



# Reading Paul with Messianic Jews

Doing biblical studies through interviews

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**ABSTRACT** • This review article presents and summarises my doctoral dissertation ‘Reading Romans, Constructing Paul(s): A Conversation between Messianic Jews in Jerusalem and Paul within Judaism Scholars’, defended on 24 September 2021 at Lund University. It is a highly interdisciplinary study between New Testament studies and the anthropology of Christianity. It focuses on Paul and readings of Romans 11, where the Messianic Jewish readings originate from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Jerusalem through so-called Bible-reading interviews. This article summarises each chapter, provides examples from the empirical chapters ‘Identity and Torah’, ‘Relations and Yeshua’ and ‘Time and Land’, and finishes by pointing out three major conclusions followed by three additional key contributions that the study makes.\*

## Introduction

### Messianic Jew meets Bible scholar: real life scene I

A Messianic Jew seeks advice on a halakhic matter from a ‘Paul-within-Judaism’ scholar. Together they turn to the apostle Paul and his writings in search of an answer. The historical-critical scholar speaks, the deeply religious person listens, and implements the guidance in his congregation. This is an astonishing meeting, yet unexpected. Besides real-life stories from a Messianic Jewish point of view, there are ideological and scholarly traces of an affinity between Messianic Judaism and the Paul-within-Judaism perspective. In particular, they are both dedicated to reading Paul and his writings as being within

Judaism, to promote a Jewish Paul and combat anti-Judaism.

### Bible scholar meets Messianic Jews: real life scene II

A trained New Testament exegete reads Paul with Messianic Jews in Israel. This is what happened: interested in how Jesus-believing Jews today actually understand the writings from another Jesus-believing Jew, Paul, I transformed from a traditional exegete to a fieldworker. I brought my Bible and recorder and went out into the field of ‘living readers’. The Messianic Jewish readings that this review article discusses originate from ethnographic fieldwork in Jerusalem conducted during my doctoral studies. I carried out biblical studies in an empirical way (God forbid!), and it turned out to be both fun and fruitful.

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This review article aims to present a teaser and a taste of my doctoral dissertation ‘Reading Romans, Constructing Paul(s): A Conversation between Messianic Jews in Jerusalem and Paul-within-Judaism Scholars’ (Nyström 2021). The title has the word ‘conversation’ in it, but admittedly, it is not so much *a* conversation, but *many* conversations. Given that it is a dissertation in New Testament studies, and in order to fill several gaps in contemporary research, I focused on how the two groups – Jesus-believing Jews and Paul-within-Judaism scholars – actually read Paul: how they construct his identity and how they read one of his most influential letters. I chose Romans 11 in particular as this chapter is of utmost importance for both in their shared focus on all things Jewish. As Yitshak,<sup>1</sup> one of the Messianic Jews featured in this study, said about this choice of text: ‘This is the very heart of God!’ (Nyström 2021: 5, 107; interview with Yitshak, 2015). The study is formed as a conversation between the scholarly and the religious readings of Romans 11 on similarities and dissimilarities between them, although most are within the readings performed by the Messianic Jews as such. With the focus on Jewishness and Judaism, as well as post-supersessionism (a topic figuring frequently in the study), the dissertation joins today’s intense discussion within biblical studies and in the systematic theology of reading the New Testament *within* Judaism.

### The Paul-within-Judaism perspective and Messianic Judaism in Israel

The dissertation consists of two parts, with three chapters in each, followed by a free-standing summary and conclusion. ‘Part

1 All names are pseudonyms.

One: Frameworks for the Readings’ serves as a backdrop for understanding the Messianic Jewish readings; why all this matters, what they are, and where they come from. ‘Part Two: The Readings in Context’ discusses the Messianic Jewish readings of Romans 11 in dialogue with the scholarly readings. In the following, I turn to each of the chapters, aiming to give a short summary of content and argument.

‘Messianic Judaism and Paul within Judaism’ (Chapter One), apart for situating the study along the lines above with motivation and aim, does two things. First, and intertwined with the state of research, I offer an introduction to what Messianic Judaism is with a focus on identity negotiations, moving on to the issue of the Bible and Bible reading in the movement. Since Jesus-believing Jews somehow inhabit the space in-between Judaism and Christianity, I argue that engagement with the Bible is fundamental for this group in performing their identity, especially as they regard the Bible (the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament) as the ‘the final authority in all matters of life and practice’ (MJAA 2021; UMJC 2021). There has been a lack of studies focusing on both Messianic Judaism in Israel and its engagement with the Bible, which the study aims to fill.

Thereafter, the focus shifts to the conversation partner of the Paul-within-Judaism perspective. Since Paul-within-Judaism is the newest and most radical perspective on Paul within New Testament research, I here outline general characteristics of the approach and offer examples of how its scholars read Romans 11. This perspective, very briefly, argues the following characteristics in its construction of the apostle:

- Paul remained fully Jewish even as a follower of the Messiah of Israel (Jesus);
- Paul also remained Torah-observant;

- Paul writes to non-Jews (not to a universal audience);
- Paul perceived humanity as consisting of two parts according to God's plan: Jews *and* non-Jews, even when united in the Messiah;
- Paul thought of the end of the world as around the corner.

The discussion of this perspective is placed within a wider context of other Pauline approaches outlined here, so as to consider whether some readings within the Messianic Jewish world correspond more to traits of these other trajectories. I suggest, as a contribution to the field of Pauline studies, a renaming of the established perspectives to more accurately capture what is at stake in them in regard to how Paul is constructed: 'Paul *outside* Judaism' (formerly the Lutheran/traditional perspective on Paul) and 'Paul *and* Judaism' (formerly the new perspective on Paul), alongside Paul *within* Judaism.

'The Landscape of Messianic Judaism in Israel' (Chapter Two) shifts the focus to lived Messianic Judaism. Vignettes from two very different congregations in Jerusalem begin the chapter in order to offer a unique field-work-based intimation of how different their worship can appear. Identity and identity negotiations are focal topics of this chapter as a whole; how crafting a unique and 'authentic' identity as Jesus-believing Jews is ever-present in worshippers' lives, rituals and theology. As the movement largely emerges from evangelical Christianity and its mission, the believers constantly balance between things traditionally perceived as Jewish on the one hand, and Christian on the other. Alongside depicting the historical development in the United States and in Israel especially, I also show how creating a Messianic Jewish language and terminology is decisive in this endeavour. The most common example of

this is the use of 'Yeshua' instead of 'Jesus'. Also, traditional Christian terms such as 'mass' and 'church' are disregarded in favour of *seudat haadon* (lit. 'the Lord's supper') and *kehilah* (lit. 'community'); in other words, Hebrew and Jewish terms are favoured, adhered to and created to form a distinct Messianic Jewish vernacular. I argue that the main factor of dispute, ironically, within contemporary Messianic Judaism in Israel is Jewishness: how Jewish the believers should be in life, rituals and practice both in congregational and personal life. Here I formulate the analytical categories of *evangelical-Jewish* and *traditional-Jewish* to explore how different strands of the movement relate to surrounding Jewish and Christian milieus, showing that a majority of congregations belong to the evangelical-Jewish part of the spectrum. The following quotation aims to give a taste of what an evangelical-Jewish congregation is like:

'Oh, the blood of Yeshua cleanses us of all impurity!' The song rises up towards the tall ceiling as the Messianic Jewish congregation sings, lifting their hands, praising the risen Mashiah, who one day, soon, will come back. The *shofar* (ram's horn, used as an instrument), the instrument typically used during Jewish high holidays, is constantly blown, making its significant dull hum. The worship team of about seven people enthusiastically plays different instruments. No, I correct myself, they are worshipping the Lord, pouring out their souls and their hearts' desire to belong to Yeshua. The lyrics about God's majestic deeds are intended to open up the heavenly realm. The texts are simple, Yeshua-centred, and clearly biblically themed. I recognise familiar Jewish melodies, paired with what I identify as contemporary evangelical worship songs. The scene is charismatic, and

the atmosphere feels ‘authentic’, if there is such a thing. ... Whereas the *tslav* [cross] is a recurrent figure in their rhetoric, the only decoration in the room is the huge Israeli flag that hangs beside the altar. The flag is impossible to miss, underscoring that the land of Israel, expressed as the State of Israel, plays a vital role in their theology and also prayers; perhaps even more important is reading the ‘Word of God’, and living a life formed by the holy texts. Today the *roeh* (shepherd) delivers a rather free-style sermon, a message ‘from the heart of the Lord’ as he phrases it, on *Erets Yisrael* – the land of Israel. (Nyström 2021: 55–6)

Throughout the chapter, it is argued how the Bible is essential in understanding Messianic Jewish identity and thus in paving a way for a study directly focused on readings to better grasp the negotiations mentioned above.

### Biblical studies done in an empirical way

‘Interviews, Reception Studies, and Social Life of Scripture’ (Chapter Three) discusses issues of theoretical and methodological character. It offers a suggestion of how, as a Bible scholar, one can conduct a solid empirical study. Thus the project, being highly interdisciplinary, combines the fields of biblical studies and anthropology of Christianity, or, in other words, lived religion through ethnographic methods. This is something new from a point of biblical studies – but with much potential for a field often described as being in crisis.

How did the Messianic Jewish readings come into being? Developing a methodological approach termed ‘Bible-reading interviews’, I conducted semi-structured interviews on Romans 11 with about twenty male

leaders within the Messianic Jewish world in Jerusalem (2015–16, with a few additionally in 2019–20). Besides describing what I did with these, according to common ethnographic standards, I reflect on issues of conducting participant observation in different congregations during services and on issues of reflexivity, especially in terms of questions of gender and faith.

Placing the project within a theoretical framework to carve out a place for empirical and contemporary readings, I rely in the study on insights from both fields it engages with:

- (a) From biblical studies: reception theory. On the basis of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s and Hans Robert Jauss’s ideas about reading and understanding, I argue that reception *history* and its focus on the Bible in *objects* should be expanded to reception studies; *contemporary* and in *subjects*, in other words, among ‘living’ readers ‘out there’.
- (b) From anthropology: the social life of Scripture. I follow the anthropologist James S. Biele’s approach to people’s interactions with biblical text, working especially with his concepts of biblical ideology and biblical practice to analyse the interviews. Reading is here understood to include elements of both interpreting the text and applying it to one’s own circumstances. The emic understanding of biblical ideology, it is shown, is one of highest authority and of literalism, whereas the etic is shown to be one of high creativity (as Part Two illustrates). Among the biblical practices applied by Messianic Jews, I argue that their readings are directed by three hermeneutical strategies: *post-supersessionism* (that God has not cast away his people Israel), *Yeshualogy* (reading through the lens of Jesus as the sole saviour), and

*relevance* (the Word is living and active). It is shown below how this works in the reading interviews.

We now move our gaze to Part Two in the study to explore how the Messianic Jewish readers read Romans 11. In the following three sections, an interview excerpt will be the starting point of discussion. They are representative voices and originate from the evangelical-Jewish part of the spectrum where, as mentioned, we find most Messianic Jews in Israel.

### Identity and Torah

Now, since Paul is appealing to Israel's chosenness on the basis of the remnant principle, this means that from the time of the apostles and their writings until today, there has always been a faithful remnant of Jewish believers in Yeshua. Always! And that's comforting to us. ... It's unfortunate that some people use, or misuse, his words to argue *for* replacement theology when he actually is writing *against* replacement theology. ... Another important thing is that Paul is still very active in his Jewish identity, expression of worship, connection with the Torah; he still goes to the temple, to the synagogue. The Bible says, 'as was his practice'. (Nyström 2021: 149; interview with Yoel, 2016)

Yoel's reading captures well what is explored in 'Identity and Torah' (Chapter Four) as it deals with the opening of Romans 11 and how the Messianic Jews explore issues of identity, post-supersessionism and Torah. In Paul's words 'I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham ... So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace' (Rom. 11: vv. 1, 5<sup>2</sup>), Paul's and the Jews'

2 All quotations from the New Testament

own identity are scripturally confirmed: they can remain in their Jewish ethnicity as Jesus-believers. While the identification with Paul is present in the interviews, the attachment to the concept of the remnant is much stronger. The mention of 'present time' is transformed from Paul's time to their time, thus extending the Bible's words into today's realities, where, as Messianic Jews, they embody the biblical promise.

The topic of post-supersessionism is essential to the Messianic Jewish community, and is a reading strategy present throughout the interviews. Objecting to what Christian history has taught in the form of supersessionism – that God has replaced Israel with a new people, the Church – is fundamental to their identity as Jewish believers in Jesus. Again, Paul's words help in this endeavour: 'I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!' (v. 1). Proclaimed as an ideology vital for them in supporting a continued chosenness of Israel, Paul's own words also raise a challenge. 'The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened' (v. 7). For the participants in the study, Jesus-believing Jews constitute the elect, whereas the hardened ones are Jews not confessing faith in Jesus as the Messiah – although this is a topic considered sensitive and is largely ignored. Furthermore, their definition of the remnant has been changed (as Paul also seems to do!) from Jews faithful to God to Jews believing in Jesus.

In light of Romans 11, the Torah and Torah observance become present in the interviews through Paul's statement 'But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace' (v. 6). The small word 'works' gave rise to wide discussions on this topic, the most controversial in contemporary Messianic

are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Judaism: how ‘Jewishly’ should one live in relation to surrounding religious Jewish society in Israel and in light of the Christian history of condemning the ‘law’? While a few are quite observant, most are not. Interestingly, the participants construct Paul as more observant than they themselves are today. Avraham, formulating the majority view, considers Torah observance to be ‘cosmetic’, something outward and not necessary for the inward faith of the heart. He said:

The Torah is good and it’s holy. There’s no question about it. But he [Paul] is speaking to the old creation. Now, Paul believes that we are in Christ. ... So this takes us actually to a whole new reality. ... So we are a new reality and a new reality has to live out its relationship to God differently than in the Sinai reality. (Nyström 2021: 183; interview with Avraham, 2019)

Thus it is ideologically important that the Torah remain within a Jewish, post-supersessionist framework, but in practice this has been transformed through and around Jesus into something new, something different. The Torah should be viewed in light of Jesus: Jesus is now the centre of gravity of believers’ lives, not the Torah. Here, again, we witness how a hermeneutic of Yeshualogy is considered the most important factor for understanding Romans 11 and believers’ own identity and life.

### Relations and Yeshua

And they [the Gentiles] are receiving life from the Jews. You [Gentiles] have been grafted *into* them. That’s why you are alive. That’s what you’re getting from the fatness of the root, because you’ve become part of the tree of Messianic Israel. You should be grateful, not boasting. You see, what the

Church did – I sometimes say this jokingly – the Church planted a Christmas tree instead of the olive tree. ... Humanity is made up from a biblical perspective of the Jews and the Nations, those two parts. ... It’s the wholeness of Christ if it’s Jew and Gentile and that is what the New Testament calls the ‘one new man’. (Nyström 2021: 199; interview with Avraham, 2019)

‘Relations and Yeshua’ (Chapter Five) starts off with the charismatic Avraham, one of the most precise and vocal participants, with a great sense of humour, during the Bible-reading interview. Turning to the middle part of Romans 11, Paul here presents his well-known olive-tree metaphor. Not surprisingly, the interviews came here to focus especially on the topics of relations between Jews and non-Jews and the role of Jesus in this. Paul again: ‘But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you’ (vv. 17–18).

For all the Messianic Jewish readers, the olive tree is a metaphor for humanity: the natural branches are Jews, while the wild branches represent non-Jews. For the participants, confessing faith in Jesus as the Messiah is a prerequisite for belonging and being attached to this tree, which is often seen as an image of the covenant with God. Humankind is thus understood as constructed of these two parts, parts that are of equal value but with distinct roles in God’s plan. Central to Messianic Jewish theology, based on Paul, is the notion that this ethnic distinctiveness always remains – even when united in faith in Jesus. For the readers, maintaining this separateness is to confirm their own Jewish identity as valid and to reject

supersessionism and the idea that all become Christians when believing in the Messiah. Avraham and his fellows also strongly emphasise that non-Jews are brought *into* the metaphorical olive tree and are attached to it; they do not become Israel but are dependent on Israel for their existence. This is, for them, a reading opposite to that of supersessionist Christianity throughout the centuries. Jews and non-Jews, rather, are perceived as dependent on each other to push God's plan with the world forward. This theology of unity in distinctiveness is denoted by many participants as 'the one new man' (an expression from Eph. 2:14).

In terms of relations between Jews and non-Jews in the interviews, all participants apply Romans 11 to their contemporary relations to the Christian world (but notably not to Jewish society). 'There's a lot of Gentiles being cut off from the tree [cf. vv. 20–1] and they don't even realise it. They're cut off. ... They have nothing to do with God, nothing to do with the character of Yeshua and the teachings of the Lord, and what it means to follow Him' (Nyström 2021: 231; interview with Yitshak, 2015). While Messianic Judaism usually considers evangelical Christianity a friend, the movement generally expresses a stark critique of churches. Reading the olive tree, Yitshak here gets the image of Christians being cut off from with God. The critique usually consists of three clusters: most Christians are perceived as not having a living relationship with Jesus, their view of the Bible is not literal and authoritative, and this results in all sorts of supposedly heretical teachings of both a moral and theological character (doctrines on the Virgin Mary are a prime example). Even more so, although connected, is the critique that Avraham addresses above. Christianity is perceived as having chosen a pagan, Hellenised path and has thus stepped away from the Jewish roots

that keep it alive; it has planted a Christmas tree instead of an olive tree.

### Time and land

God did not bring us back home 1,000 years ago or 500 years ago, he brings us back as dry bones, as in the hour in the time when the gospel has reached the end of the earth, beginning in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Not before, not after. This is very unique. It's coming back here, circulating the world, and coming back here. ... So, when we look at Romans 11, we really understand that this is an amazing hour on God's timetable, again. ... And the whole Bible, and all history is moving to bring this event [the eschatological crescendo] into reality. And we've seen enough of God's promises being fulfilled together to put our trust in what he says and say, 'Yeah, that day is coming when all of Israel will be saved'. ... It's a great hour, it's a great hour. And I'm in the midst of it. (Nyström 2021: 249; interview with Yitshak, 2015)

Turning to the end of Romans 11, 'Time and Land' (Chapter Six) discusses these topics as they become clearly present in the Bible-reading interviews. Yitshak illustrates this well. Paul's words here are once again, but more acutely so, read as prophecy already in the process of being fulfilled. 'I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved' (vv. 25–6). The Messianic Jews claim that they actually understand these words of Paul's by being an embodiment of the 'first fruits' (v. 16) of this coming into reality. For them, as Yitshak elaborates above, this present time is the beginning of the end times. Humanity, it is once again affirmed, consists of Jews and non-Jews dependent on each other to push forward

into the end times. While the interviews feature a number of understandings of what this 'full number' or 'fullness' of the non-Jews actually implies, they are convinced that now, today, they live at the breaking point between the era of the non-Jews and the era of the Jews. The full number is about to be fulfilled, which then results in Jews coming to faith and all Israel being saved. Since they exist today as a community of Jesus-believing Jews that is slowly growing, Paul's words lead them to understand that they embody the beginning of this promise of salvation to all Israel. In their understanding, this coming national salvation takes place in the very end times. Yitshak reads Romans 11 as a compass for God's dealings with the world and is therefore assured that the present times are the beginning of this eschatological crescendo. Messianic Jewish identity is thus deeply eschatological, an identity closely formed in their readings of Paul.

'For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable' (v. 29). Paul's words towards its close are viewed as a summary of the whole chapter: God is faithful to his people Israel. The covenantal calling remains, *therefore* all Israel will be saved. Stressing this future promise of salvation creates a scriptural means of escape for the Messianic Jews when Paul talks about a partial hardening of Israel: it is according to God's plan and then, in the future, they will also be saved through confessing Jesus as the Messiah. They thus manage to hold on to a post-supersessionist theology, although directed by Jesus.

The gift that receives most attention by the Messianic Jewish readers is without doubt the land – the land of Israel. Read against the background of Genesis 12, where Abram (Abraham) receives the promise of the land, it is viewed as still valid for the Jewish people. One common understanding of the 'full number' from the above discussion

is not one of numerical quantity, but of 'fullness' in a chronological understanding. In a highly creative application to modern times, the promise of the land is connected to the Six Day War in 1967. During this war, Israel occupied or captured (depending on one's politics) large land areas and Jerusalem was – in Jews' eyes – liberated from Gentile rule (the Jordanians) to become unified under Jewish rule. This, then, confirms for them a shift in the eschatological plan from non-Jews to Jews. This prophetic reading is further enhanced by the fact that the Messianic Jewish movement was born in the late 1960s, a sign of divine providence and a starting point for the salvation of all Israel. In Messianic Jewish thinking, as it appeared in the interviews, in sum, the physical restoration of the land of Israel is already fulfilled and the spiritual restoration, where 'all Israel' will recognise Jesus, has slowly begun and will soon culminate in the eschatological drama. Time and land are, thereby, deeply connected in readings of Paul and Romans 11: Jesus-believing Jews regard themselves as 'back home' in Israel with an identity and hermeneutic that is deeply eschatological; they live in the end times, awaiting the return of the Messiah.

### Some final reflections

Many things could be said about the conclusions of the study. Here I would like to turn to three areas.

*Messianic Judaism and Paul within Judaism.* Owing to limits of space in this review article, I did not engage in the conversation between the two groups of readers of Paul in the summary of chapters 4–6, except at the beginning. I would like to address this topic here. The study has confirmed in general that Messianic Jews read and construct Paul in a similar way to scholars of

this Jewish-oriented perspective in most aspects (see bullet points above). Both, for example, consider Paul to construct humanity as consisting of Jew and non-Jew – with a persistent ethnic separateness – setting this perspective apart from other Pauline perspectives as well as from Christian faith teachings; in interpreting Romans 11, there is no doubt that Messianic Jews espouse this perspective more than other Pauline perspectives. Yet one should be careful here for two reasons: Yeshualogy and relevance. The textual practice of Yeshualogy in Messianic Jewish hermeneutics – Jesus is seen as present ‘everywhere’ in Romans 11 without being overtly mentioned – differs strongly from readings of Paul by scholars of Judaism; in this crucial aspect, the views of Messianic Jews have more in common with other, older Pauline perspectives. This is, I think, a very important difference to recognise.

*Post-supersessionism and Yeshualogy.* There is an intense ongoing discussion today about post-supersessionist theology in a number of theological disciplines. In addition to making a general contribution to that theology, this study casts light on the role Jesus plays in this theological construction. Inclusive or exclusive soteriologies are often, regrettably, left out of this conversation. The Messianic Jewish readings of Paul show that the hermeneutics of post-supersessionism and Yeshualogy exist rhetorically side by side, yet they seem to collide with each other as they are negotiated in the readings. The Bible-reading interviews show a preference for seeing post-supersessionism as the most important hermeneutic ideologically as it confirms and supports the Jewishness of Messianic Jews. On the other hand, Yeshualogy – explaining the text through and with Jesus – appears to be the most dominant textual practice, one that is placed above post-supersessionism. Yeshualogy sets the readings of Messianic

Jews apart as unique. Post-supersessionism is understood through, and is dependent on, a type of Yeshualogy: the remnant maintaining the covenant is redefined as Jewish Jesus-believers; the natural branches in the olive tree are Jesus-believers (not any Jew), and God’s calling to Israel is valid as they will all one day be saved through faith in Jesus. For the Messianic Jewish participants in the study, the tensions between the two hermeneutics are solved through a hermeneutic of eschatology.

*Relevance and creativity.* Reading the Bible as a Messianic Jew involves reading it in a highly creative way. The perceived authority does not in fact stem from a literalism but from the idea of the Bible as ‘God’s *living* Word’. This review article has throughout shown how Messianic Jews read Paul in a way that makes his words relevant for them today. As readers they apply the text to themselves, and they read themselves into the text. It is, in other words, an excellent example of the social life Scripture can take.

Finally, I would like to point to three broad areas where the study makes an important contribution. These are also areas worthy of projects of further elaboration in various directions:

- (a) It is the first in-depth study on Bible and Bible readings within the Messianic Jewish movement, which – given the authority ascribed to the Bible by the believers – contributes to the understanding of Messianic Jewish identity, life and theology, and especially so in the setting of Israel.
- (b) It addresses the important issue of whether scholarly conclusions from the field of biblical studies reach out to the religious communities and impact on their understanding of Scripture, in this case the writings of Paul.

- (c) It shows that exegesis can also be about readers today, as I have successfully combined the fields of biblical studies and anthropology. The study offers a methodological novelty in its empirical character that can pave the way for a whole new sub-field within exegesis and new collaborations between disciplines usually far apart from each other. The potential for new and innovative research is immense.

It is my sincere hope that the many conversations arising from my study, which this review article gives glimpses of, will nurture and provoke new discussions. ■

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Her research interests extend from Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity through texts and material culture to today's interaction between the two religions.

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