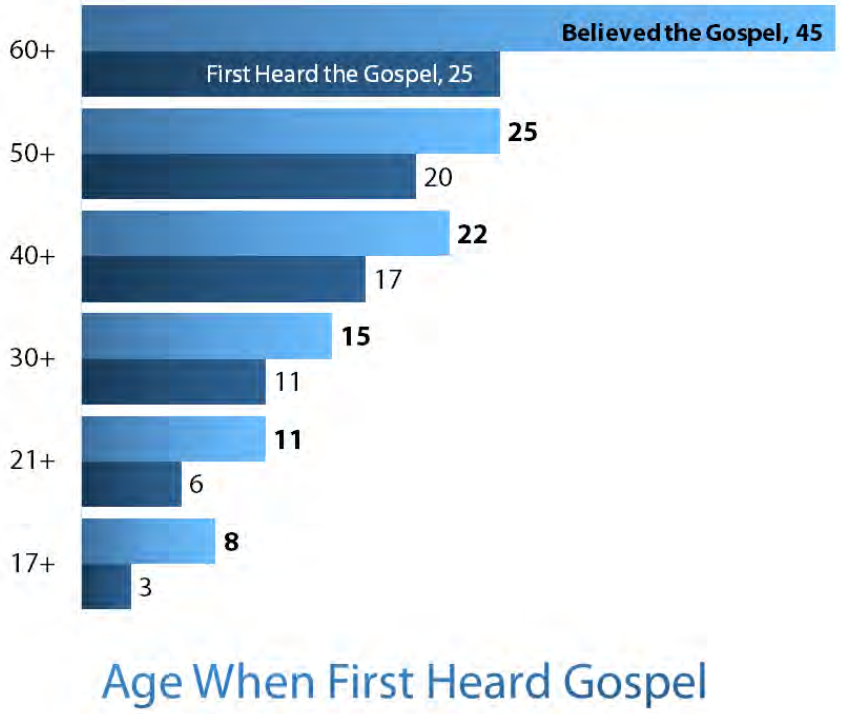
Table 12 Education



Age When First Heard The Gospel

Overall population: Median age is 17 for first hearing the gospel and 22 for becoming a Messianic Jew. Table 12 breaks the age down by decade. As expected, the average age rises with each decade, but across all decades, most people had heard the gospel by age 25, though there were still a number of respondents who heard the gospel later in life. And while the medians were 17 and 22, the averages were significantly higher, indicating that people respond to the gospel even when hearing it for the first time at much later ages.

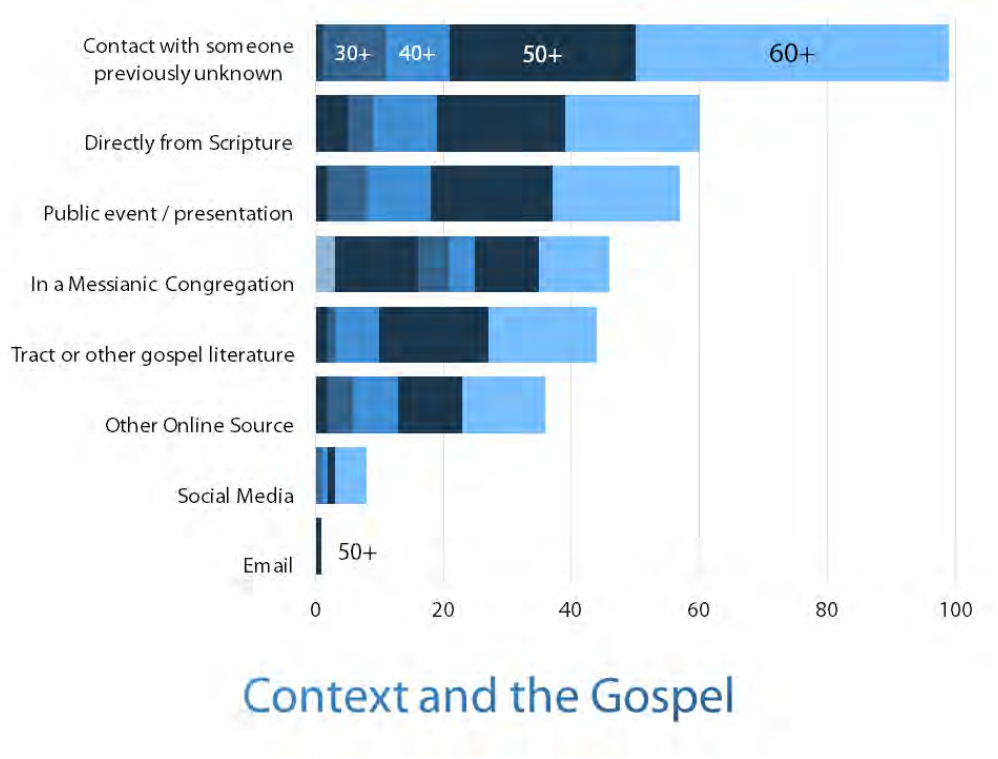
Table 13 Age and the Gospel



Context and the Gospel

These questions ask about the source and the context in which the respondent first heard the gospel, broken down by decade. As expected, the most common way for someone to hear the gospel in the Jewish community is in direct conversation. However, there has been growth in the numbers who hear it in a church, a Messianic congregation, and in conversation with a relative.

Table 14 Context and the Gospel



Tables 15 and 16 ask the same questions of source and context in different ways. Although the question was asked differently in the two surveys, the importance of personal interaction around the topic of the gospel was very important, with respondents in the 2013 survey indicating that conversation with friends, relatives, or strangers accounted for the majority of the means of hearing (with a congregational setting, Messianic congregation, or church being the next most prevalent). The 1983 survey indicated that people were the strongest influence.

Respondents were asked to provide narrative here as well. We can see that older responders responding to the gospel trended in a negative way, whereas younger respondents exhibit similar but less severe reactions.

Table 15 First Heard the Gospel

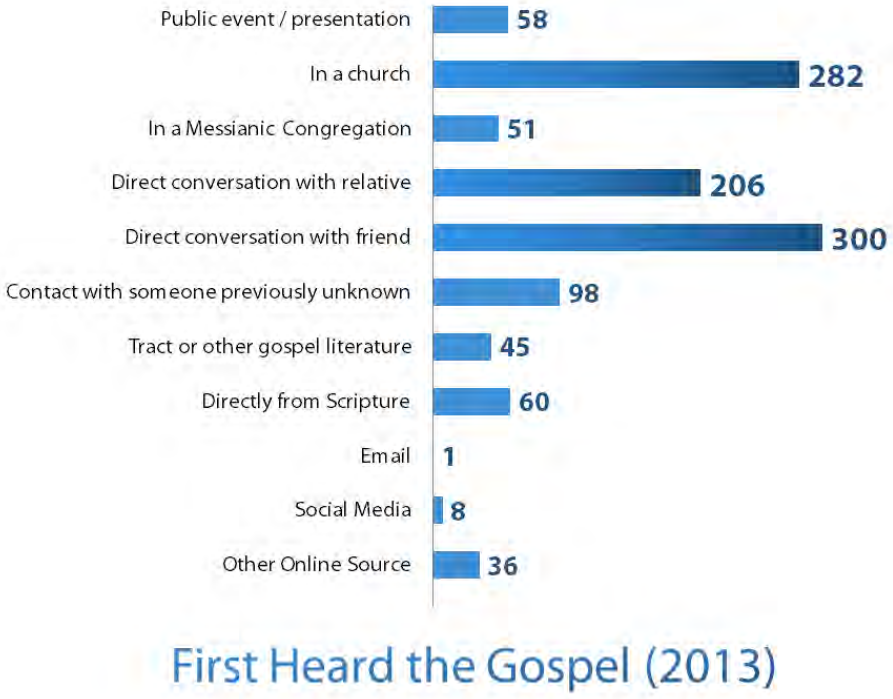
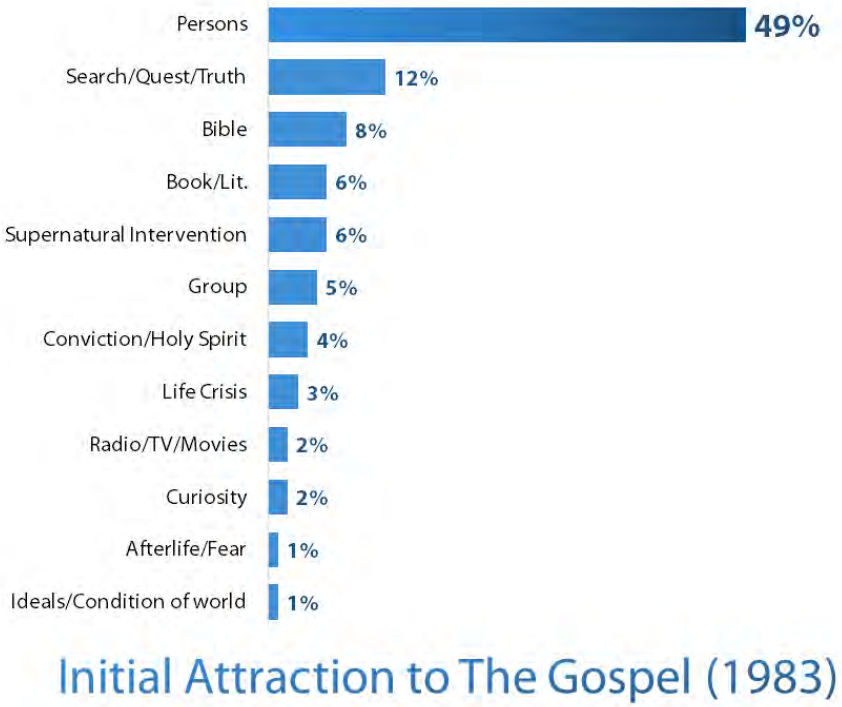


Table 16 Initial Attraction to the Gospel 1983



Tables 17–18 look at the nature of the response, actions taken, and convincing. These are categories that were applied to narrative responses. We tried to capture the essence of the reaction. There is a mixture of positive and negative responses across the age groups.

Table 17 Nature of Response When You First Heard the Gospel

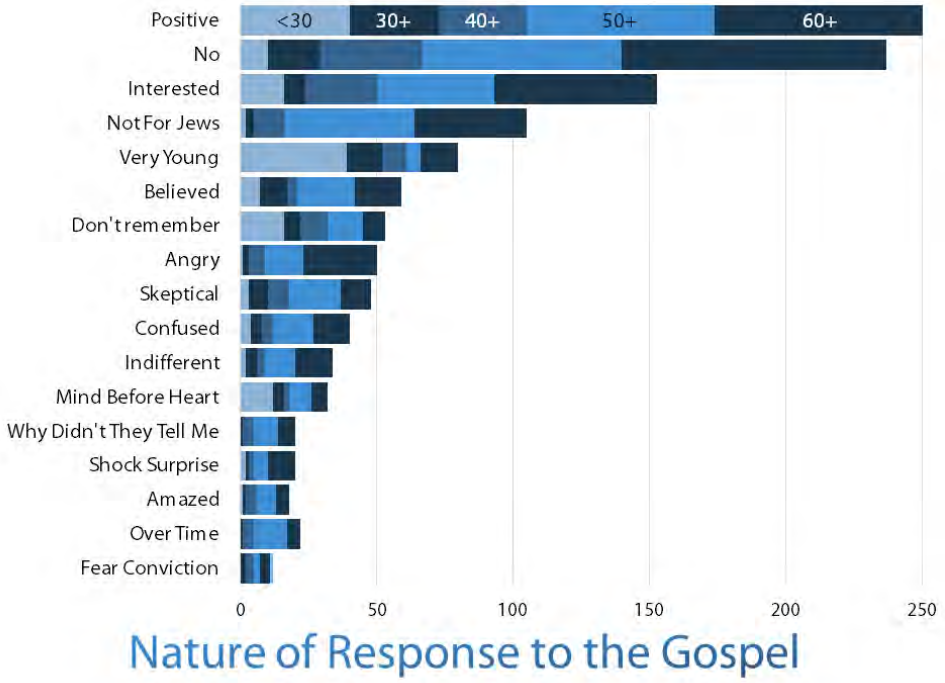
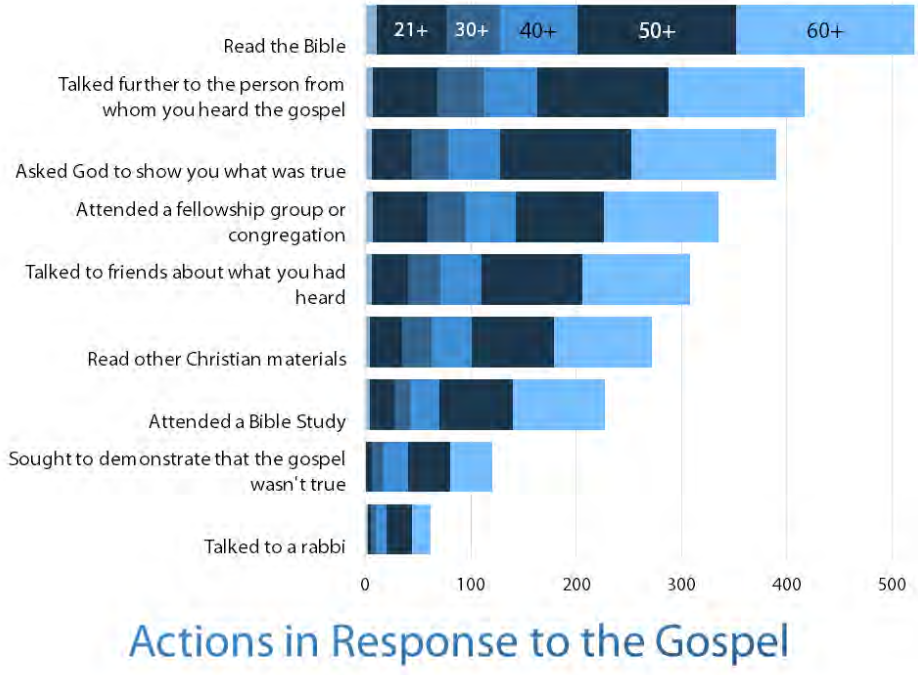


Table 18 offered respondents multiple options with regard to actions taken after hearing the gospel. The trend indicates respondents attempting to refute or confirm, using the Bible and friends as resources. Each response was well represented across the age groups.

Table 18 What Actions Did You Take After You Heard the Gospel?



Respondents for Table 19 were able to select multiple options. We see again, as in Table 18, that responses were well represented across the age groups.

Table 19 What Helped to Convince You of the Truth of the Gospel?

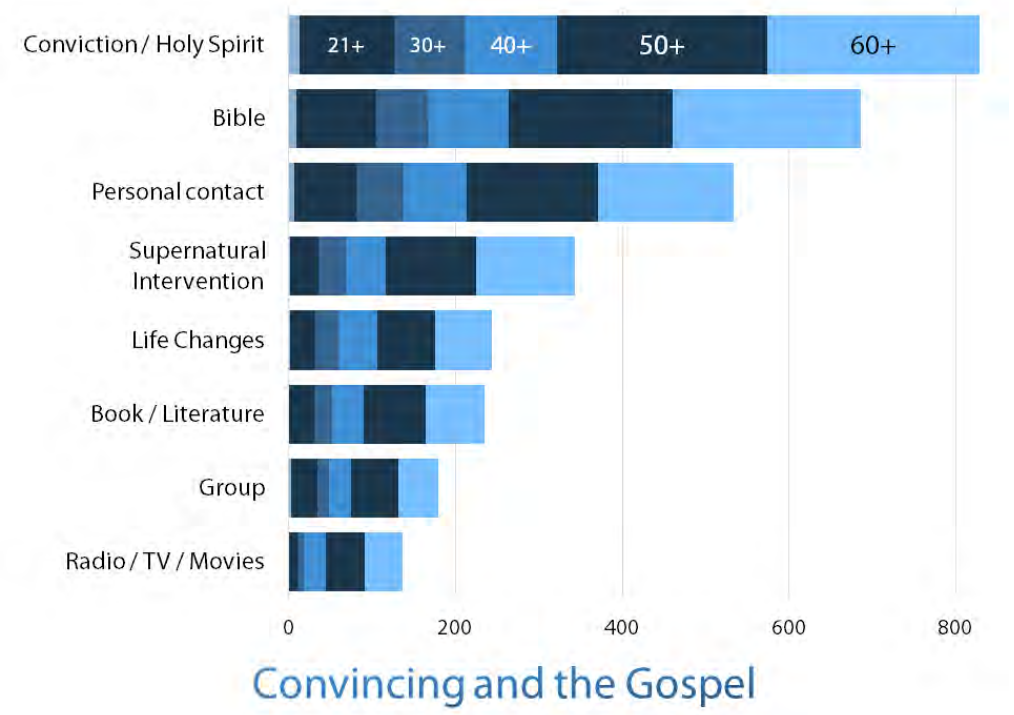
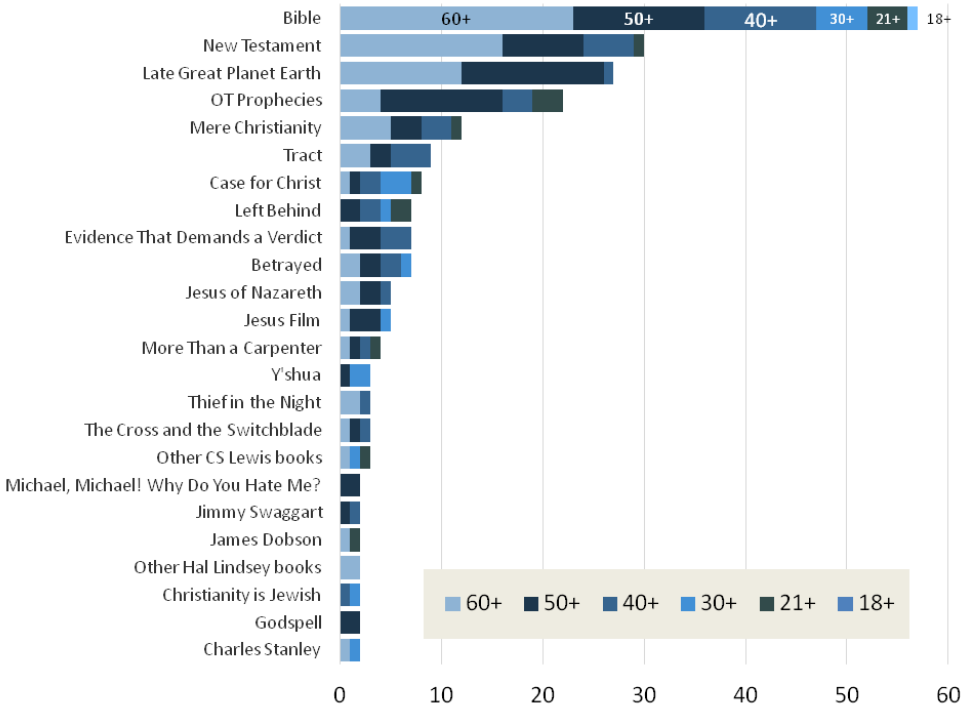


Table 20 indicates a consistent representation of the Bible, New Testament, and prophecy across age groups. *The Late Great Planet Earth* is not significant among responders under 50. C. S. Lewis is the best-represented author across the age groups.

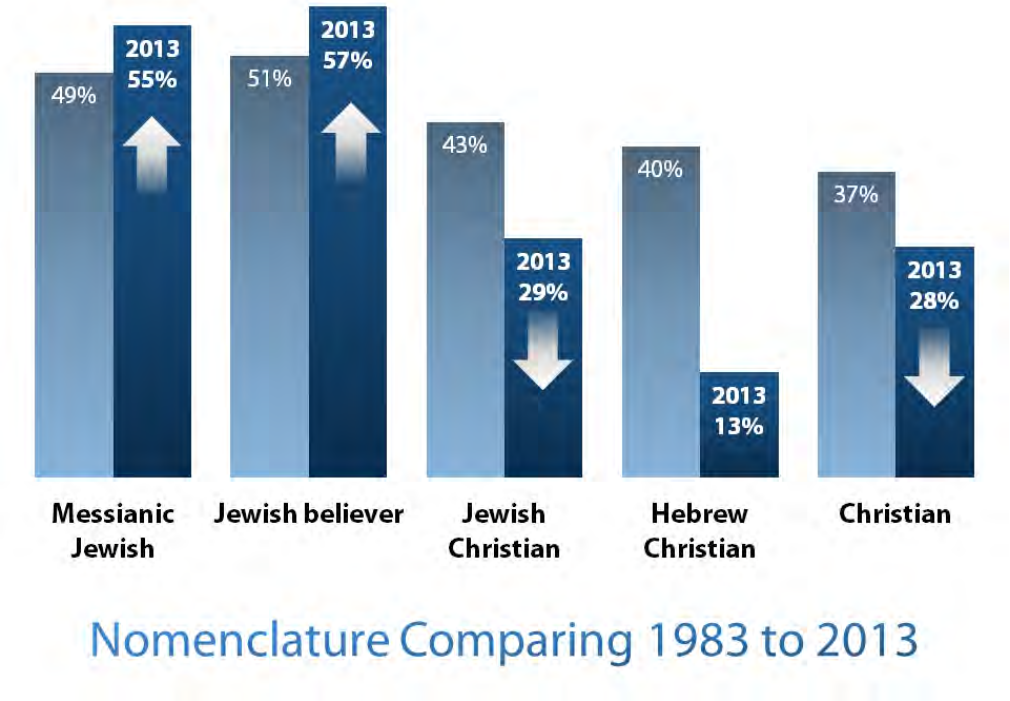
Table 20 What Book or Movie Influenced You?



Nomenclature

This graph answers the question of how Jewish believers in Jesus identify themselves. There has been some significant trending in the last three decades away from "Hebrew Christian" and an increase in identification as either "Jewish believer" or "Messianic Jew." Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

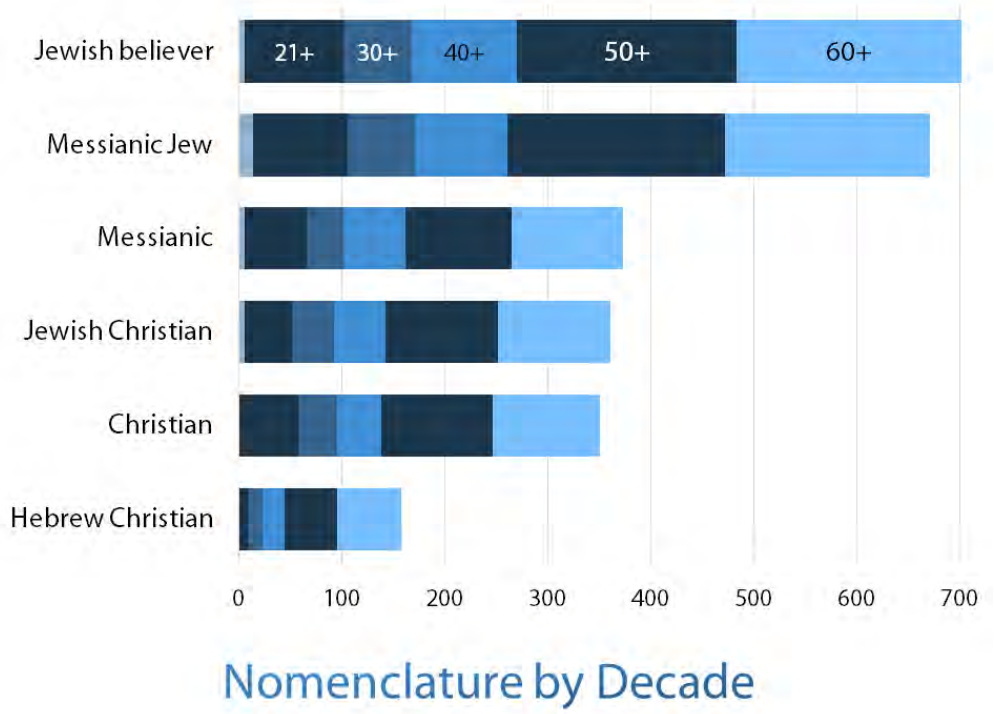
Table 21 Nomenclature Comparing 1983 to 2013



Nomenclature By Decade

These results across the decades show a consistent pattern of using a label that maintains Jewish identity. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

Table 22 Nomenclature by Decade



Activities and Worship

The next section attempts to show the wide variety of ways that Messianic Jews participate in the Jewish world. We see a consistent pattern of respondents taking a renewed interest in participating in and relating to their Jewish world in a variety of ways and with a variety of commitments. We see diversity and choice in patterns that reflect a commitment to the Jewish world in the face of the pressures of modernity. More than 90% feel an association with Jewish tradition, observe some Jewish practices and life-cycle rituals, and mark at least some Jewish festivals. *Before* and *After* questions endeavored to show if orientation and participation in the Jewish world changed. We also attempted to see if commitments to the Jewish world were altered after their decision was made.

We see in Table 23 that respondents in 1983 and 2013 say they are oriented to and participating in Jewish life in a more substantial way than respondents to the Pew study.

Table 23 Celebration of Holidays Comparatives

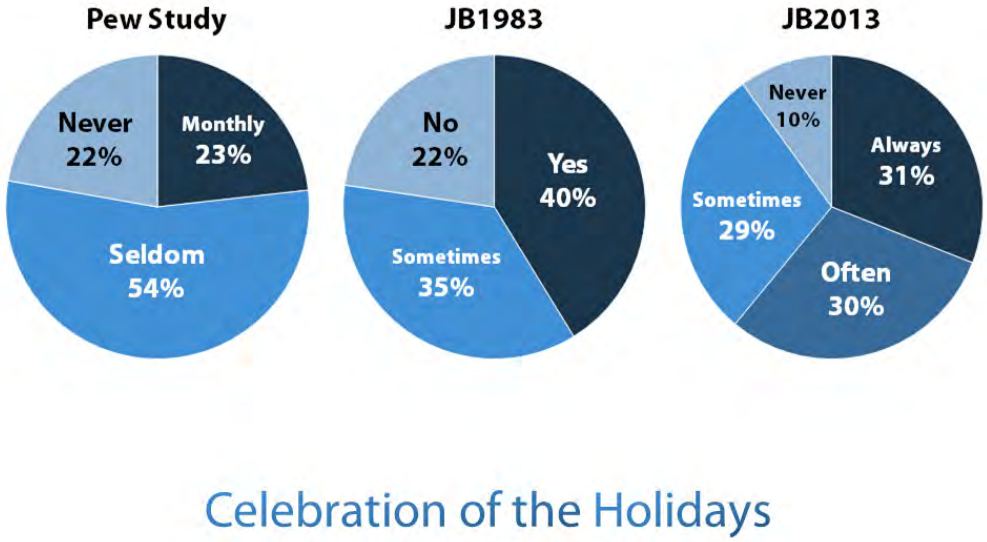


Table 24 respondents show by decade how celebration of holidays was impacted by becoming a Messianic Jew. We see a trend across age groups toward a participation in Jewish life.

Table 24 Celebration of Holidays Decadal Before and After Becoming a Messianic Jew

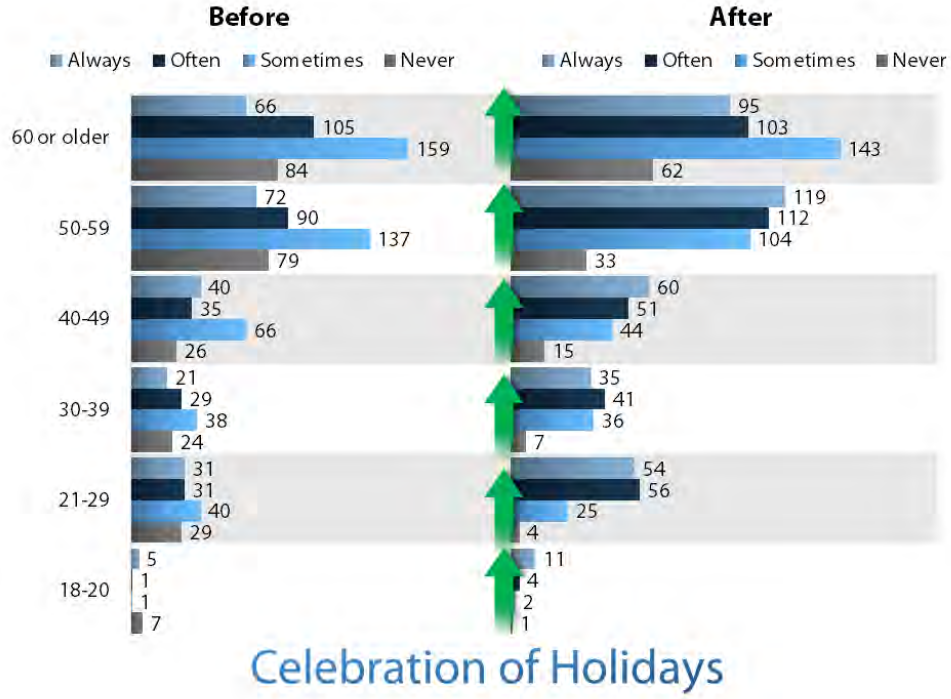
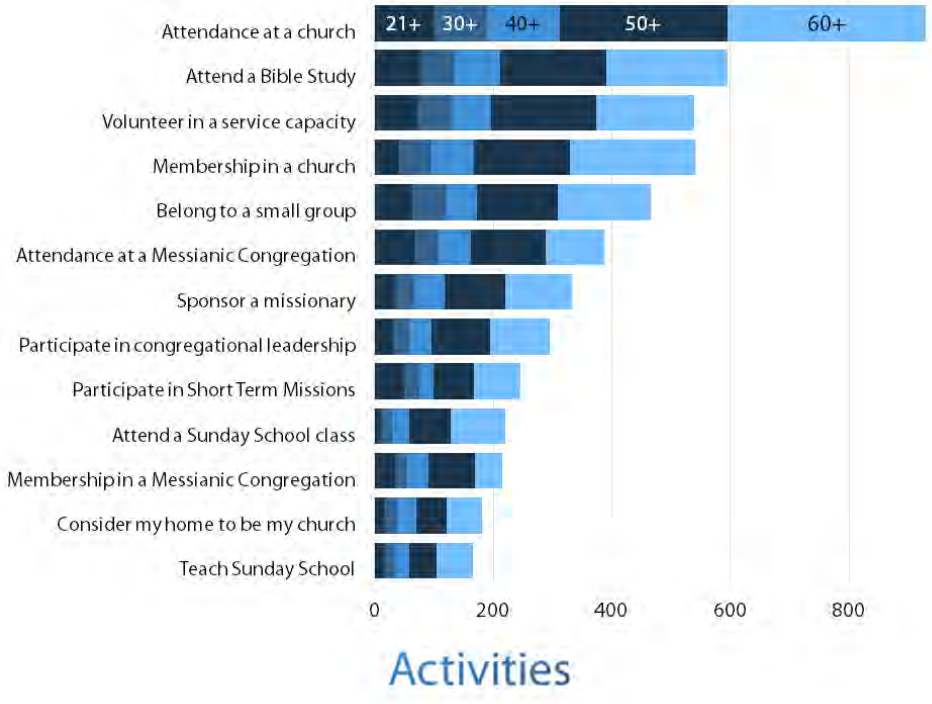


Table 25 asks the respondents to list what activities they participate in on a regular basis in their Messianic Jewish life. There is an even response across age groups, and respondents were able to choose more than one activity.

Table 25 Activities



Respondents here and below indicated participation in and orientation to a variety of activities, interests, and causes before and after becoming Messianic Jews.

Table 26 asks the respondents to speak to their participation in synagogue life outside the Messianic Jewish community. Patterns indicate an orientation, especially in older respondents, away from this practice. We do see, however, a consistent pattern of Messianic Jews in all age groups participating in worship at local synagogues.

Table 26 Synagogue Attendance

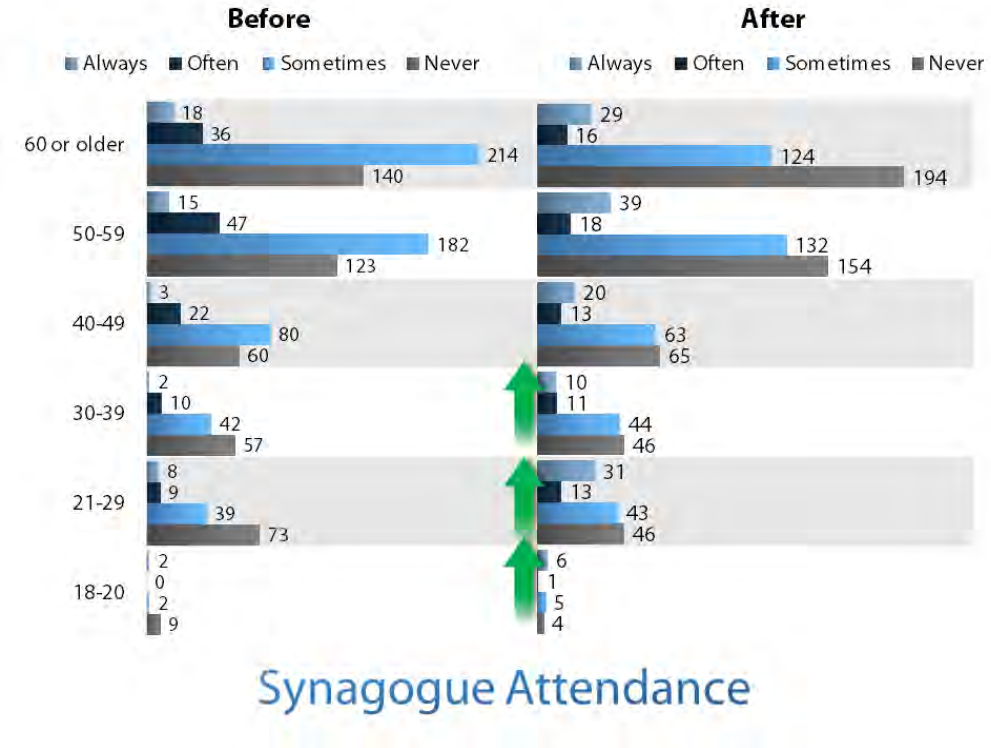
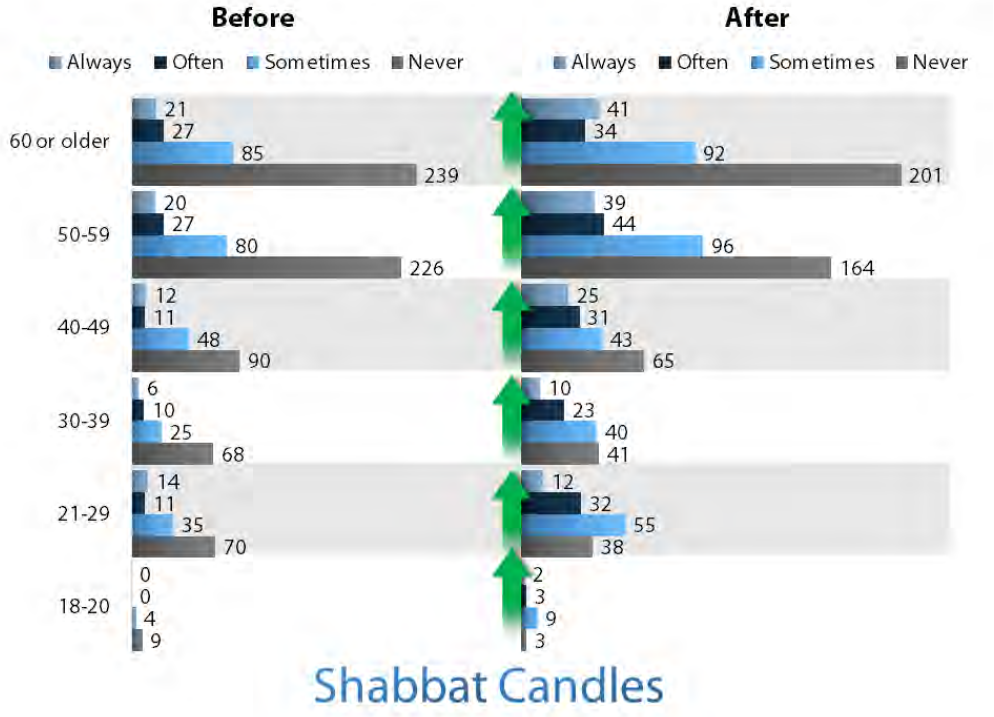


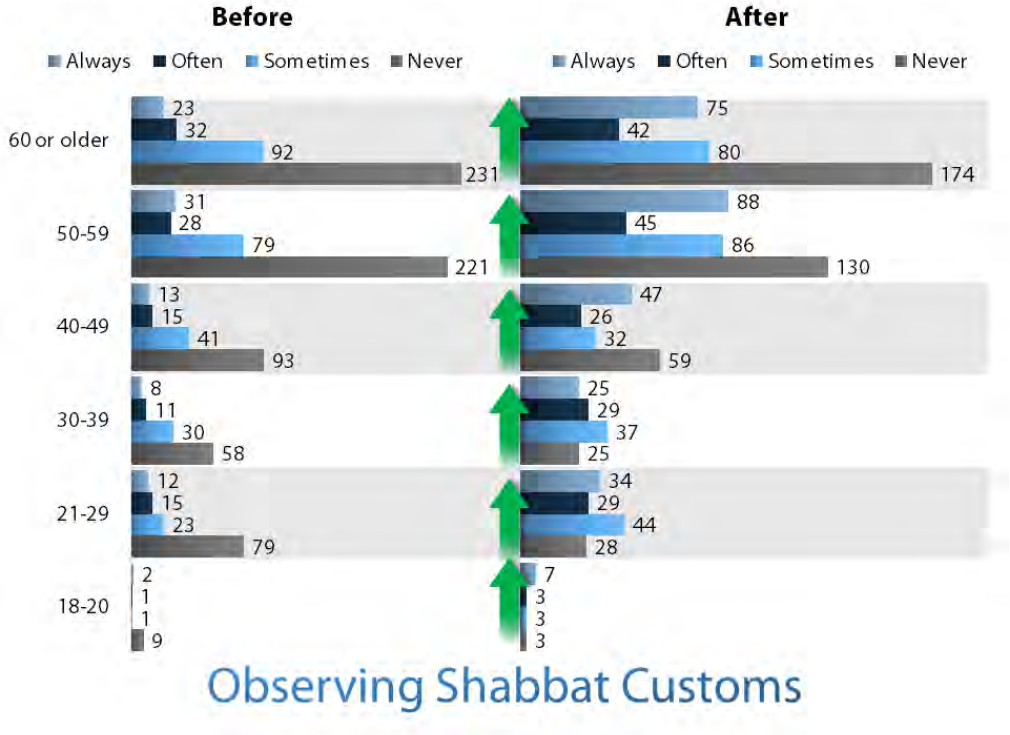
Table 27 asks respondents if Shabbat is recognized in the home through the lighting of Shabbat candles. We see a consistent increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 27 Shabbat Candles



With regard to the general observance of Shabbat, and without providing specifics, we again see a consistent increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 28 Observing Shabbat Customs



With regard to the study of Hebrew, and without providing specifics, we see a consistent increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 29 Study Hebrew

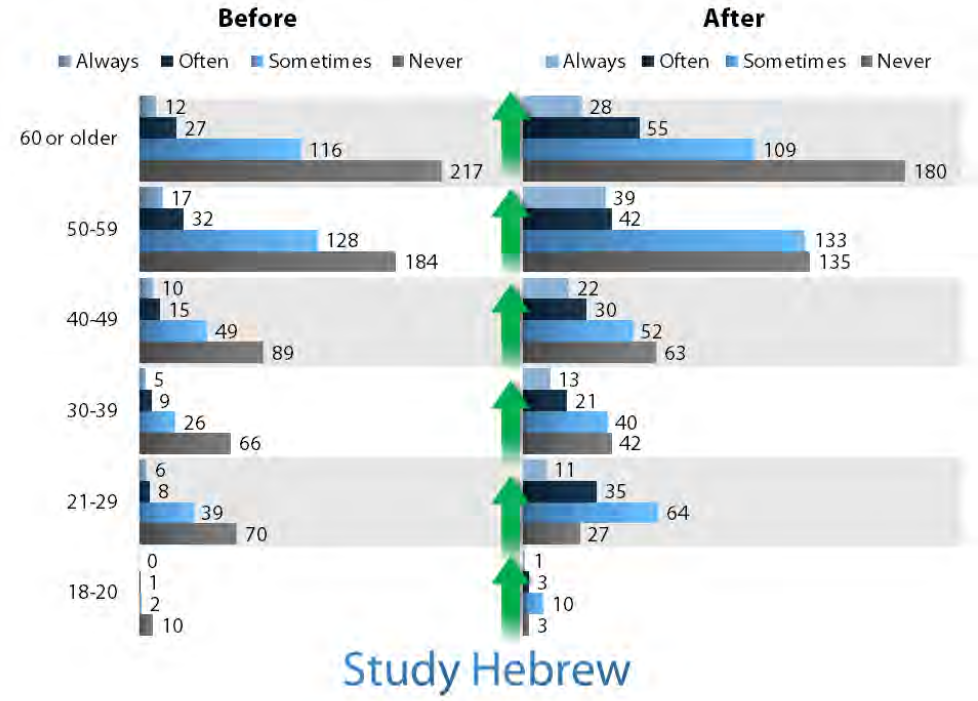
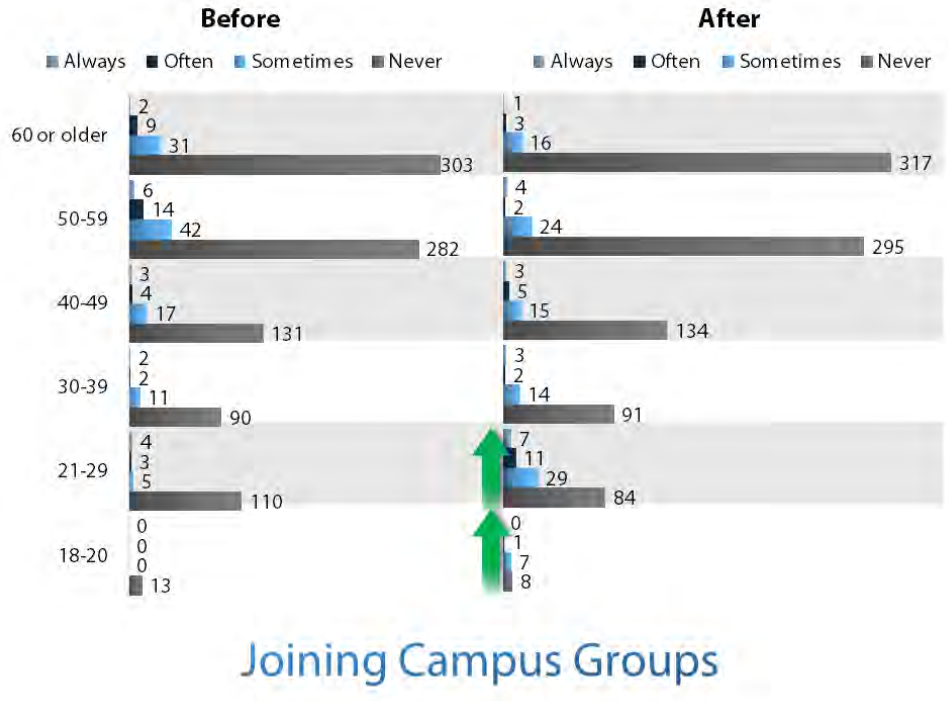


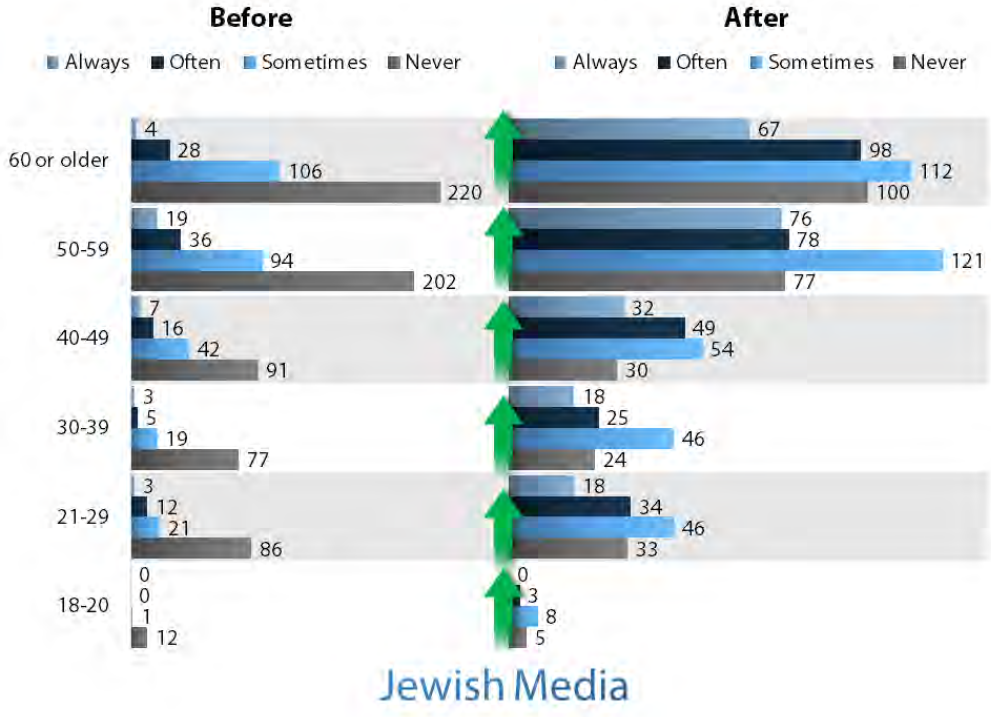
Table 30 respondents show a consistent pattern of participation among older and younger ages. We speculate that these groups were not available to older respondents or that the older groups participated in more extemporaneous and impromptu groupings. We note respondents under 30 trending toward participation in campus groups.

Table 30 Joining Campus Groups



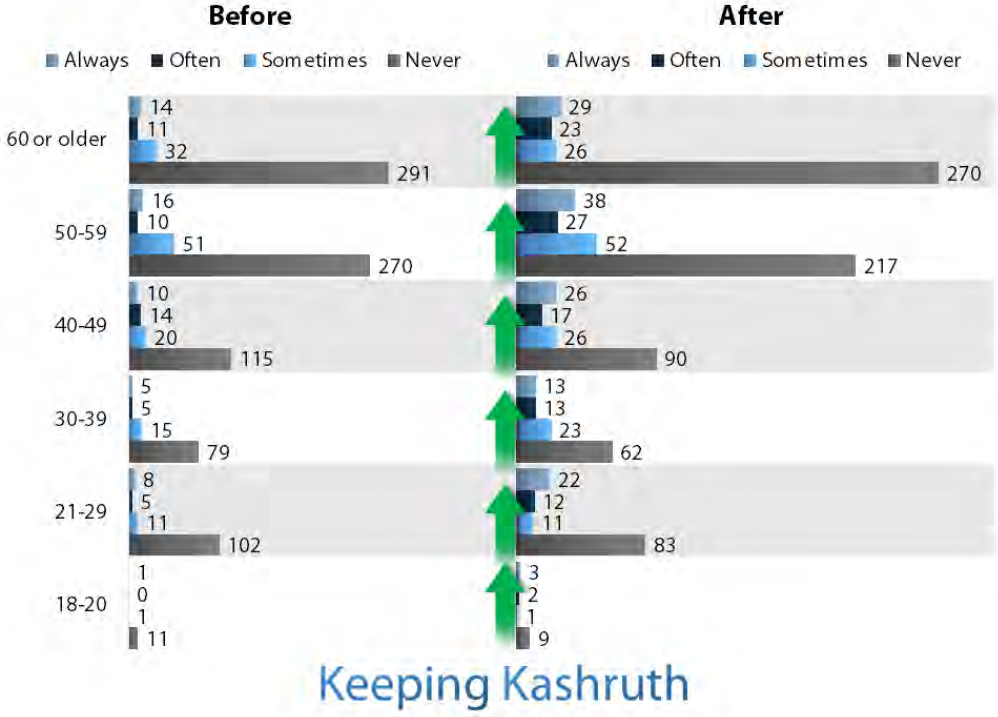
With regard to accessing and reading Jewish media, and without providing specifics, we see a consistent increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 31 Jewish Media



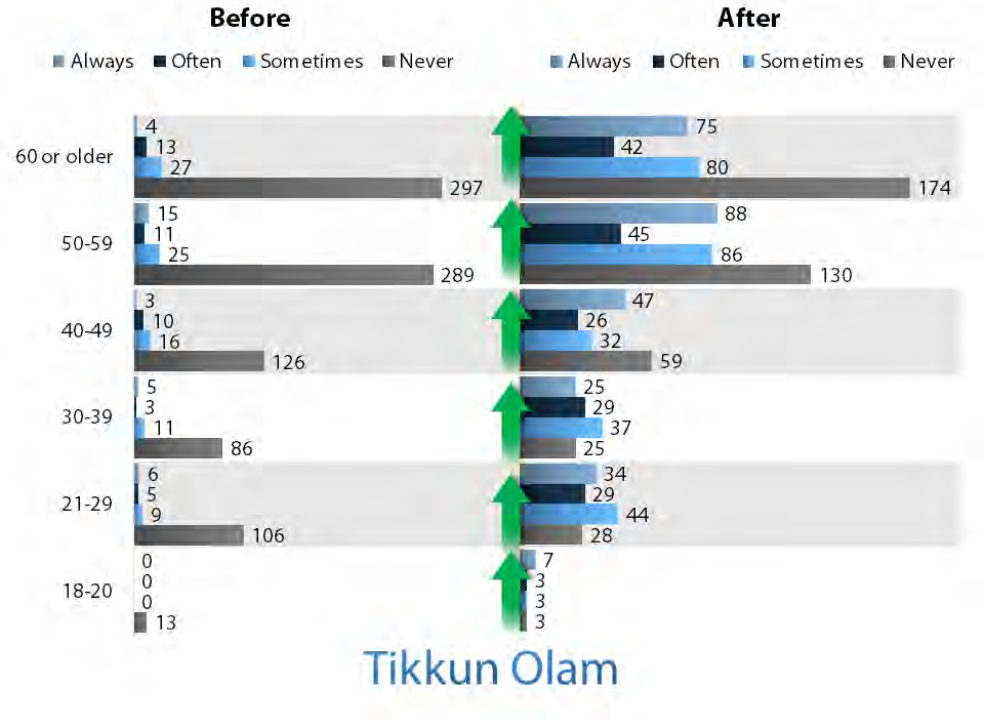
With regard to traditional Jewish dietary observances, and without providing specifics, we see a consistent increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 32 Keeping Kashrut



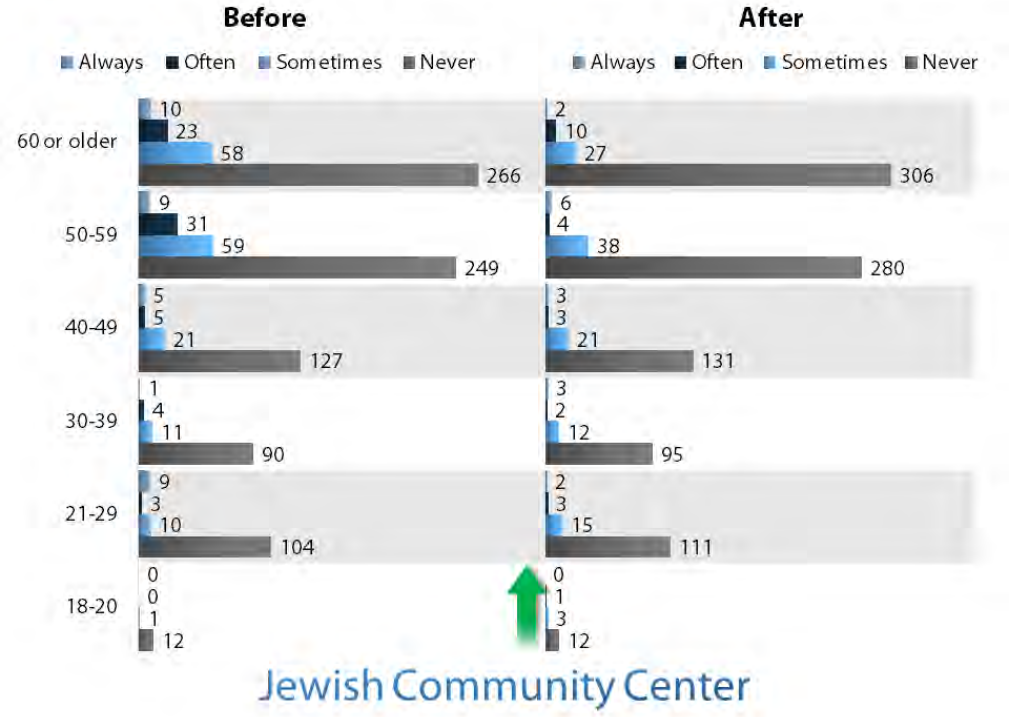
With regard to the Jewish value of tikkun olam (*repair of the world*), and without providing specifics, we see a consistent and very significant increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 33 Tikkun Olam



With regard to participating in Jewish community centers, and without providing specifics, we see some decrease across age groups toward this practice.

Table 34 Jewish Community Center



With regard to giving to Jewish causes, and without providing specifics, we see a consistent and significant increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 35 Giving to Jewish Causes

With regard to traveling to Israel, and without providing specifics, we see a consistent and significant increase in orientation across age groups toward this practice.

Table 36 Going to Israel

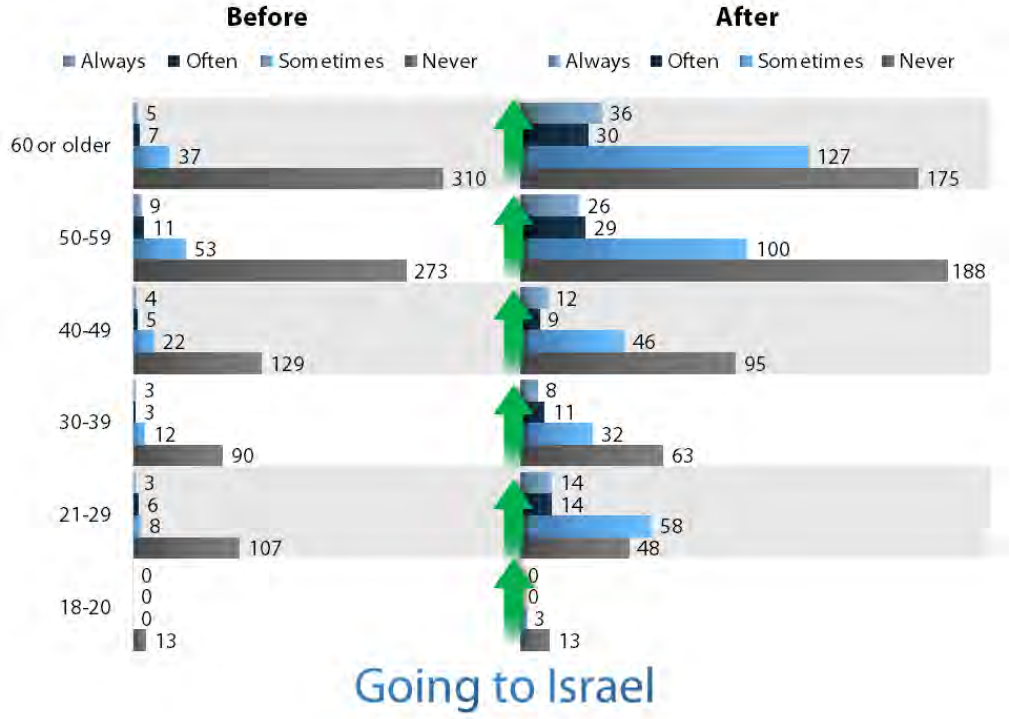
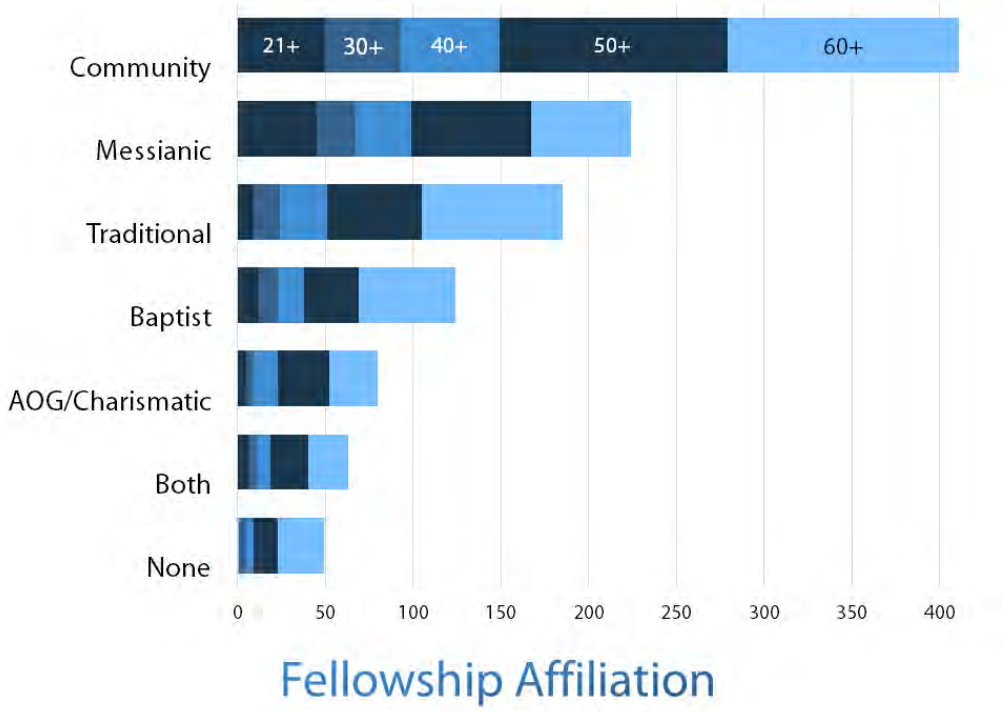


Table 37 asks the respondents to list the churches or congregations they attend. This was asked in order to get a more concrete sense of congregational affiliation and present attachment to fellowship. We then grouped the responses in order to make a more meaningful comparison. In most cases, the type of church or Messianic congregation was reasonably clear.

Five percent of respondents indicated attendance at both a Messianic congregation and a Christian church of some other denomination.

In most cases, the denomination was reasonably clear from the name, but in some cases we made an assumption about the category. Messianic congregations, Baptist churches, and charismatic churches were each grouped into their own category. The "traditional" category included Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and similar denominations. The community category includes community churches, non-denominational churches, and some of the more recent "movements" in which non-denominational churches have emerged as affiliated congregations in multiple cities.

Table 37 Fellowship Affiliation



Section II: Qualitative Analysis

Introduction

Qualitative results are more elusive. Narrative responses were broken down by common themes and significant statements which yielded patterns that were sometimes easy and sometimes more difficult to discern. In assessing and analyzing this part of the research, we examined narratives that show patterns of experiences in relationships and pressures related to the decision-making experience. We tried to develop categories of information that would lead to an understanding of the common experience of the participants.

Questions on Pressure

The comments on family rejection covered several types of internal and external pressure. Some of the following comments represented common themes weighted across age groups but clustered in the above 50 group.

Loss of important relationships: “It became a battle between the comfort of my life and a good relationship with my family or choosing Jesus.” “My dad and I were already in a strained relationship; this most likely would make it worse.”

Direct rejection: “When I first went to church, Mom kicked me out of the house and made me choose to either leave church or leave the house.” “Since I come from a very powerful family, I was concerned they would try to have my children taken out of my care through legal channels, but I was prepared to face any judge since freedom of religion is our right.” “My family cut me off and mourned my death. They wanted nothing to do with me for a while, then after eight months or so they accepted it, but not happily.”

Fear of telling family: “I had a huge fear of my dad finding out.” “I was afraid to tell my parents, family members.”

Fear of disappointing family: “My dad was always rich in his Jewish beliefs and I feared disappointing him, but what I felt in my heart was true. My mom was raised Jewish but she went into this New Age belief that borders on cultish.” “I only knew of one family that were Jewish believers while growing up. They were considered the ‘weird family’ in the neighborhood. I felt like I would be considered the black sheep of my family and that they would be disappointed in me.” “I didn’t want to disappoint my parents.”

Ridicule from family: “When I finally got the courage to tell my dad, he laughed at me and said that belief in Messiah and heaven is like being on drugs. My family thinks I am nuts, but they are still my family.”

As expected, family rejection was the most often-cited item, with related items of community rejection, cultural pressures, and disloyalty. Also, the most frequent mention of the Holocaust was among the age groups of children of Holocaust survivors, with a smaller incidence in the age groups of their grandchildren.

There was an increased incidence (particularly proportionately) of those who knew of the gospel from an early age among the youngest two categories, representing the increase in second-generation believers.

Conviction of sin ranked high. This was followed by those who indicated they were challenged by the gospel in various ways.

Participants were involved in a complex pattern of relationships that were affected by this decision-making process. Respondents were able to cite multiple sources of pressure. We define *community* as the formal Jewish community and family of the respondents. Based on the number of responses, we still see similar patterns in all age groups.

Table 38 Source of Pressure

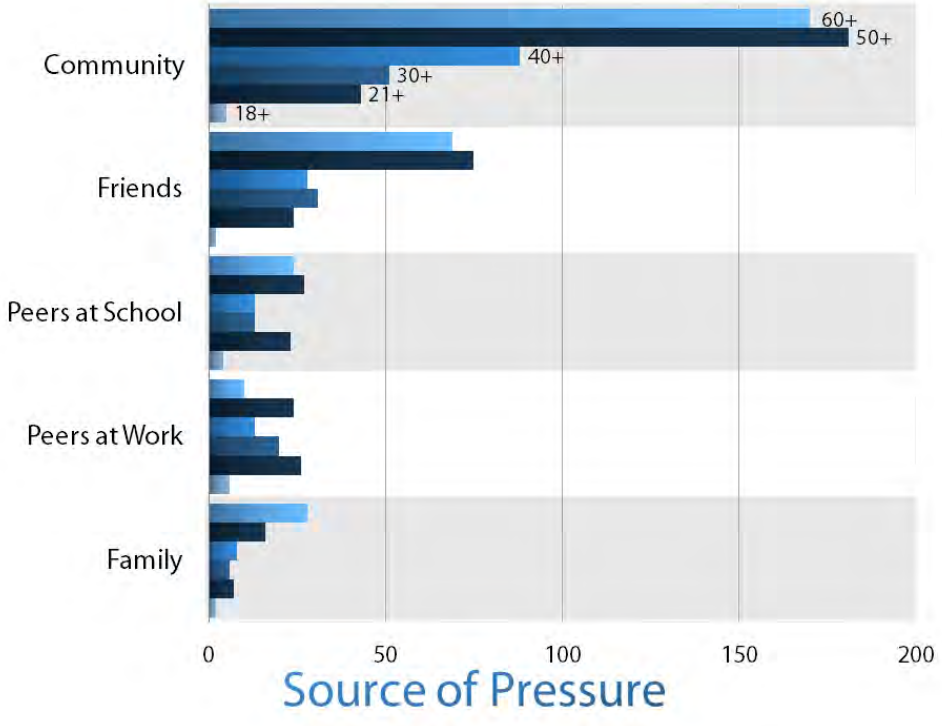


Table 39 includes multiple selections. There is a consistent pattern of experience in all age groups.

Table 39 Type of Pressure

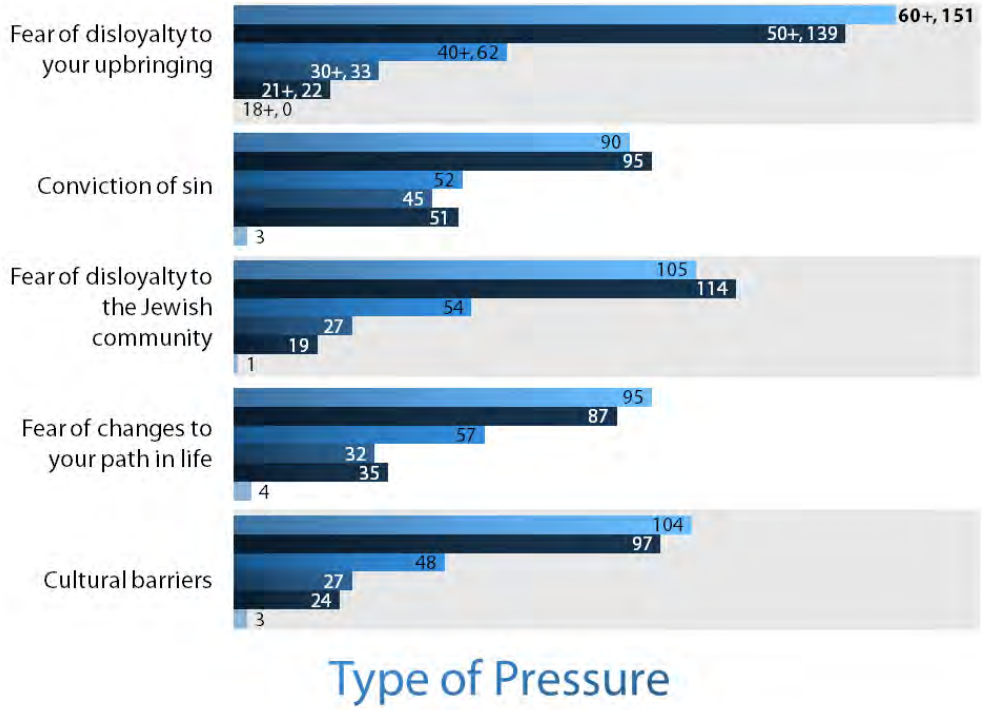


Table 40 asked respondents for a narrative response. Family reaction and conviction of sin were the most prevalent expressions seen in the stories.

Table 40 Internal Pressure Numbered

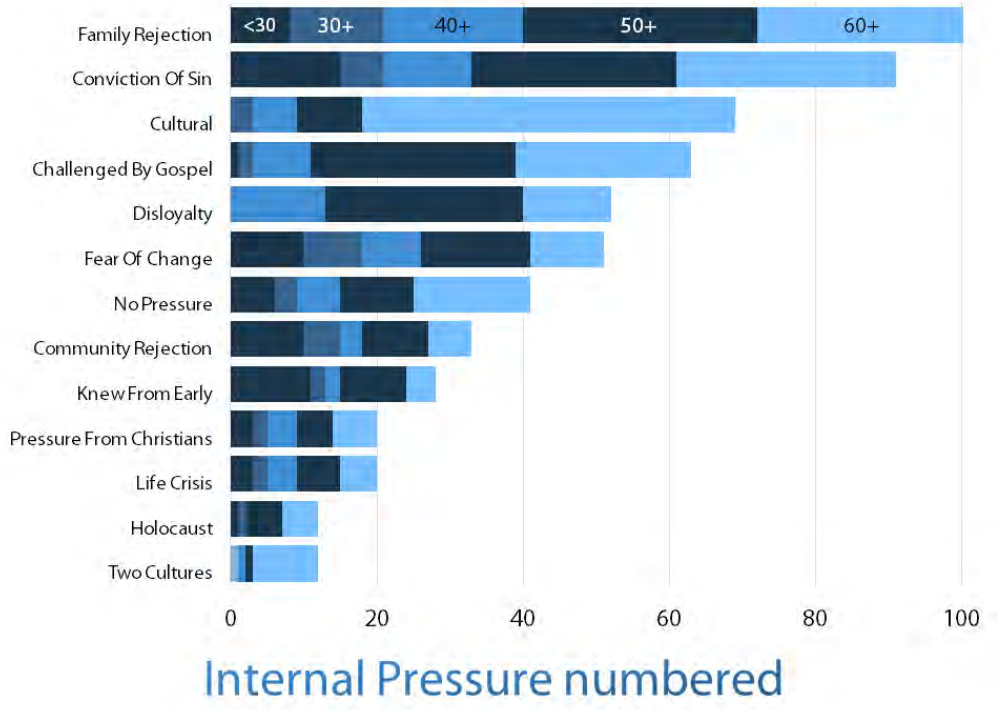


Table 41 asked respondents for a narrative response. Older age groups indicate the largest percentage response to being pulled between a variety of social and cultural values.

Table 41 Internal Pressure as a Percentage

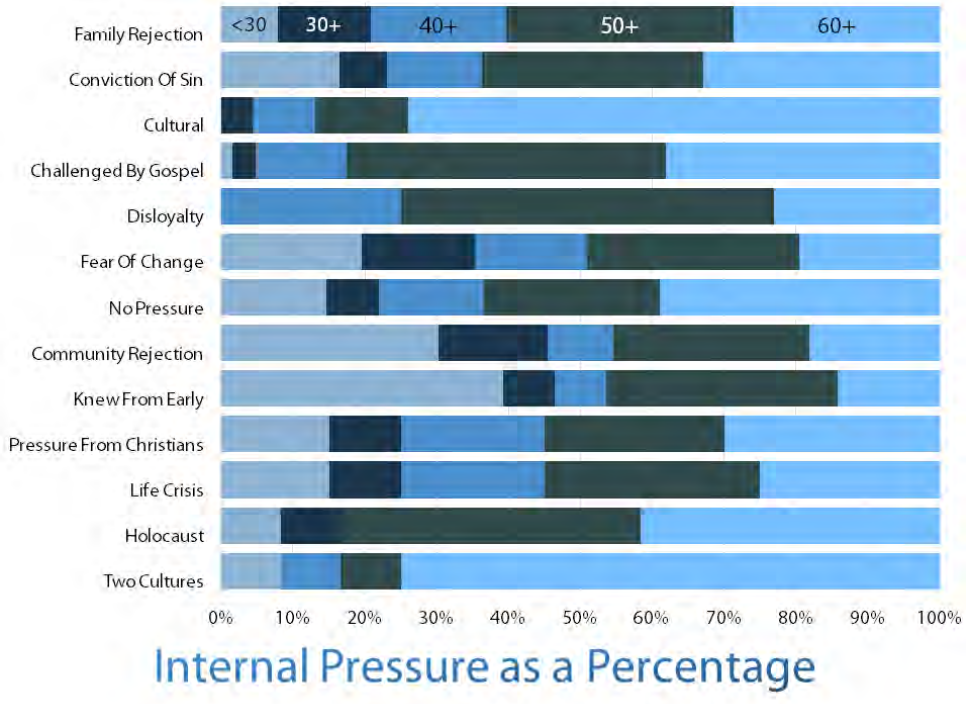


Table 42 provided respondents multiple choices. They were able to choose more than one selection. There is an even distribution among age groups in these expressed changes.

Table 42 Changes in Relationships

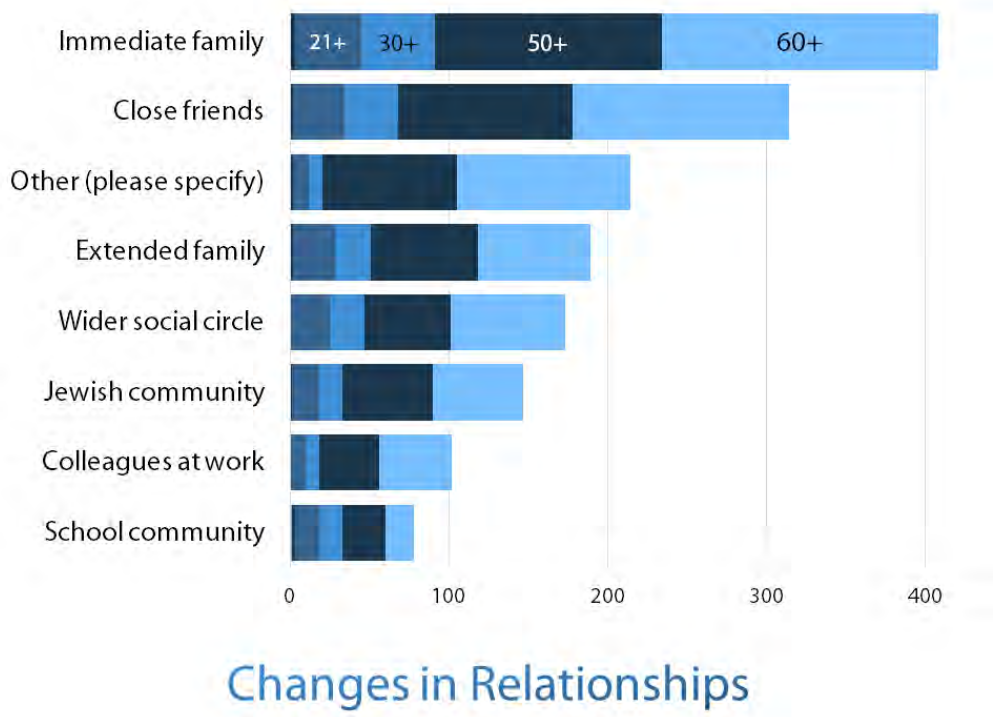


Table 43 shows the same data as 42 in a different format. Across age groups we see a consistent pattern based on the number of responses. Responses varied based on the closeness of the relationships.

Table 43 Changes in Relationships

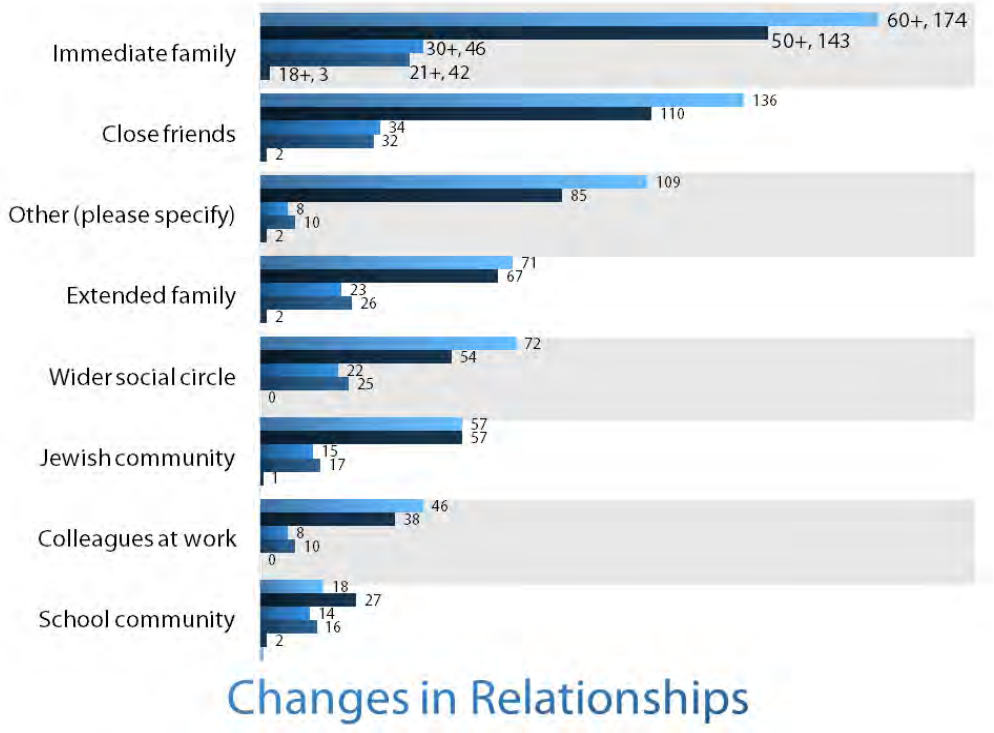
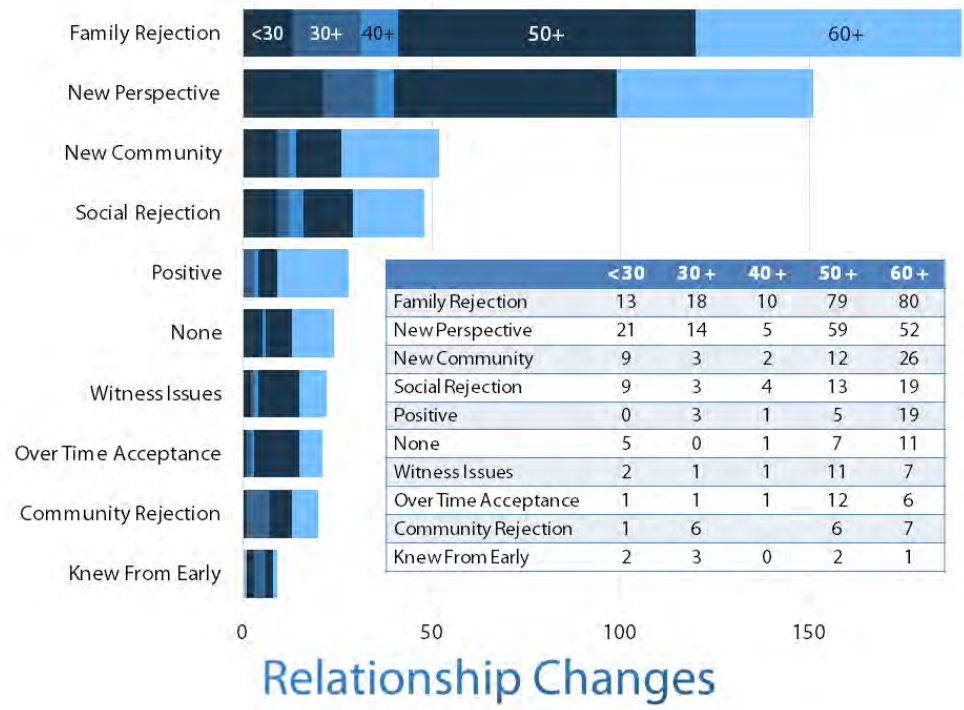


Table 44 asks for a narrative response. We see a more significant pattern in older respondents with regard to family and orientation to community. Respondents categorized as new perspective sought not only to change old relationships, but to make new ones. They looked at existing relationships differently.

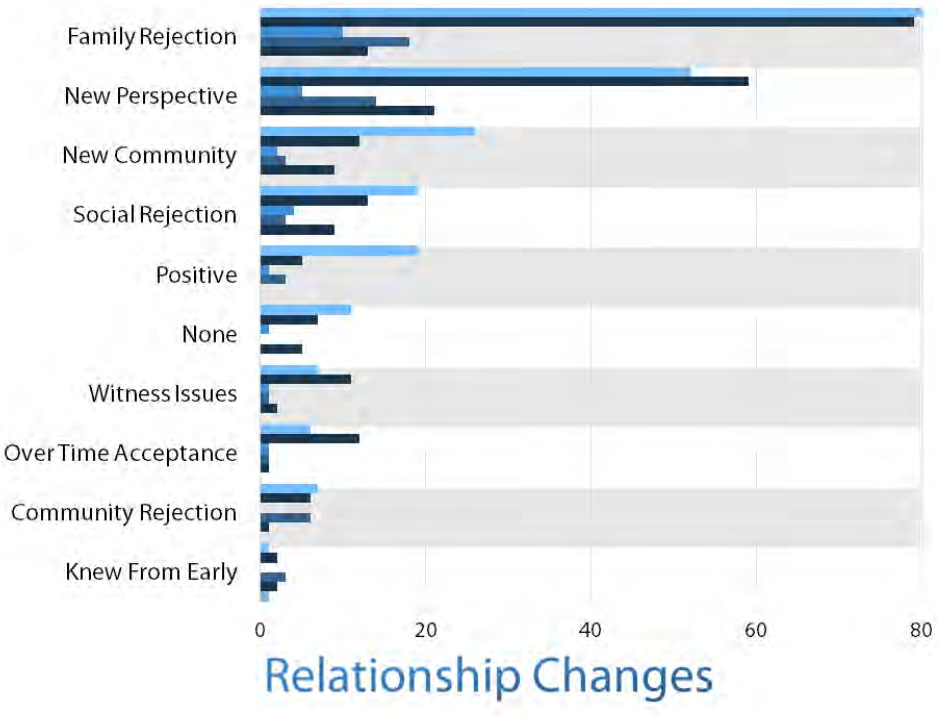
Table 44 Relationship Changes



	<30	30+	40+	50+	60+
Family Rejection	13	18	10	79	80
New Perspective	21	14	5	59	52
New Community	9	3	2	12	26
Social Rejection	9	3	4	13	19
Positive	0	3	1	5	19
None	5	0	1	7	11
Witness Issues	2	1	1	11	7
Over Time Acceptance	1	1	1	12	6
Community Rejection	1	6		6	7
Knew From Early	2	3	0	2	1

Table 45 is the same question presented in a different form.

Table 45 Relationship Changes



Conclusions

Our data address a wide range of complex phenomena. Our aim is to improve critical thinking on strategies, practices, and knowledge of the environments in which we work. We hope that this study will stimulate conversation and new efforts to understand the attitudes and behavior of North American Messianic Jews. Qualitative questions on peer and community pressure are open to competing narratives. We hesitate to conclude that Messianic Jews are either *not welcome* or *not interested* when it comes to continuity with family and institutions, or how one affects the other. It is clear that both these forces are at work.

Through this study we explored three matters:

1. The representation of the experiences of a group of Jews who believe in Jesus.
2. How this group of Jewish people experienced cultural influences during their decision to follow Jesus.
3. How one generation's experience compares with another's.

Assimilation and Communication

Our results indicate that the Messianic Jewish community in North America is assimilated and accommodated into 21st-century culture, but has not acculturated itself.

This means that Messianic Jews see Jewish religious and cultural forms as an important means of identification. Many want to participate in them while still being part of the wider culture. Jewishness and identification with the wider religious, social, and cultural characteristics of Judaism is important, but most want choice. The statistics show us that being Jewish and identifying with Jewish values and causes is important, but so is being part of the wider culture of choice.

We would say these results show that resources must be brought to bear in these areas that respect a significant cross-cultural approach. This approach attempts to look at things from the point of view of the receptors. The doctrine of sociocultural adequacy—of focusing on the receiver's cultural perspective—helps us appreciate the essential validity of other people's ways of life and their basic assumptions and worldviews.

Charles Kraft is an apologist, anthropologist, and linguist. He is professor emeritus of anthropology and intercultural communication at the School of Intercultural Studies in Pasadena. Kraft sees sociocultural adequacy as an anthropological restatement of the Golden Rule; it advocates granting the same respect and appreciation to another's culture as we would wish them to grant to us, were we in their place. In practicing this anthropological Golden Rule, Kraft asserts that human well-being is a value that transcends every culture. Thus, he affirms that we ought to look beyond the validity of specific cultural matrices toward what we might assume those cultural structures are providing—genuine quality of life in material, spiritual, and interpersonal and personal areas (Kraft, 509).

The majority of our respondents are members of the "baby boom" generation. There are broad cultural similarities, and the historical impact of this generation is ubiquitous. The term has gained widespread popular usage. Baby boomers are associated with a rejection or redefinition of traditional values. We associate this generation with the birth of the modern Messianic movement. We acknowledge and pay respect to the many thousands of Messianic Jews of previous generations on whose shoulders we stand.

David Baron was born in 1855 and cofounded the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel missionary organization in London. He was a leader in the Hebrew Christian movements of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) period in Europe. He wrote in 1893:

> What we continually press upon Jews is that we believe Jesus is the Son of Man and Son of God, not in spite of, but because we are Jews. We believe that Jesus is the King of our people, the sum and substance of our Scripture, the fulfiller of our law and prophets, the embodiment of the promises of our covenant. Our testimony is that of Jews to Jews.

Worldview Clash and Ethnic Cohesion

Messianic Jews find truth that is consistent and coherent with Scripture. They do not find this same coherence in their culture.

This worldview clash is a maze of underlying presuppositions that lie at a deep and often unseen level of thought. This worldview is a necessary intellectual arrangement that encompasses both knowledge and viewpoints. We assume this worldview to be true; it offers coherence and a model of reality, and functions as a protective mechanism against other worldviews (Hiebert, 28). Worldview serves important social and cultural functions by providing answers to our deepest questions; it yields emotional security, validates norms, and offers psychological reassurance (Hiebert, 29–30).

The Pew study indicates that most Jewish people are attracted to Jewishness and choice. Many are ambivalent about faith and already admit to the existence of and tolerate competing worldviews. Given this ambivalence, how do we explain this constant and consistent pressure on Messianic Jews from the Jewish community?

Ethnic cohesion is an elusive factor, perhaps made up of some combination of pride in one's cultural heritage and a determination to survive. Its presence often keeps a people struggling to maintain their sociocultural existence, even in the presence of great pressure to change. The breaking of such cohesion results in the loss of the will of a people to *continue* living as a viable social entity. Tampering with this cohesion leads to, in the language of Jewish culture, a kind of confusion. To reject the gospel is to be accepted within this culture—and, likewise, to accept the gospel is to be rejected by the culture. We see the rejection of Jesus and the culture we assume he represents as part of Jewish worldview and part of security, norms, and reassurance.

Messianic Jews and Conventional Jewish Values

Even with the minor differences in how the questions were framed across the various studies, the results show that the Messianic Jewish community in North America is more similar to the American Jewish community than to the general US population in demographics such as Jewish dispositions, education, and occupation. The nomenclature preference and religious observance levels among these Messianic Jews indicate a continuing identification with the Jewish people. The diversity of the Messianic Jewish community is the diversity of the larger Jewish community. We are, in our temperaments, dispositions, and activities, part of this wider community. Messianic Jews seek ways to be part of the wider Jewish community.

Hearing the Gospel

Responses to the questions about how Messianic Jews first heard the gospel and what attracted them to the gospel underline the significance of individual interaction. The more recent study also indicated that churches and Messianic congregations have an emergent impact.

Intermarriage

There is a need for critical thinking in the area of intermarriage. If, as suggested by NJPS (Kosmin et al.), approximately half of the general Jewish population marries non-Jews and three fourths of

Messianic Jews marry non-Jews, how many of the children of these families will claim Jewish identity? The intermarriage situation is dynamic. In the general Jewish community, Taglit-Birthright Israel is altering marriage and family patterns (Saxe & Chazan; Saxe et al.). Taglit, which brings young Jews to Israel, changes the course of participants' deportment with regard to Jewish life. Messianic Jewish leaders must understand who these individuals are and how they are involved with their religious-ethnic identity. We are also seeing, in the Messianic Jewish community, congregations and ministries making new and dynamic efforts to provide fellowship and service opportunities to young Messianic Jews which alter marriage and family patterns. We see this in our intermarriage statistics.

Pressure

These qualitative results show that the older group of Messianic Jews experienced quite a bit more external pressure than did younger respondents. This older age group is composed of second-generation North Americans whose immigrant grandparents and parents lived in a more stable social and cultural dynamic.

This survey is a snapshot of a dynamic process. Because the Messianic Jewish community is changing so rapidly, the problem of relevant communication and generational change develops with it. Can we measure successful communication in less obvious and less quantifiable but equally important categories? People are to be treated as people, not as things; they are to be respected and consulted, not simply dominated. Potential innovations are to be politely advocated, not rudely mandated, even when the power of the change agents is considerable.

For us, the key is communicating Jesus as the fulfillment of the destiny and the hope of Israel. The promise to Abraham comes true in his person, work, and mission. What is clear is that a new narrative of contemporary Messianic Jewish life is needed: one that concedes the changing space, size, and structure of the Messianic Jewish community and attempts to understand how Messianic Jewish life is evolving in the 21st century.

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Andrew Barron
Beverly Jamison
October 2014

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Jews for Jesus, founded in 1973, is dedicated to bringing the gospel into places where a Jewish testimony is needed.

Book Review: *Apostates, Hybrids, or True Jews? Jewish Christians and Jewish Identity in Eastern Europe, 1860–1914*

by Raymond Lillevik (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications)

Rich Robinson
Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus

George Santayana's oft-quoted saying, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," seems perennially applicable to the Messianic Jewish movement. Or more apropos of the Bible, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9). Either way, Raymond Lillevik's new book gives 21st-century Yeshua-followers plenty to remember and plenty to learn from.

This 453-page book (I used the non-paginated Kindle version) revises Lillevik's PhD dissertation at the Norwegian School of Theology. Two of his professors, Reidar Hvalvik and Oskar Skarsaune, will be well-known to readers of *Mishkan* (the latter wrote the foreword). In the same stream of judicious Scandinavian scholarship, Lillevik provides a balanced, thought-provoking, and often lively look at three Jewish followers of Jesus in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the identity issues that surrounded their faith.

The three subjects are all Central or Eastern European Jews: Chaim (Rudolf Hermann) Gurland, Chaim Jedidjah Pollak (aka Christian Theophilus Lucky), and Isaac Lichtenstein. We get not only a fascinating outline of their quite different lives but an in-depth look at how they and others viewed their identities as Jews who had come to embrace Jesus. The choice to look at these three in particular stems from their time period, when many of the issues of the modern Messianic movement began to take shape, as well as from the significant amount of written material surrounding them. Then, too, they all had contact in one way or another with Norwegian and Danish mission societies, and so are relevant to the author's own milieu.

Before the biographies, Lillevik gives us a chapter on methodology and previous research. It is standard to do this sort of thing in dissertations, but those who would rather bypass the first chapter will still be well served by the rest of the book. Lillevik is well abreast of the contemporary scholarship on identity issues both individual and social. He interacts with many names in the field (Erik Erikson, Fredrik Barth, Benedict Andersson, Peter Wagner, Foucault, Strozier, etc.) as well as Jewish authors such as Cohn-Sherbok, Feher, Harris-Shapiro, and Boyarin. Ultimately, he adapts Sergio DellaPergola's framework for studying Jewish identity. In addition to DellaPergola's categories of particularist and national-community, Lillevik focuses on the three subjects vis-à-vis "the relationship to Christian tradition and doctrine . . . the relationship to Christian community . . . [and] the relationship to contemporary Jewish (Hebrew) Christian groups and individuals."

Chapter 2 surveys the Eastern European Jewish world vis-à-vis Christian missions during the years 1860–1914. Four detailed maps are included, along with a sketch of the various Jewish missions operating at the time in this part of the world. This background is not just "color," but is important for understanding what shaped the three subjects, their journeys to faith, and their interactions with others.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed biography of the three subjects, along with a photo of each. All three identified as Jewish, at a time when Jewish identity was already taking various forms in connection with the larger culture. Each in their own way, they navigated their identities, their relationship to the Jewish community, and their stance regarding Jewish missions.

Gurland lived in a world influenced by both traditional Judaism and the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, and found himself gravitating away from Talmud and tradition and his "claustrophobic" upbringing (Gurland's own word). Just as there are social costs for Jews who follow Jesus, there was a cost for turning from Orthodox Judaism. Gurland's two marriages were each in turn annulled by family members; his third wife became a believer, only to have her children removed by her traditionally Jewish family. (After her death, Gurland married for a fourth time.) Gurland was very involved with missions to the Jews, serving as a missionary himself as well as a pastor, and "apparently followed the traditional pattern for converted Jews, leaving behind all connection to his Jewish background, and none of his descendants cultivated any connection to their Jewish origins." But that picture is too simplistic and must be nuanced, as Lillevik shows.

Pollak/Lucky grew up in Galicia, where Hasidism was influential. There are four (!) different versions of how he came to faith. He soon emigrated to the USA and studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York, a prominent Presbyterian institution. He received ordination from a Lutheran church body but seems also to have had an affiliation with the Seventh Day Baptists. He was a harsh critic of Jewish mission work and an advocate that Jewish believers should remain within their own Jewish people and observe the traditions. One of his contributions was the production of periodicals directed at non-Jesus-believing Jews, which he published in both English and Hebrew.

Lichtenstein publicly professed his faith in Jesus while still a rabbi in Hungary, and continued to remain in his pulpit due to a variety of social and religious factors that Lillevik analyzes. He would not involve himself with the Jewish mission societies, and he was never baptized into any particular church body, but baptized himself in a *mikveh*! In some ways he acted as a free-floating missionary to the Jewish people.

Chapter 4 takes the biographical material and analyzes it in terms of how the three related to Judaism and to the Christian community, as well as to the community of Jewish believers. I cannot summarize the wealth of material here, except to give a relevant quote or two regarding each subject:

> **Gurland:** "The question is whether Gurland was arguing as a traditional Jewish-Christian apostate, or if his views were an echo of the internal Jewish debate following the modernization of the Jewish society."
> "In spite of Gurland's antipathy towards Talmud and his marriage to a non-Jew, there are also factors in Gurland's life that show he did not want to turn away from either the Jewish people or his national background as such."
>
> **Lucky:** "Lucky's most characteristic feature was his loyalty to the Jewish tradition combined with his faith in Jesus."
> "For Lucky the New Testament was not only the fulfillment of the Tanak, but also confirmed the main teachings of the rabbinic tradition."
> "This of course raises the question of whether Jewish Christians are obliged to observe the Talmud; Lucky thinks they should. However, this should not be as a result of coercion, but only in freedom and voluntarily."

> **Lichtenstein:** "Lichtenstein's fear of being cut off from his people made him avoid a public baptism his whole life."
> "Like Lucky, Lichtenstein claims to hold Jewish tradition, first of all the Hebrew Bible and Talmud, in high esteem."
> "Not only is Jesus in continuity with the Jewish tradition, but he has also accomplished the mission of Israel in the world."
> "Lichtenstein was not interested in issues of law observance as such, but rather the right motivation for this observance."

All these issues are placed in the complex context of 19th-century European Jewish life, which came to expression in different ways in different locations. The matters of Haskalah, Hasidism, the reform of Judaism, state church requirements and local laws, anti-Semitism, and much more all interacted to produce unique environments for Gurland, Lucky, and Lichtenstein.

It should be evident that the discussions in today's Messianic Jewish community echo some of the same issues faced by an earlier generation. However, as Lillevik warns us, we cannot too quickly use our current context in order to understand the past. The issues of Torah observance and the authority of Jewish tradition are still on the table among Messianic Jews. But the context, the motivating factors, and the argumentation are quite different from what they were in 19th-century Galicia or Hungary. Moreover, as pointed out in the introduction, there are similarities between the roads that Lucky and Lichtenstein took and those today who seek to combine Muslim or Hindu cultural and faith practices with expression of Christianity, e.g. the so-called Insider Movements. In other words, there is much to reflect on that can help us navigate our own situation. But the application of Lillevik's book will be another project for another day.

Book Review: *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*
by William E. Arnal (London; Oakville, CT: Equinox)

Rich Robinson
Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus

Like Bruno Bettelheim's book *The Uses of Enchantment*, this could have been titled *The Uses of the (Jewish) Jesus*. William Arnal has a couple of aims. The first is to bring to our attention a debate in academia, which he calls a non-debate, between scholars who affirm the Jewishness of Jesus and a second group of scholars whom the first group *claims* denies the Jewishness of Jesus. The Jewishness of Jesus means not simply the fact that he was born a Jew, but his full situation in the Judaism and Jewish culture of his time. The second aim is to show that this pseudo-debate really exists in the service of various agendas and subtexts, in which Jesus and his Jewishness are utilized (not "manipulated"—Arnal does not judge individual motives) as symbols to serve a cause other than what they appear to be serving.

The book starts out with "Introduction: Mad Mel and the Cultural Prominence of Jesus," intended to give an example of the power of Jesus as a cultural symbol. To this end, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is viewed through the subtext of "the sadistically violent nature of contemporary North American culture" inasmuch as it shows "a bizarre equation of 'spirituality' with pornographic excesses of pain." Psychoanalysis is invoked, and Freud pops in for a visit several times in the course of the book. The uses of *The Passion* film as a symbol include its employ in the service of anti-Arab sentiment as well, though not its use as a vehicle of Roman Catholic faith or, for Protestant evangelical Christians, the possibility that it calls all Christians to suffer and carry their own crosses. At a kind of meta-level, then, the chapter proves its point as the critique of the film seems to carry its own agenda with it. It's an interesting opening that includes the story of a church that had an Easter bunny whipped (don't ask, just read it), but though a fascinating read on one type of approach to the film, it can tend to derail the reader from the real subject matter of the book.

In any event, Arnal's observations in the introduction emerge as a setup for the main points of the book about scholarship surrounding the Jewishness of Jesus. The historical background to the current "non-debate" is laid out in chapter 2, "Bad Karma: Anti-Semitism in New Testament Scholarship." Beginning with Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1899, we proceed to the views of Walter Grundmann, a New Testament scholar living in Nazi Germany, during which time Jesus was made *judenrein*, in part to justify the existence of Christianity under Nazism. Then we are on to Gerhard Kittel, editor of the famous *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, which to this day is known simply as *Kittel* to many a seminary student. Kittel affirmed Jesus' Jewishness, but refused to countenance equal political rights for Jews, since in his view God was sitting in judgment on Israel.

All this was overtly anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish. More recently, we encounter another, more subtle, type of anti-Jewishness in Jesus scholarship. These sorts of scholars uphold their ideas of Jesus' uniqueness by contrasting Jesus and his Jewish environment. Such views are held even by post-Holocaust academics who are not anti-Semitic, yet it ends up as a kind of "wish-fulfillment," caricaturing Judaism. This approach is traced from Renan through Bultmann and the "new quest" for the historical Jesus (Käsemann), and into more recent scholarship (Jeremias, Norman Perrin, C. K. Barrett). Arnal has strong words for such scholars who inaccurately portray Judaism even absent anti-Semitism: "a willingness to distort and denigrate the religious beliefs of an entire people . . . betrays, in addition to its scholarly deficiencies, a moral bankruptcy that cannot be rationalized" (p. 15).

So far, then, we have the overt anti-Semites and the well-intentioned but morally bankrupt distorters of Judaism. (I find Arnal's characterization of the latter as scholars whose ethical compass is in bankruptcy to be rather over the top; given the state of research and their own contexts, did they know differently?)

In contrast to these two perennial varieties, a good deal of recent scholarship plants Jesus firmly in Jewish soil. Here the roster extends to Vermes, Sanders, Meier, Crossan, and Fredriksen. Let's call this Jewish Jesus scholarship (JJS). Yet at the same time, the underscoring of Jesus' Jewishness has taken on a curiously polemical tone, including charging other scholars (e.g. the Jesus Seminar; proponents of Jesus-as-Cynic-philosopher) with promoting an "un-Jewish" or even anti-Jewish Jesus. Let's call this latter body of work non-Jewish Jesus scholarship (NJJS).

Arnal concludes that the "shrill reiteration" of Jesus' Jewishness by the JJS serves as "a screen onto which other, more current, and unresolved matters are being projected." Chapter 3 therefore follows along: "A Manufactured Controversy: Why the 'Jewish Jesus' Is a Red Herring." Why the intra-academic debate between JJS and NJJS? After all, "No one is disagreeing that Jesus was Jewish. Why the choler? What is going on?" (p. 29). The whole kerfuffle is "a straw man," and is really a debate over whether Jesus is being "cast as the wrong kind of Jew," namely by those for whom Jesus' being the right kind of Jew is important for one reason or another. A long and interesting discussion ensues. In the end, Arnal defends the NJJS school: "The charges of a 'non-Jewish' Jesus appear to be based on a definition of Judaism that is insupportable. It is contradicted by the actual evidence, it is theoretically misguided, and it is anachronistic . . . [and leveling such charges] trivializes real anti-Semitism, and, as a corollary, racism in general" (p. 37). This last sentiment would certainly seem to be true. What we have, according to Arnal, is a case of crying wolf.

Finally, having shone a spotlight on the current academic debate, we arrive at chapter 4, "The Jewish Jesus and Contemporary Identity." What agendas are underlying this whole debate? Judaism, Arnal proposes, is standing in these debates as "a cipher for other, unstated, issues of concern; to use psychoanalytic language, a displacement, a manifest content both concealing and expressing a latent content" (p. 39). In other words, each side in the debate really wants to put the Jewishness of Jesus to different uses revolving around identity issues.

I found this chapter fascinating, as Arnal lays out several possible agendas that are at work in the attack on NJJS by JJS (and remember, the "non" in NJJS is only an alleged "non" that Arnal finds unsupportable, hence his exploration of what's really going on). First is the scholarly agenda. The attack on NJJS may be an effort to get out from under the dominance of European, especially German, New Testament scholarship, to produce a new kind of academic work with its own distinctive voice. This scholarly self-identity includes a more secular and historical rather than theological approach. So this represents a sort of reaction to an older scholarship that was both anti-Semitic and heavily theological. The JJS folks prefer to speak of a Jesus loudly rooted in a Jewish environment, an environment that can be spoken of in secular terms without a theological overlay.

Second is the possible political agenda of repudiating German Nazi anti-Semitism, though the Judaism invoked by the NJJS bears no resemblance to the Judaism that Nazism attacked, namely the Judaism of Eastern Europe and Germany. However, this agenda is well-served by the JJS, which finds Jesus to be Jewish in a way that comports better with modern Jewish life, e.g. by emphasizing the title "Rabbi" or drawing attention to his Jewish clothing. In JJS Jesus studies, Jesus comes to represent 19th–20th century European Jewry. This kind of Jesus functions in the image of Eastern European Jews, a stereotyped image originally anti-Semitic but now co-opted by means of showing the outsider (the European Jew) to be actually central to the dominant Christian culture. The JJS Jesus also distances Christianity from "complicity" in the Holocaust (an agenda that Arnal is reluctant to embrace as he does not want to let Christianity off the hook so easily). Arnal then defends the NJJS against their JJS opponents: *their Jewish Jesus is different than the Jewish Jesus of the JJS, but no less Jewish or more anti-Jewish for that*. For one thing, they don't assimilate Jesus into and co-opt the Jewish stereotype but rather show that the stereotype is altogether wrong because there are a variety of ways to be Jewish—in contrast to the JJS's more uniform picture of Judaism.

The third agenda has to do with religious identities: who or what is a "true" Jew? Here the NJJS and JJS debate has implications for the validity of Reform Judaism, though that particular agenda would likely be of interest only to Jewish scholars. Another aspect of this agenda more relevant to non-Jewish scholars is that postulating a certain kind of Jewish identity is useful for Christians in constructing their own Christian identity in distinction to that of being Jewish.

Finally we come to cultural identities. As postmodernism redefines the nature of culture, both the JJS and the NJJS conceive Jesus in distinct ways, depending on whether one wants to retain the "stability of culture" by defining Jesus' Jewishness in more or less sharp contours.

Enough to give the sense of the book—there is also an extended discussion on the place of historical research. As Arnal says, "The Jesus who is important to our own day is not the Jesus of history, but the symbolic Jesus of contemporary discourse." It is not Jesus himself, but the uses to which he is put, his "reception history" in the current jargon, that matters. In the event, he also dissociates the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith, the validity of which is an old subject for debate.

I found the best takeaways to be the historical review, the glimpse of the current debate between JJS and NJJS, and the notion that particular subtexts underlie that debate. Arnal and I part company on epistemology and the validity of historical inquiry to help us understand Jesus and the Christian movement. If all we are left with are subtexts, I for one would have no interest in Jesus at all.

Finally, this intra-academia debate hardly touches the lay person. As Arnal remarks at the end of his *Passion* chapter, "We scholars, in our conversations about Jesus, tend to ignore or dismiss the vast majority of the public, who return the favor and show little or no interest in or even cognizance of our discourses. Jesus is indeed a valuable cultural commodity. It turns out, though, that if the sheer weight of numbers means anything at all, the rarefied opinions of scholars—to which this book is devoted—contribute almost nothing to the public conversation about the symbolic Jesus." Whether this book represents navel-gazing is for the reader to decide; I for one found it stimulating.

Book Review: *"The Time Is Come": The Rise of British Missions to the Jews 1808–1818*

by John M. Yeats (Lambert Academic Publications)

Rich Robinson
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John Mark Yeats is the undergraduate dean for Midwestern Baptist College in Kansas City, Missouri. *"The Time Is Come"* was originally written as a PhD dissertation in historical theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Illinois, USA) in 2004. I reviewed the dissertation version; I am told by the author that the printed book version is not much different.

The book focuses on the early years of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews (LSPCJ), utilizing, among other sources, archival material that has not previously been consulted. As such, it offers a fresh look at an understudied subject.

Originally headed by Samuel C. F. Frey, the LSPCJ was the first organization in Britain devoted entirely to Jewish evangelization. Despite early troubles, the mission attracted funding from all classes of society and, in its earliest years, from various segments of the church. The introduction lays out the "central question": "In what ways did the LSPCJ attract the attention and maintain the financial support of Protestants who spanned the full social spectrum for the years 1808–1818?"

As background, chapter 1 reviews the relationship of Britain and its Jewish population from the expulsion from England in 1290 through 1800. Chapter 2 covers the founding of the LSPCJ. Though the existing London Missionary Society (LMS) had an arm for evangelizing Jews, Frey and others felt that was not sufficient; indeed, some argued, the Jews needed to be converted *in order that* the Gentiles would turn to Christ. Hence their vision for a society dedicated to Jewish evangelism as its sole *raison d'être*.

Frey himself, born in 1771, was a German Jew who came to faith in Jesus in his early twenties through the Lutheran church. In Frey's experience, being a Jewish Christian meant rejection both by the Jewish community and also by mistrustful Christians, who doubted the sincerity of many converts and also held less than elevated views of Jewish character.

Frey was a restless soul. He began work for the LMS in 1801, but broke ties in 1809. He was next aligned with the LSPCJ for nine years, but left that society when it came under the Church of England, in which he was not ordained, but also probably due to his "aggressive, self-assertive character"—something which seems to have characterized more than one missionary to the Jews. He eventually moved to America, founding another mission to the Jews, and then pastoring and preaching till his death in 1850.

Historically, Jewish missions have been no strangers to controversy. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss Frey's / the LSPCJ's methods, respectively the "normal" and the "controversial" ones. Yeats finds six main approaches that the LSPCJ took. One was to be evangelically ecumenical and unified. In this the LSPCJ was ahead of its time. Unlike the phenomenon of modern Billy Graham crusades, where churches successfully come together across denominational boundaries, the LSPCJ's broad

umbrella eventually fell apart over issues of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nor were the Dissenters able to offer as much financial support as did the Established Church. By 1815, the society had come under the Church of England.

The second normal method was to offer public lectures to Jewish people. These came under criticism for an (alleged) lack of attendance, and for Frey's "enthusiasm," that is, his use of fancy rhetoric and emotionalism. The third normal approach was via printed publications, one of the LSPCJ's most expensive but also effective methods of outreach. This included production of a Hebrew New Testament that was later judged sub-standard and unusable. Most of the printed materials were intended to garner Christian support, but there were those meant directly for a Jewish audience.

Stories of controversy have universal appeal, as some may find in chapter 4. The first controversial approach was the establishment of charity and free schools to provide an education for those who could not afford one otherwise. In a move that would raise ethical hackles today, Jewish children could be—and were—taken from their parents (at the child's wish to convert), educated in a Christian school, and permanently brought under the care of the mission. One contemporary critic thought this free education was a form of bribery; modern missionaries would more likely criticize denying the right of parents to raise their own children! Two points: one, Frey felt that Jewish parents would corrupt the Christian education their children received if they remained at home, a reflection of his own experiences; and two, a law remained on the books allowing exactly what the mission did. It was legal, if not moral. It all came to a head with the court case of Hyam Isaacs; the court ruled for the LSPCJ since at 15 years old, young Isaacs was, according to the law, no longer a minor (!). Other statements of the time, though, indicated that children were educated with their parents' consent and desire, so the full situation remains to be clarified.

The next controversial approach was the instituting of "houses of industry." A Jewish convert could not hope for employment in the Jewish community; these "houses" were therefore intended to help the convert gain a foothold within Christian society. Only the print-shop succeeded among several such ventures. Finally, there was the giving of benevolences to those Jewish people in monetary need. This, as we might well imagine, led to accusations of "buying" converts, "luring" children, or to situations where a professed convert, once on his feet, returned to the synagogue. From the mission's side, this rather open-ended policy led to serious financial difficulties as the mission burned money in offering charity.

Chapter 5 deals with the support structures of the LSPCJ, namely stacking the mission with prominent names (including that of William Wilberforce) to garner the support of the rich, as well as gaining support from the less affluent classes. The latter was often accomplished via auxiliary committees scattered throughout Britain or so-called "penny societies," which ended up providing 60 percent of the mission's income in 1816.

Chapter 6 treats the appeals made in order to generate financial support. Here we find the LSPCJ engaged in a balancing act in putting forward an "image" of the Jewish people. First, Jews were portrayed as the benighted "heathen" of England, in order to place Jewish missions on a par with other evangelization efforts, and in order to help prioritize Jewish missions as the means towards evangelization of the entire world. Out of the other side of the mission's mouth, Jews would simultaneously be lauded for preserving the Bible and Jewish culture and religion. The former image raised support for evangelism; the latter was meant to better the position of the Jews in English society. The two presentations created a Janus-like picture of the Jewish people, yet in the end the LSPCJ advanced toward both goals.

Further advances toward raising funds were enabled by the millennial expectations that were in the air at the time (Yeats gives a very helpful detailed discussion) and appeals made along

those lines. But it took more than end-times interest in the Jews; it took the development of a "Judeo-centric missiology" in which Jewish missions were placed at the very center of all missions activity. In an interesting take on Romans 1:16, "the LSPCJ proposed that the Jews were to convert before the Gentiles in accordance with Paul's proclamation that the Gospel was to be to the Jew first, and then the Gentile." Jewish missions *had* to go forward apace, for only in that way would the Gentile mission succeed—one thought being that the vastly scattered Jewish diaspora would be God's entrée to world evangelization.

Yeats raises one other important question: did the presence of many with government connections within the LSPCJ's leadership help influence government policy positively towards the Jews? Similarly, did the LSPCJ's houses of industry, ultimately falling by the wayside for Jewish missions, help bolster the employment situation for Jews throughout England? These Yeats leaves, with other topics, for future investigation.

All in all, an original work of investigation in its access to previously untapped source material. Yeats has highlighted the unique social setting of the time in which various approaches, including those controversial or ethically dubious, made sense to the LSPCJ. He has noted the eschatological motivations that helped the mission go forward even in the face of internal problems, and the "pervasive Protestant" social setting in Britain that allowed that eschatological appeal to work. And he suggests areas for further study, some of which were noted above. A bibliography rounds out the volume. A worthwhile addition to any missions library and for those interested in the history of Jewish evangelism.

Elections Again and Again: Bibi Netanyahu's Fourth Government Is Ready to Launch

by Elisabeth E. Levy

After a month and a half of negotiations, the white smoke finally rose from the prime minister's office in Jerusalem on May 6, 2015. It was almost the last minute, only one and a half hours before the midnight deadline. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu informed President Reuben Rivlin that he had succeeded in forming a government. The new government is composed of 61 mandates, which makes it one of the narrowest governments in Israel's history. Israel's two Orthodox Jewish parties are back in the coalition, together with the new Kulanu party and HaBayit HaYehudi (Jewish Home). The previous government was the first that did not include the religious parties. Now they are back and defending the privileges of the religious sector in Israel.

The new coalition says it will be a government for "all the people in Israel," but never has an Israeli government been smaller. The leader of the opposition and the Labor party, Isaac Herzog, stated, "This is the weakest, narrowest and most prone to extortion coalition in the history of Israel." He added that giving the Ministry of Justice to Ayelet Shaked from HaBayit HaYehudi proved that Netanyahu "cares more about his political survival than the good of the Israeli people." Ms. Shaked will be the only woman in the Security Cabinet.

HaBayit HaYehudi, with its chairman Naftali Bennett, joined the government after receiving crucial ministerial posts such as Education, Agriculture, and Justice. These are important posts for a party with only eight Knesset seats. The government should have 18 ministers in total, but Netanyahu is asking for permission to appoint additional ministers without portfolio since he has too many people in his own Likud party waiting to receive ministerial posts. Netanyahu also tried to prevent Ms. Shaked from heading the powerful Ministerial Committee on Legislation, offering her instead the Ministry of Culture and Sport, but did not succeed.

A former leader of the Israeli Histadrut (Labor Union), Amir Peretz, commented that none of the parties that joined the coalition requested the immigrant absorption portfolio. With thousands of Falasha Jews from Ethiopia now demonstrating in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other cities against the Israeli government's failure to absorb them properly, this is an urgent and important issue to resolve.

For the younger generation of non-religious Israelis, the new government is a big disappointment. One person I talked with expressed this opinion: "For us—who have done the army, studied for many years, and are now working and paying taxes, and still can't live on what we are making—this new government will not change anything. It will still be difficult to make a living, and buying an apartment is almost impossible. . . . So it is hard to witness the possibility that the religious part of the population will again receive more money, cheaper houses from the government, and other privileges, and the new law of compulsory military service for everyone, including the religious sector, will now probably be canceled." Many young Israelis are expressing similar opinions. And there is more to this than the question of "the price of cottage cheese."

Writing these lines from Jerusalem, I would like to mention that Jerusalem is the poorest municipality in Israel, because there are so many Orthodox Jews and Arabs living in this city who do not work and do not pay taxes.

This fourth government led by Bibi Netanyahu is supposed to serve until November 2019. But many Israelis are of the opinion that it will disintegrate much sooner. If one member of the government disagrees on an issue, he or she will make a hole in the boat, and that will be enough to sink it.

Israel is in need of a stable government, so let us pray for the best. Let us hope for a boat that is able to float.

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