

“You Will Be My Witnesses”:
Toward a Messianic Jewish Pneumatology

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In his assessment of Mark Kinzer’s *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, and particularly the theological mainstay of “bilateral ecclesiology,” Richard Harvey cautions that “Kinzer’s bilateral ecclesiology runs the risk of producing a ‘bilateral Christology’ and a ‘bilateral soteriology’ in its wake.”¹ While I understand Harvey’s concern, I would like to suggest that – if we accept bilateral ecclesiology – we are actually *required* to rethink every other theological locus in light of this commitment. If Christian theological categories are to be recast in non-supersessionist terms, perhaps a bilateral Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, eschatology, hamartiology, etc. is precisely what is needed.

This is not to say that *unity* among the two-fold body of Messiah can be neglected or downgraded in any way. To forsake unity would be to undermine the thrust of the entire New Testament and essentially rebuild the “wall of hostility” that Paul assures us has been torn down through Messiah (Ephesians 2:14). As I understand him, Kinzer is not attempting to question or challenge this unity; rather, he is committed to pointing out that unity, in this case, was never intended to equal uniformity.

In what follows, I would like to take a few steps in the direction of developing a Messianic Jewish – or, if you will, a bilateral – pneumatology. My hope is that these reflections accomplish two things: first, that they provide a small glimpse of one particular doctrinal correlate to bilateral ecclesiology, thus reminding us of the long task of theological reconceptualization that lies before us. Second, I hope that what follows

¹ Richard Harvey, “Shaping the Aims and Aspirations of Jewish Believers,” *Mishkan* 48 (2006), 24.

can contribute to this year's discussion of Torah's fulfillment in Messiah and its ongoing relevance for Jewish followers of Yeshua.

I. "A Kingdom of Priest and a Holy Nation:" Laying the Groundwork

Because the pneumatology offered here draws upon the larger framework of God's covenant with Israel, it is necessary for us to do a bit of background work before addressing pneumatology proper. First, we must rehearse some basic points with regard to the contours of Israel's vocation, and, second, we must retrace Christology along these theological lines. In what follows, we will briefly address each of these tasks in turn.

The Corporate Life and Vocation of Israel

In the Genesis creation narrative, we are told six times that God beholds what he has made and calls it good, and finds the whole of his creation very good. However, the climax of the narrative comes not on the sixth day (i.e., creation's completion), but on the seventh day (i.e., the blessing and sanctification of the Sabbath). While creation is repeatedly called good, the word holy only appears with reference to the Sabbath. "The world, untarnished by any evil, was very good. But it was not yet holy. It was *chol*—profane, secular."² In Genesis 2, the Sabbath is "not an institution but a hope," a sign that points toward creation's eschatological telos—holiness (*kedushah*).

As we follow the narrative forward, we see in Exodus that the redeemed and delivered people of Israel are commissioned to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy

² Mark Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah and the People of God: A Vision for Messianic Jewish Covenant Fidelity*, ed. Jennifer M. Rosner (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 95.

nation” (Exodus 19:6).³ The holiness associated with the Sabbath gains fuller clarity through the calling and shaping of the people of Israel. As Kinzer explains, “only with the establishment of Israel as a holy people...does *kedushah*, that eschatological destiny of consummated creation, descend to earth and become a signpost pointing the way to the world’s ultimate fulfillment.”⁴ The holy people are fittingly commanded to observe the Sabbath, the holy day (Exodus 20:8).⁵ Likewise, as the nation commissioned to usher the divine presence into creation, Israel is tasked with building God’s earthly abode, i.e. the tabernacle and later the temple. The Sabbath as sanctified time and the tabernacle/temple as sanctified space are closely correlated; effectually, the Sabbath is a “temple in time” just as the temple is a “Sabbath in space.”⁶

God’s holiness in the midst of Israel, the Sabbath and the tabernacle/temple points forward to the final consummation of creation—God’s unrestricted presence and the definitive removal of the secular/holy barrier. Jewish tradition describes the world to come as “a day that will be entirely Shabbat,”⁷ and Scripture (perhaps most notably Zechariah 14 and Revelation 21) offers an eschatological vision in which God’s holiness ultimately blankets all of space and time.

³ According to Kinzer, “it is surely significant that the various forms of the Hebrew root *koph-dalet-shin* appear nowhere else in the book of Genesis. They are not seen again until Hashem’s revelation to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5), and then with the first commandments given to Israel—in Egypt (Exodus 12:16; 13:2) and at Sinai (Exodus 19:6, 10, 14, 23)” (Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 96 n. 8).

⁴ Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 96

⁵ As Kinzer explains, “Shabbat only becomes a human institution after the exodus and in connection with Sinai and Israel’s national constitution (coinciding with Israel’s call to be a holy people and to construct a holy place); it is the preeminent sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Exodus 31:16-17)” (Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 4).

⁶ Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 96; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 8, 21. The biblical narrative concretizes this connection by patterning the building of the tabernacle/temple after the six days of creation, with the tabernacle/temple as the telos of Israel’s work mirroring the Sabbath as the telos of God’s work (see Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 1985), 142-145).

⁷ *M. Tamid* 7:4; *Genesis Rabbah* 17:5

It is important to note that, while Israel's holiness (which points forward toward this eschatological holiness) is expressed through its connection to the Sabbath and the tabernacle/temple, it is not ultimately contingent upon these things.⁸ Israel's existence as God's dwelling place is made manifest through its distinctive covenantal responsibilities and practices. Every facet of Jewish life expresses the holiness allotted to Israel and hastens toward the sanctification and consummation of all of creation. The people of Israel—with or without the temple, whether in the land or in exile—participate proleptically in the unbounded holiness that will characterize eschatological consummation. Their collective life and practices are postured toward ushering creation from being good to being holy. As Franz Rosenzweig so eloquently describes, Israel already tastes the intimate covenantal fellowship with God for which all creation is destined.

Within this framework, Israel's story and covenantal life reflect two seemingly irreconcilable threads. According to the first thread of Israel's narrative, the Israelites are commanded to preserve God's holiness dwelling in their midst by avoiding both moral and ritual impurity.⁹ According to Jonathan Klawans, moral impurity refers to sinful behavior (idolatry, incest, murder, etc.), which results in defilement of the people, the sanctuary and the Land. Moral impurity incites divine chastisement, requires atonement, and, unabated, leads to exile.

⁸ According to Kinzer, "the destruction of the *Bet Mikdash* [temple] in 70 A.D. and the subsequent exile from Jerusalem raised serious questions for the rabbinic tradition. Had Israel lost its *kedushah*? With no temple, no high priest, and no sacrifices, and with a life lived in the impure lands of the *goyim* (nations), how could Israel maintain its holiness? The answer of the rabbis is striking. They did not merely claim that Israel maintains its holiness, despite its loss of the temple system and the land. They went further and asserted that Israel's holiness was never entirely dependent on these factors" (Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah*, 100).

⁹ For a full explanation of the distinction between moral and ritual impurity, see Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford, 2004).

Ritual impurity, by contrast, is a (generally) temporary condition that results from contact with natural and unavoidable sources of impurity. Ritual impurity is transmittable, it is overcome by “washing and waiting,” and it is not sinful unless one refuses to undergo the prescribed purification procedures. According to Jacob Milgrom, the purity construct in the book of Leviticus revolves around three primary sources of ritual impurity: corpses/carcasses, skin diseases, and genital discharges.¹⁰ After lengthy prescriptions related to infectious skin diseases and genital discharges, Leviticus 15:31 reads: “You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.” Thus, Israel’s sanctity relies upon the people’s ability to guard, preserve and carefully steward God’s presence in their midst.

According to the second strand of the narrative, the holiness of God that dwells within Israel will expand outward into the ordinary (*chol*) world beyond. This trajectory is present from the very beginning, originating in God’s call of Abram (“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” Genesis 12:3), and is repeatedly echoed throughout the prophetic literature. Isaiah imagines a day when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9), and declares that “it is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Zechariah 14 envisions a day on which the most mundane objects will be just as holy as the temple instruments in Jerusalem. In the narrative of the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel’s guarded holiness coexists (albeit uneasily)

¹⁰ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 46; Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 105.

with the vision that one day – “on that day” – God’s presence will flow far beyond these prescribed boundaries and parameters.

The Incarnation and Life of Yeshua

Seen through this lens, God’s incarnation in Yeshua represents both the continuation of God’s story with Israel and a radically new chapter in that story. The atonement that Yeshua, the great high priest, effects on the cross provides the final and definitive sacrifice for sins, thus cleansing and purifying God’s people. As was prophesied in Ezekiel 34, God himself shepherds and tends to his flock, bringing back the strays, binding up the injured and guarding against plunderers.

As demonstrated by his life and ministry, Yeshua embodies a “concentrated and intensified form of the divine presence,”¹¹ which is made especially evident through the *invasive* quality of his holiness. While Israel was commanded to refrain from contact with ritually unclean objects and persons, lest Israel’s holiness be defiled, Yeshua’s holiness flows *outward* into the impure world. Through him, the holiness embodied by Israel begins to ripple throughout creation, as it was always intended to do. “Yeshua’s contact with the impure does not defile him, but instead transmits purity, holiness, and life to the impure ones around him. Yeshua’s life and mission thus display a new type of *kedushah*, a prophetic, invasive holiness that needs no protection, but reaches out to sanctify the profane.”¹²

To illustrate this point, let us look at several passages from the book of Matthew, keeping in mind Milgrom’s three main sources of ritual impurity. Matthew 8:1-4, the first

¹¹ Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 104.

¹² Kinzer, *Israel’s Messiah*, 107.

recorded miracle in Matthew's gospel, tells the story of Yeshua healing a man with leprosy. While Yeshua's healings do not have a standard format, Matthew is intentional to note that, in this case, he reaches out his *hand* and *touches* the leper. According to the Levitical purity system, this action should have resulted in Yeshua contracting the leper's ritual impurity. However, in what must have been a shocking and scandalous surprise for Yeshua's Jewish onlookers, Yeshua's holiness and purity flows outward and heals the leper. Yeshua then commands him to follow the purification ritual specified in Leviticus 14.

The very next chapter of Matthew includes a pericope in which one story is interrupted by another story. Matthew 9 begins with a ruler who beckons Yeshua to come "put his hand" on his daughter, who has just died. As Yeshua gets up to go with him, a woman "who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years" (euphemistic language for ritually impure genital discharge) reaches out and *touches* Yeshua's tzitzit. Just like the leper in Matthew 8, her contact with Yeshua leads to her healing, when just the opposite would have been expected. The narrative then goes back to the ruler's daughter, who Yeshua raises by *taking her hand*. Again, the story is rife with touch language; Matthew wants us to be clear that Yeshua is transgressing boundaries of ritual purity, and that in him God's holiness is beginning to expand outward.

When Yeshua is asked to authenticate his ministry and messiahship in Matthew 11, he does so by pointing to what can be *seen and heard* as a result of his work. Echoing Isaiah 61, Yeshua declares that "the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Matthew 11:5). His identity is confirmed by the tangible, physical

restoration that, through him, is spreading outward into the world. It is noteworthy that when Yeshua commissions his disciples in Matthew 10, these are the precise actions he commands them to perform as well.

In light of our topic at hand, it should not be overlooked that the passages from Matthew 8-11 just reviewed immediately follow the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Yeshua's entire discourse in this section is framed by his words in Matthew 5:17ff,¹³ making it clear that his fulfillment of the outward expansion of Israel's holiness does *not* imply a supersessionist stance toward Torah.

Having briefly explored the connection between Israel's vocation and Messiah's fulfillment and continuation of that vocation, we are now prepared to further explore this trajectory from a pneumatological perspective.

II. "You Will Be My Witnesses:" The Empowerment of the Spirit

Luke, the author of Luke-Acts, is the most prolific contributor to the New Testament as well as the one who mentions the Holy Spirit more than any other. The book of Acts begins where the gospel of Luke leaves off; the apostles have been told to wait in Jerusalem until the gift promised by the Father has come (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). In Acts 1:6, the apostles ask the resurrected Yeshua, "are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" While Yeshua's answer does not clarify dates or times, the response he gives provides the framework for the entire book of Acts: "You will receive

¹³ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In what follows, we will unpack the implications of the Spirit’s coming for the two-fold body of Messiah.

First to the Jew...

Acts 2 begins with the casting of lots to determine who will replace Judas as the twelfth apostle and then immediately moves into the Pentecost narrative, which occurs during the Jewish festival of Shavuot. In Hebrew, Shavuot means “weeks,” and refers to the seven weeks between the Exodus from Egypt and God’s revelation of the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai. Greek-speaking Jews referred to Shavuot as Pentecost (the “fiftieth” day, i.e. seven weeks).

Shavuot commemorates the day on which God gave the Israelites the Torah, and it is one of the three pilgrimage festivals in Judaism; this explains why, in Acts 2:5, “there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” The imagery of the Acts 2 Pentecost account parallels the Exodus 19-20 narrative of God’s giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Exodus 19:16 refers to “thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast.” Similarly, Acts 2:2-3 refers to “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind,” and “what seemed to be tongues of fire.”

In order to unpack these parallels between Shavuot (i.e., the giving of the Torah) and Pentecost (i.e., the giving of the Spirit), it is important to see the tight connection between the giving of the Torah and the Exodus from Egypt. In Israel’s history and

theology, these events are two sides of the same coin; they are the two essential steps to Israel gaining freedom. But what does this freedom look like?

Speaking as an American, “freedom” serves as a touchstone in our nation’s history, politics and culture, and we have in mind a very specific thing when we use this word. What *we* mean by freedom is “freedom to,” which implies a lack of constraint and the ability to self-determine. In short, freedom in the American context means *liberty*, and our nation’s rhetoric repeatedly promises to protect this “inalienable right.”

This, however, does not capture the essence of biblical freedom. From a scriptural perspective, autonomous self-determination is the sure path to ruin. Israel’s story repeatedly illustrates the way in which the people’s corporate life is dependent upon a certain yieldedness to the will and ways of God. Biblical freedom is more aptly categorized as “freedom from” rather than “freedom to”; is not so much *liberty* as it is *liberation*. Obedience and submission to God is the singular path to freedom from the many false gods that vie for our loyalty and promise an abundant life. Israel’s history testifies to the way in which straying from obedience to God inevitably leads to idolatry.

It is this biblical notion of freedom that we must understand if we are to fully grasp the theological significance of the Exodus-Sinai event. As Rabbi Donin explains, “the festival of Shavuot emphasizes the spiritually significant lesson that the release from bondage and the winning of political freedom does not constitute complete freedom unless it culminates in the spiritual *restraints, disciplines, and duties* inherent in the Revelation to Israel and in Israel’s acceptance of the Torah.”¹⁴ If the Israelites had been liberated from Egypt only to pursue their own earthly desires, they would have merely traded one cruel master for another. In other words, if the Exodus is about Israel gaining

¹⁴ Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 240. Italics added.

freedom, that freedom is incomplete and misdirected without Torah. Israel is led into a *teleological communal life*, and the Torah provides the roadmap for their journey.

Because Torah is intimately connected to freedom, and because the coming of the Spirit occurs during Israel's annual celebration of the giving of the Torah, we can affirm with Paul that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17). We must remember, however, that this freedom does not mean a lack of constraint or restraint. This freedom is characterized by communal structure, order and submission to God. The Spirit thus enables the people of God to faithfully journey onward, providing the community with the same kinds of "restraints, disciplines, and duties" that Israel had always known through the Torah.

In fact, for Israel, the coming of the Spirit was indeed correlated with the empowerment to obey Torah. During the Babylonian exile, Ezekiel's prophetic promise of restoration envisions a time when God will regather his people from the nations where they have been scattered and bring them back into the land of Israel (Ezekiel 11:17). Ezekiel continues: "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:18-20).

Again in chapter 36, Ezekiel prophesies Israel's return to the land and voices God's promise: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will

live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:26-28). According to Ezekiel’s vision of restoration, the Land, obedience to Torah, and the gift of God’s Spirit go hand in hand.

The promise of the Spirit in Ezekiel 36 immediately follows God’s promise to cleanse his people from impurity and idolatry (v. 25). Fittingly, Peter’s response to the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 is to call those present to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). The gift of the Spirit, and the obedience enabled by that gift, must be preceded by repentance and forgiveness of sins. As prophesied by Ezekiel, the Spirit’s coming is accompanied by a cleansing from impurity and idolatry.¹⁵

The vision of Torah observant Messianic Judaism hinges upon the divine empowerment brought by God’s Spirit. While Messiah provides atonement for sins and models for us the perfect fulfillment of Torah, our baptism and reception of the gift of his Spirit enables us to boldly follow in his footsteps. By the power of the Spirit, Israel is thus empowered to faithfully live out the life to which it is called, a life of obedience and submission to God.

...then to the Gentile

Acts 3-9 includes numerous references to the Spirit’s presence and power among the believers, and Acts 10 tells the story of the surprising inclusion of Gentiles in this ever-expanding movement of God. When Peter recounts the narrative of God’s work in Messiah at Cornelius’ house – after both Peter and Cornelius have received visions from

¹⁵ For a detailed exposition of this connection, see Mark Kinzer, “Israel’s Eschatological Renewal in Water and Spirit: A Messianic Jewish Perspective on Baptism” (paper presented at the 2009 Messianic Jewish–Roman Catholic Dialogue Group in Jerusalem, Israel, September 2009).

God – “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message” (Acts 10:44). Peter and his Jewish companions “were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (Acts 2:45). In this regard, the Spirit indeed extends the work of Messiah; God’s presence and holiness continues to expand outward, astonishing even those Jews who had followed Yeshua and had been participating in his mission. Apparently they had not yet realized the full implications of the outward expansion of God’s reign of which they themselves were a part.

The presence of the Spirit among both Jews and Gentiles illustrates what it actually means that the “wall of hostility” has been torn down. In Peter’s vision in Acts 10, he is instructed “not to call impure anything that God has made clean” (Acts 10:15). Peter’s understanding of this vision has everything to do with fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, as evidenced by the interpretation he offers in Acts 11 and Acts 15. In Acts 11, the response of the “circumcised believers” to Peter’s explanation is: “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

Indeed, it is precisely the gift of the Spirit that identifies and concretizes unity and fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. Three times in the book of Acts, it is noted that the Spirit came upon the Gentiles *just as he came upon the Jews* (Acts 10:47, 11:15, 15:8-9). This, for the Jewish believers, was the overwhelming proof that God’s work extended beyond the people of Israel.

However, it is determined early on that the *implications* of the gift of the Spirit – and of God’s presence and work – are not the same for Jews as for Gentiles. This is the issue that occasions the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, and the fact that the Spirit came upon the Gentiles *as Gentiles* constitutes Peter’s argument that the Gentiles need not be

required to obey all the commandments of the Torah. While the Spirit's presence among both Jews and Gentiles powerfully illustrates and actualizes God's ever-expanding work in the world, it apparently does not erase the distinction – particularly with regard to stipulations of covenant faithfulness – between Jew and Gentile.

While the Spirit empowers Jews to uphold the “restraints, disciplines, and duties” to which the Torah had always called them, the Spirit likewise orders the life of Gentile followers of Yeshua *so that* they may live as the people of God alongside and joined to the people of Israel. The practices that are required of Gentile believers in Acts 15 illustrate their turn from idolatry and arguably set basic parameters that enable table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. Through God's work in their midst, Gentiles join into the teleological communal life of Israel without themselves becoming Jews.

Michael Wyschogrod provides an interesting reflection on the theology of Paul, which is relevant to this discussion as well. According to Wyschogrod's exegesis of Paul, “the Christ event had made possible a new category: gentiles who were not circumcised and not obedient to the Torah but who were still not excluded from the house of Israel.” Wyschogrod calls those belonging to this new category “associate members in the house of Israel.”¹⁶ It seems that Acts likewise defines a similar category, membership in which is evidenced by the presence of the Spirit.

To briefly review what we have established thus far, the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2 is rife with Sinai imagery, leading us to understand the gift of the Spirit as parallel to the gift of the Torah. Ezekiel's restoration prophecies reinforce this connection and point toward the Spirit as the one who will empower the people of Israel to obey Torah.

¹⁶ Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 191, 193.

The coming of the Spirit upon Jews in Acts 2 foreshadows the coming of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Acts 10, an event that astonishes those Jews present. This democratization of the Spirit illustrates the ever-widening expansion of God's work and presence and establishes a solid bridge between Jews and Gentiles within the people of God. This bridge does not erase distinction but rather facilitates and enables intimate fellowship among those whose covenantal callings look different in practice. Like Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology, this portrayal of bilateral pneumatology illustrates the way in which God's redemptive and consummative work empowers both Jews and Gentiles to carry out a life of obedience, uniquely but jointly.

A Rosenzweigian Pneumatology?

In the time that remains, I would like to draw Franz Rosenzweig into the conversation as a way of concluding the pneumatological reflections just offered. While Rosenzweig does not offer a well-developed or freestanding pneumatology, the bilateral pneumatology offered here fits quite well within the purview of his thought. According to what we have said so far, the Spirit empowers what Rosenzweig construes as Judaism's inward-facing, Torah-centered redemptive vocation as well as Christianity's outward-facing, ever-expanding redemptive vocation. In this way, Rosenzweig's theological paradigm sharpens and fleshes out a bilateral pneumatological vision.

Additionally, Rosenzweig is able to offer incisive cautionary flags to each community that we too would be wise to heed. According to Rosenzweig, as Christianity goes about its task of converting the pagans away from "the old gods, the old world, the

old Adam,”¹⁷ it is always susceptible to a “spiritualization of God”¹⁸ and a “flight into pure contemplation,” thus effectively emptying the idea of God of its “concrete richness.”¹⁹ To the extent that Christianity unhitches itself from Judaism, it is in danger of drifting toward paganism and spiraling out of its redemptive orbit. The fact that pneumatology’s doctrinal history reflects scant concern with the connection between the Spirit and Torah (and perhaps the Spirit and the Jewish people more broadly) illustrates Christianity’s tendency to succumb to this temptation and decouple itself from its life-giving source.

Judaism, according to Rosenzweig, is susceptible to the opposite danger. The Jewish temptation is to magnify God’s intimacy with the Jewish people to the necessary and complete exclusion of the rest of the world and its peoples. The Jewish people are in danger of forgetting that the ultimate redemption upon which they wait applies to *all* humanity; essentially, the Jewish people’s inwardness causes them to forsake the rest of the world. The Jew’s immersion in Torah leads to a willful ignorance and indifference toward the pagan world that has embraced Christianity, and Judaism thus retreats into “the cozy domestic space between the Law and its...people.”²⁰ For Rosenzweig, the Spirit “throws bridges from man to man, from tongue to tongue,”²¹ and Judaism’s tendency to live in blissful isolation has the effect of obscuring these bridges and corroding the bonds they provide.

¹⁷ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 421.

¹⁸ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 422.

¹⁹ Stéphane Mosès, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 274.

²⁰ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 426.

²¹ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 388.

The caution that Rosenzweig issues is aimed at normative Judaism; how much more applicable is it to Messianic Judaism! In the words of Paul, “we were all baptized by **one Spirit** so as to form **one body**—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the **one Spirit** to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Again, it is the Spirit who binds the two-fold body of Messiah together, and this unity must be preserved even as we live faithfully within the unique contours of our respective redemptive vocations.

Finally, from the vantage point of bilateral pneumatology, there is one overarching feature of Rosenzweig’s paradigm that must be noted and challenged. As one commentator has explained, for Rosenzweig, “Christianity and Judaism are internally incompatible but mutually reinforcing religious life-worlds, both of which stand as necessary witnesses to redemption.”²² While in Rosenzweig’s system Judaism and Christianity exist under the same umbrella of redemption, their trajectories are completely separate and their borders are not permeable. Even as he posits Christianity’s fundamental reliance upon and indebtedness to Judaism, Rosenzweig does not allow for overlap between the two. While this vantage point is undoubtedly a function of Rosenzweig’s historical setting, the events that have transpired between his lifetime and ours allow us to read the history and reality of Judaism and Christianity differently than Rosenzweig. For him, they are fundamentally dissimilar and their vocations are complementary but essentially incompatible. For us, Yeshua—and his Spirit in our midst—serves as a link between the two communities.

Rosenzweig helpfully construes the distinct vocations of Judaism and Christianity as a good thing, thus reminding us not to overlook the fundamental differences between

²² *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134.

the two. Nevertheless, we must insist on more continuity than he allows for. We serve as living examples that there can and should be some sort of overlap between Judaism and Christianity, a vista that Rosenzweig himself could have scarcely imagined. A Messianic Jewish (or bilateral) pneumatology provides yet one more lens through which to see and name this overlap, in order that it may be fostered and strengthened.

But with our unique posture comes a unique responsibility—to shape the future of our still-marginalized and misunderstood insistence upon straddling two traditions. It is my hope that in our continued work together, we can increasingly discern what it looks like for each of us in our varied contexts to forge the way forward. The task that lies ahead is framed by the questions we are asking together – questions about identity and community, questions about faithfulness and obedience, questions about Yeshua and Torah. These are among the central questions which it is our obligation and legacy to ask, and, eventually, to answer.