

THE JEWISH  
ANNOTATED  
NEW TESTAMENT

Second Edition

New Revised  
Standard Version  
Bible Translation

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*Editors*



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from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God . . . one substance with the Father . . .”

The Council of Nicea in 325 did not end all debate concerning the nature of Jesus. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon confronted a new challenge presented by the Monophysites or Miaphysites, theologians who maintained that Jesus had an eternal “single nature”; they asserted that after his incarnation, no distinction could be made between his divinity and his humanity. The bishops at Chalcedon argued instead that Jesus had two natures which are both distinct and “without separation” in the “union” of the “one person” of Christ. Stated differently, if Christ is of one substance with the Father, and if he is one person, he is nonetheless a person whose nature consists in both his humanity and his divinity when these two natures work together to effect salvation.

#### THE TRINITY

Along with formalizing the relationship between Jesus’ humanity and divinity, his postbiblical followers also required clarity on how the Logos or the Word of God (Jn 1:1; see “*Logos*,” p. 688) is related to the Trinity, which includes God the Father, Christ the Son or Word, and the Holy Spirit.

The Nicene Creed states

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of all that is, seen and unseen . . . We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God . . . We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father . . . [who] by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.

The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruah* which also means breath. It comes into Greek, with the same connotations, as “pneuma” (Lat is “*spiritus*”). According to classical Christian thought, the Holy Spirit can be understood as the divine breath that animates God the Father who creates and God the Son who, made flesh, redeems

persons from sin. The original form of the Nicene Creed states therefore, “we believe in the Holy Spirit . . . who proceeds from the Father.” As the Nicene Creed also states that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all share the same substance, some Christians claimed it would be more accurate to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. A number of Christian churches in the West, as early as the sixth century, therefore added the phrase “and the Son” (Lat *filioque*) to the creed. Eastern Orthodox Christians, opposing this addition, argued that the Father is the sole source of being in the Trinity. Disagreement over the *filioque* clause constituted one of several causes for what would be an eventual division in Christianity between the Eastern (Byzantine) and Western (Roman) churches, finalized in the Great Schism in 1054.

Throughout their history, Christians have disagreed on christological details, and these disagreements continue today. The Trinity, in its classical formulation of “essences” and “persons,” remains difficult to comprehend, so alternative formulations have been offered. One modern way of thinking about Trinity is to describe its members as having different job descriptions: God the Father is the Creator; God the Son is the Redeemer, and God the Spirit is the Sustainer. In turn, the Church of the Latter-day Saints or Mormons categorically rejects the classical doctrine of the trinity. In Mormon teaching, the Trinity consists of three distinct beings, with the Father and the Son having separate, tangible bodies. Unitarians, on the other hand, traditionally regard Jesus as the “son” or “child” of God (like every other human being), but not as God.

For centuries, Christological questions surrounding Jesus’ humanity, his divinity, the nature and meaning of his death and of eternal life, have drawn Christians into deep theological reflection. The great fourth-century Christian theologian St. Jerome said, “the springs that water the church are the mystery of the Trinity [and] the mystery of Christology” (sermon on Ps 41). The ongoing attempt to understand the meaning of these mysteries presents Christians the opportunity to continue to ponder the wisdom of God’s ways.

## MESSIANIC JUDAISM

*Yaakov Ariel*

Messianic Judaism is a new religious movement that combines faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior with Jewish identity and culture. There had been earlier attempts in

the late modern era at creating communities of Jewish-Christians, such as the Hope of Israel in the Lower East Side of New York in the 1890s–1900s. But while cherishing such forerunners, today’s Messianic Jews see them-

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## JUDAISM

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selves as more daring and independent and therefore taking the Jewish-Christian experiment a few steps forward. The term “Messianic Judaism,” coined by members of Protestant communions, originated at the turn of the twentieth century to designate those Jews who had embraced Protestant Christianity but wished to maintain some Jewish customs and rites, such as observance of the Sabbath on Friday night–Saturday night, the wearing of prayer shawls, dietary regulations, and circumcision for sons. As a rule, Jewish converts at that time joined Protestant communities, and even those few who organized into separate “Hebrew Christian” congregations retained some Jewish customs while rejecting the Messianic Jewish agenda of fully claiming a Jewish identity.

Missionaries and communities of Hebrew Christians in Israel revived the term “messianic Judaism” in the mid-twentieth century. They noted that for Israeli Jews, the term *nozrim* (Heb for “Christians”) meant an alien, often hostile, religion, so they sought a neutral term that did not arouse negative feelings. *Meshichiyim*, namely “messianists,” held an aura of a new, innovative religion, emphasizing the messianic element of the faith. In Israel, Messianic Jews often identify themselves with the Hebrew term *ma’aminim*, that is, “believers.”

The term “Messianic Jew” resurfaced in America in the early 1970s with the formation of a vigorous and more independent movement that has taken over as the preferred choice for persons joining communities of Christian Jews. The movement of Messianic Judaism suited members of the Baby Boom generation who acquired unprecedented freedoms to choose and select at will, creating cultural amalgamations from elements that were considered by previous generations to be far removed from each other. This was also an era where many religious and ethnic groups were taking pride in their roots. Evangelical Christianity, where Messianic Judaism found its home, was beginning to offer more space for ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences, and many Evangelical churches were willing to accept Jewish symbols and customs. The Israeli victory over its Arab neighbors in June 1967 also strongly affected Evangelical Christians, who began to appreciate more the special role that they believed Jews were to play in world history, leading to Jesus’ Second Coming. Likewise, the 1967 War boosted the desire of Jews who joined churches to maintain many elements of their identity and culture. The attempt to combine the two traditions offered Messianic Jews a sense of mission, as many Messianic Jews and their Evangelical Christian supporters felt that they were working to heal old wounds and bring together two religious traditions that they believed should have never been at odds.

Messianic Jews generally promote the conservative lifestyle associated with Evangelical Christianity, including abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex, and encouraging hard work and obeying the secular law.

Perhaps the most well known of the groups emerging in early 1970s is Jews for Jesus, another Evangelical-Jewish group that should not be confused with Messianic Judaism, despite some similarities between these groups. Both appeal to members of the counterculture and both have made extensive use of Jewish symbols and language. Jews for Jesus, however, has been a missionary organization whose founder, Moishe Rosen (1932–2010), related skeptically to the Messianic Jewish movement. He asked his missionaries to join non-Jewish churches and to direct inquirers and converts to such churches.

Another movement that carries resemblance to Messianic Judaism is that of the Hebrew Catholics. The movement, which operates within the confines of the Catholic Church, is much smaller; it does not operate parish churches outside of Israel, and the community makes itself known through publications, the internet, and periodical conferences. In Israel, Hebrew Catholic congregations include Jewish Israeli converts as well as non-Jews who have joined those congregations, at times as spouses of Jewish members. Hebrew Catholics follow Catholic liturgy, but they also have written their own prayers that bring Catholic elements of faith together with Israeli culture, such as Hebrew hymns for *Miriam HaMevurahat*, “the blessed Miriam [Mary].” Recognizing the movement, the Vatican created in 2011 the Vicariate of St. James to offer Hebrew congregations in Israel a friendly Catholic hierarchical presence.

The appearance of an energetic and fast-growing movement that promised to combine Judaism and Christianity stirred strong reactions from the mainstream Jewish and Christian establishments. Most Jews did not accept the claim that one could embrace Jesus as Lord and savior and still remain within Judaism. Some considered the new movement to be a missionary ploy intended to lure Jews away from their ancestral faith. Others looked upon Messianic Judaism as a harmful cult. On rare occasions Jews turned to violence against Messianic Jews by defacing their sanctuaries or by “rescuing” Torah scrolls from their congregations. At the turn of the twenty-first century, many Jews continue to feel negatively about Messianic Jews, with a small number of leaders and writers, such as the author and Reform Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, who call upon Jews to accept Messianic Jews as part of the larger Jewish community. The Israeli Ministry of the Interior has, at times, made it difficult for Messianic Jewish immigrants, or their spouses, to become residents or citizens of the state.

Liberal Protestants generally have also expressed reservations about Messianic Judaism. By the late twentieth century they had adopted a new agenda consisting of interfaith dialogue and of understanding Judaism as a sister faith; therefore, they did not promote the evangelization of Jews. Reflecting their dissatisfaction with certain conservative Evangelical tenets, they similarly objected to Messianic Judaism's theology, interpretation of Scripture, and support for right-wing politics.

For the most part, Evangelical Christians accept and support Messianic Jews. As a rule, Evangelicals do not promote interfaith dialogue, and their acceptance of Messianic Judaism points to an alternative measure of recognition of the Jewish tradition. Messianic Judaism turned, in effect, into a Jewish wing of Evangelical Christianity. Similarly, Evangelicals began to allow other hybrids in their midst, most notably Evangelical Greek Orthodoxy and an amalgamation of evangelicalism with Native American traditions. When the Evangelical group, the Promise Keepers, launched a major rally in Washington, D.C., in 1997, two groups of Evangelicals who participated in the rally were particularly visible: Messianic Jews dressed with *talitot* (prayer shawls) and holding *shofarot* (rams' horns), and a Native American group dressed in traditional attire decorated with Native American symbols.

Most Messianic Jews embrace the major premises of Evangelical theology, first and foremost the tenet that all people need to undergo a personal experience of conversion and accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Non-supercessionist and believing that the Jewish people can be redeemed as a nation, they generally see special merit in sharing the Gospel with fellow Jews, instructing them in how to read the Bible and decipher God's plans for Jews, including their coming to belief in Jesus. Messianic Jews study both the Old and New Testaments, which they regard as both historically accurate and prophetically revealing. Sharing the premillennialist-Evangelical view that prior to the return of Jesus to establish the kingdom of God on earth, the Jewish people (that is, the chosen people) are destined to play a dominant role in the events of the End Times, and that the country Israel has a purpose in history, they have served within the larger conservative Christian community as advocates of good will toward the Jews.

While the founders of Messianic Judaism adhered to Evangelical principles, it was also important for them to establish congregations independent of Christian denominations or missionary societies, such as the American Board of Missions to the Jews, aimed at converting Jews to Protestant denominations. Coming to appreciate the success of such communities in promoting conversions of Jews to Evangelical Christianity, missionary societies have helped, since the 1980s, to create self-standing Mes-

sianic Jewish congregations. Such congregations serve as natural centers of evangelism as members invite friends to attend services, and curious observers also come by. Ironically, Messianic congregations have served not only as centers of evangelism for Jews, but for non-Jews as well. For the non-Jews, the spiritual journey has been toward Judaism, or, as has also been the case for many of the Jews in Messianic communities, toward Judaism and Christianity at the same time. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the majority of Messianic Jews had not grown up in Jewish homes, even if many of them claim some Jewish ancestry or are married to persons of Jewish descent.

Opening their doors to inquirers of all backgrounds, the movement has grown significantly. The turn of the twenty-first century saw more than 400 Messianic communities in America and over 100 in Israel, with dozens more in Europe, Latin America, South Africa, and Australia. Tens of thousands of people are members of Messianic congregations, and tens of thousands more consider themselves Messianic Jews, or Jewish believers in Jesus, even if they are members of mainstream, non-Messianic churches. In contrast to the demographics of traditional Jewish synagogues, the Messianic communities have consisted mostly of persons of the Baby Boom generation and younger, who came of age in the 1960s and later. A second generation of Messianic Jews is beginning to make an impact in a growing number of congregations.

Despite common features, the movement is neither united nor uniform. As is the case among Evangelicals in general, one of the major divisions is between Charismatics, who advocate a direct personal encounter with the divine, and practice more expressive modes of worship (for instance, being "slain in the spirit," and services for miraculous healing), and non-Charismatics. Most of the early congregations chose to become Charismatic, but many of the ones established by the primarily non-Charismatic missionary societies shy away from such practices. Messianic congregations also reflect a broad spectrum in terms of Jewish traditional observance. Different Messianic congregations have different amalgams of Jewish and Christian liturgical elements. Messianic *Haggadot* (Passover services) and *siddurim* (prayer books) include some elements of the traditional Jewish liturgy, making up for omitted passages, such as the traditional haftarah (prophetic reading), or Musaf (the supplementary morning prayer), with prayers that give expression to faith in Jesus as the Redeemer. The *Birkat ha-Minim* (the twelfth benediction of the Amidah), which has often been interpreted as relating unfavorably to Christians (see "*Birkat ha-Minim*," p. 653), is also omitted.

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conduct their weekly prayer meetings on Friday nights or Saturday mornings, and they often ask their male members and guests to wear yarmulkes during the services. More and more congregations have installed Arks with Torah Scrolls, and they read each week a passage from the *parasha*, the Jewish lectionary. Messianic Jews have also incorporated Israeli motifs into their services, including Israeli songs and the usage of Modern Hebrew. Their attachment to Israel indicates both their devotion to Jewish causes and the premillennialist-Evangelical understanding of the role of that country and land in God's plans.

While struggling to be accepted as both genuinely Jewish and Christian, Messianic Judaism built its own subculture, complete with national organizations, youth movements, conferences and retreats, prayer books and hymnals, publications and periodicals, including Messianic Jewish theological, apologetic and evangelistic treatises. Many Messianic hymns resemble contemporary Evangelical ones, and the music is unmistakably rock-influenced new Christian music; most hymns written and composed by Messianic Jews refer to Jesus as the Savior of Israel. Small but significant changes differentiate Messianic hymns from contemporary Evangelical hymns, such as the use of *Yeshua* (the Heb name for Jesus) instead of "Jesus."

Messianic Bar Mitzvahs have become very popular. Embracing this major Jewish social institution has served as a statement that Messianic Jews practice Jewish culture. The ceremonies follow traditional Jewish rites such as chanting the *parasha* according to traditional melodies, but instead of the conventional *haftarah* (prophetic reading), the Bar Mitzvah boys often read from the New Testament. The *drasha*, the customary sermon, is turned into a public declaration that affirms Messianic Jewish faith and identity.

Messianic Jewish thinkers have produced a series of theological tracts that define the movement's path. In accordance with the plurality of communal and liturgical

options within the movement, their work has given voice to a large spectrum of opinions. Most writers are unified in claiming the antiquity of their movement, and they note that the earliest Christians were Jews; thus, in their view Messianic Judaism is the more authentic form of Christianity. David Stern, a leader in the Messianic Jewish movement in America and Israel, edited a Messianic Jewish New Testament. He changed the title of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* to *Letter to the Messianic Jews*. In his *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Stern asserts that Messianic Jews are not fifty percent Jewish and fifty percent Christian, but rather hundred percent Jewish and hundred percent Christian.

The early twenty-first century is seeing a new generation of Messianic Jewish intellectuals with new interpretations of the movement. Completing doctoral degrees in prestigious American, British, or Israeli universities, and acting in increasingly pluralistic Evangelical environments, they have developed a more daring theology. For example, Gershon Nerel in Israel is advocating relying solely on the Bible (both "Old" and "New Testament") as a source of authority, instead of Protestant theological constructions or declarations of faith. In a movement called Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism, Mark Kinzer advocates cutting the cord that has tied Messianic Judaism to the missionary community, and moving from Protestant theology to Jewish post-biblical sources. Unlike the more familiar Jews for Jesus, some members of Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism do not insist that one needs to believe in Jesus as Lord in order to be saved or in a right relationship with God. Kinzer and his group, *Hashivenu* (Heb "Bring us Back"), have created an on-line *Yeshiva* to offer Messianic Jewish education as well as a series of publications and yearly conferences. While committed to the basic elements of Evangelical theology and devoted to Jewish identity and heritage, Messianic Jews are now becoming more autonomous, creating theological and communal spaces of their own.

## BEARING FALSE WITNESS COMMON ERRORS MADE ABOUT EARLY JUDAISM

Amy-Jill Levine

There are numerous ecclesial guidelines for Christian clergy and teachers on how to present Jews and Judaism. These include the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Ro-

man Catholic Church" (1985); US Catholic Bishops and the Anti-Defamation League, "Within Context: Guidelines for the Catechetical Presentation of Jews and Judaism in the New Testament (1986, updated 1993); National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic