



MISHKAN

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possible in more quiet circumstances. And first attempts are being made to do this.

Spiritual Maturity Based on Faith

As we have discussed before, it is hard to have much excitement in the German Messianic movement today. This creates a great opportunity for maturing in faith, without this faith being based on pure excitement or enjoyment of the fruits of revival.

Messianic Materials

The felt need for printed and other types of materials creates a market for such materials. This would be a good time to start various Messianic publications in German and Russian (together with those in other Russian-speaking countries). These can include books, magazines, periodicals, journals, recordings, and Internet sites.

Bridges to Other Messianic and Christian Groups

The current situation motivates the Messianic movement to seek the support of other like-minded believers. It drives various Messianic groups to each other, and helps them to appreciate Christianity and the Messianic movement worldwide. Therefore, it would be wise for Messianic congregations and groups to develop good contacts not only with each other, but also with churches and Christian organizations in Germany and worldwide. This will create a healthy, biblical sense of unity and fellowship while providing opportunities for joint outreach, learning from the experience of others, prayer support, and even financial help.

The Messianic movement in Germany will hopefully also develop relationships with Messianic movements, congregations, and organizations in other countries. While doing this, it is important to be careful to choose the biblically healthy ones. The theological education and training discussed above can help in this regard. Developing relationships does not mean coming under the authority of someone else; the Messianic movement in Germany has to develop in an appropriate way for Germany, complementing the Messianic movement and Christianity worldwide by its uniqueness.

Before "The Wave"

There is a growing expectation among Messianic leaders in Germany of a new revival among Jewish people. We hope that by using the opportunities that the challenges are giving us, and wisely dealing with the obstacles, we will be ready for the new revival. And we pray that this will be the case.

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A Hebrew Christian of Hebrew Christians?

- Views of the Apostle Paul by Three Jewish Believers in Jesus: Paul Levertoff, Sanford Mills, and Joseph Baruch Shulam

by Daniel R. Langton

Jewish attitudes towards the Apostle to the Gentiles have been the subject of a number of studies in recent years.¹ These have tended to focus on New Testament or Pauline studies, on theologians and religious leaders. Those conducting the surveys have been interested primarily in interfaith relations, and yet little or no interest has been paid to Jewish believers in Jesus (the only exception being an edition of *Mishkan* published in 1994²). The obvious explanation for this absence has to do with the controversial nature of socio-religious debate surrounding the Jewish legitimacy of such individuals in the wider Jewish community. But the fact that, along with so many other Jews in the modern world, Jewish believers in Jesus cannot easily be fitted into neat theological pigeon-holes is precisely what makes them so interesting when studying their empathetic interpretations of the similarly complex character of Paul. For such writers as Paul Levertoff, Sanford Mills, and Joseph Shulam, the Apostle Paul – who described himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5) – facilitated their own idiosyncratic presentations of Jewish legitimacy within the modern cultural debate as to what constitutes an authentic Hebrew.

¹ For example, Daniel R. Langton, "Modern Jewish Identity and the Apostle Paul: Pauline Studies as an Intra-Jewish Ideological Battleground," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 2 (2005): 217–58; Daniel R. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional Jewish View of Paul' and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no.1 (2005): 69–104; Pamela Eisenbaum, "Following in the Footnotes of the Apostle Paul," in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezo'n, and Sheila Greeve Davaney, (London: Routledge, 2004), 77–97; Stefan Meissner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur ju'dischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996); Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, "The Essential Heresy; Paul's View of the Law According to Jewish Writers, 1886–1986," Ph.D. diss., Temple University (1990); Donald A. Hagner, "Paul in Modern Jewish Thought," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 143–65; Halvor Ronning, Jewish Literary Treatments of the Apostle Paul 17: "Some Jewish Views of Paul as Basis of a Consideration of Jewish-Christian Relations," *Judaica* 24 (1968): 82–97.

² The twentieth issue of *Mishkan* (1994) was entitled "Apostle Paul (By Jewish)

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



Paul Levertoff

Paul Levertoff (1878–1954) was born Feivel Levertoff to a Hassidic family in Belarus, where he received a traditional Jewish education.³ Following talmudic studies at the Volozhin yeshiva, he went on to the University of Königsberg in Prussia, where he converted to Christianity in 1895. He became a missionary, working for various societies throughout Europe,⁴ and demonstrated a flair for translation and scholarship. After a stint as a lecturer in rabbinics in Leipzig,⁵ he moved to Wales, where he was ordained as an Anglican minister, and then on to East London, where he established an independent Messianic Jewish congregation, although for a time he was closely associated with the International Hebrew Christian Alliance. A particular interest in his theology was the attempt to reconcile the teachings of the New Testament to Hassidic thought, and he is best remembered for his partial translation of the Zohar for Soncino Press.⁶ His *Ben ha-Adam*⁷ was the first treatment of Jesus in modern Hebrew.

Levertoff's interest in Paul came to the fore early with his study entitled *St. Paul: His Life, Works and Travels*,⁸ when he was working for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.⁹ There is little in this short work that would have raised an eyebrow among a Christian readership, but Levertoff intended it for a Jewish audience and wrote his treatment of Paul in modern Hebrew, the first author to do so.¹⁰ In his introduction, he laments the fact that every time he writes about "Messianism" (as he calls Christianity), it is necessary for him to justify his reasons. He argued that there should be no more need to explain a book on Paul than there was a book on Maimonides, since the essential character of Messianism "is so *Hebrew* and [. . .] ought to be common to the lips of every child of

3 For a useful overview of Levertoff's life and writings, see Jorge Quiñónez, "Paul Phillip Levertoff: Pioneering Hebrew-Christian Scholar and Leader," *Mishkan* 37 (2002): 21–34.

4 He worked for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (1896–1910), and for the United Free Church of Scotland Jewish Committee as their evangelist in Constantinople (1910–11). He was director of the East London Fund for the Jews, also known as London Diocesan Council for Work Among the Jews (1923–54).

5 He taught at the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum (1912–18), although he was held under house arrest as a Russian citizen from 1914 to 1916. In addition to rabbinics, he also taught Yiddish and a variety of courses in Jewish studies and the New Testament.

6 Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul Phillip Levertoff, trans., *Zohar*, vol. 3 (London: Soncino Press, 1933); and Maurice Simon and Paul Phillip Levertoff, trans., *Zohar*, vol. 4 (London: Soncino Press, 1933).

7 Paul Levertoff, *Ben ha-Adam: Chayey Yeshua ha-Mashiach upealeav* (London: 1904), the English title given as *Son of Man: A Survey of the Life and Deeds of Jesus Christ*. The author of the second Hebrew attempt, Joseph Klausner, is dismissive of Levertoff's study, complaining that "the plain purpose of the writer in spite of what he says to the contrary in his Preface is to win adherents to Christianity from among Russian Jews who read Hebrew" (Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* [New York: MacMillan, 1925], 124).

8 Paul Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach o Sha'ul ish Tarsus: Chayav, po'alav u-nesi'otav* (London: Y. Neroditski, 1907), the English title given as *St. Paul: His Life, Works, and Travels*.

9 Also of interest is his series of three lectures: Paul P. Levertoff, "St. Paul in Jewish Thought: Three Lectures" (London: Diocesan House, 1928). In addition, Levertoff translated Franz Werfel, *Paulus unter den Juden* (Berlin: Zsolnay, 1926), as Franz Werfel, *Paul Among the Jews: A Tragedy*, trans. Paul Levertoff (London: A. B. Mowbray & Co., 1928).

Israel."¹¹ In offering a full picture of the life of Paul the apostle in a concise and popular manner,¹² Levertoff is clear that his aim is a missionary one.¹³ Nevertheless, he regarded himself as Jewish,¹⁴ and his vision was of a profoundly Hebraic interpretation of what it meant to be a follower of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. For example, he sprinkles the text with Hebrew and Aramaic phrases that are laden with Jewish religious meaning.¹⁵

According to Levertoff, Paul's work was a continuation of the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶ While Jesus had not been able to reveal the full significance of his appearance in the world ("The generation was not yet worthy of it"), and his disciples had failed to comprehend it, yet Paul was able to articulate the essence of Jesus' messianic title – "Son of man" – and to develop his ideas. In contrast to the other disciples, who were simple and unlearned men, Paul was a scholar whose writings represent "the most complete interpretation of Messianism there is in the world."¹⁷ In particular, since Jesus could not explain the meaning of his own death, Paul had done so, and his (thirteen) letters reveal a progressive realization of the sacrificial significance of the Messiah's death¹⁸ and God's plan "to demolish the iron wall that had been put between Jew and Gentile," a task

11 *Ibid.*, ii.

12 *Ibid.*, iii.

13 He hopes to "awaken such a desire in the hearts of those who stand apart from Messianism, and to strengthen the impression in those who have already been bestowed with a little of Messianism – that is our aim in our literary work in general and in writing this book in particular" (*ibid.*, iii). He also writes of his hope that it will "produce beneficial fruit for our people, the People of Israel, and will show a way and an opening to salvation, this being our prayer rising from the depths of the heart which is hurting and concerned for its people" (*ibid.*, iv).

14 Levertoff's daughter recalls his mantra: "Christianity is Judaism with its hopes fulfilled" (Olga Levertoff, "Paul Levertoff and the Jewish-Christian Problem," in *Judaism and Christianity: Essays Presented to the Rev. Paul P. Levertoff*, ed. Lev Gillet [London: JB Shears and Sons, 1939], 97). As Levertoff saw it, "The 'New Testament' was founded and built upon the foundation of the 'Old Testament'; the latter signifies the age of prophecies and aspirations, the former – the age of realisation and fulfilment" (Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 18).

15 He describes Paul as one of "the great men" (*eshlae ravrevel*), or attributes the root of Messianism in terms of "a secret and hidden force" (where *tamir v'nelam* refers to God). He is also careful to explain the Christian religion (*ha-dat ha-Nozrit*), a label with very negative connotations, in terms of the exalted founder-figure of Jesus of Nazareth (*Nazrat*), and generally prefers to write of the Messianic religion (*ha-dat ha-mashichit*). The stoning of Stephen is described in the traditional language of martyrdom as "sanctifying the Name" (*kiddush ha-shem*) (Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 2, 20–21, 23).

16 *Ibid.*, ii, 5.

17 *Ibid.*, 5. He went on, "The most sound way to understand Paul's writings is to look at them as the continuation of the teachings of Jesus himself. They contain many of those ideas that Jesus took with him and never uttered in words. [...] Of course, if Jesus had expressed them himself, then the explanation would have been different. But although Paul's ideas always bear the stamp of his rational personality, yet their essence is without doubt the essence of the ideas of Jesus himself" (*ibid.*, 5–6).

18 "[T]o Paul it was given to discover and reveal the full height and depth of the work of 'the Son of God' as a saviour for humankind. He very seldom speaks of the Messiah's life on earth, though we know from several hints in his writings that he knew it well. For him, the messiah was always – that sublime, glorious creature whose head was crowned with the splendour of the heavenly rays, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus, who held his hand and brought him to the foundations of heavenly peace and the joy of the new life" (*ibid.*, 12).

which could not have been given to Jesus who had been "plucked away while in the prime of his youth."¹⁹ Thus Paul could take his place alongside Moses, David, Isaiah, and other great Jewish personalities and heroes who, during the weightier periods of world history, had been drawn to the stage by the invisible hand of providence and who had "forced the current of history to direct itself to a particular goal."²⁰

Although mainly adhering to the traditional Christian account, Levertoff occasionally fills in gaps in the apostle's biographical record, such as the family decision to send the precocious Saul to yeshiva to prepare to be a rabbi (rather than to be a merchant), wondering whether he attended university in Tarsus where he would have become familiar with Greek thought and methods of debate,²¹ and suggesting that his mentor, Gamaliel the Great, was tolerant of Greek wisdom.²² While Levertoff spends considerable time praising the benefits of a rabbinic education for a missionary who would always gravitate toward the local synagogue in his travels,²³ he also notes that Saul would have been taught that peace of mind and God's reward could only be obtained by observance of the commandments.²⁴ He believes that Saul went through severe spiritual sufferings in that the more he tried to observe the law, the more powerful grew "the evil inclination."²⁵ Saul's increasingly desperate, guilt-ridden zeal for the law led him to persecute early Messianism, and Levertoff writes sympathetically of Saul's shock at their account of a crucified Messiah, "a terrible desecration of the Name and a betrayal of all that makes Israel holy."²⁶ Only during the tranquility and quietness of his journey on the road to Damascus did Saul's personal sense of guilt, and the powerful impression made by Messianics such as Stephen and their teachings of a suffering Messiah, bring about the famous vision and blindness, and "the total shattering of the previous system of his life."²⁷ In the period that followed, Levertoff suggested, Paul, "an ardent nationalist," came to realize that his hope for a Jewish Messiah who would save the world was realized in Jesus. Writing about his self-imposed exile in the Arabian desert near Mount Sinai, Levertoff once again emphasizes Paul's place in authentic Jewish tradition.

Exalted memories hovered over that place and the shadows of great men went about it. There Moses saw the burning bush and listened to the voice of Jehovah from the top of the mountain; there Elijah se-

19 Ibid., 6-7.

20 Ibid., 1, 2.

21 Ibid., 15-16. "Did he draw water from the springs of science descending from Mount Helicon before going to sit by the water flowing down from Mount Zion? . . . The speech he made in Athens [in Acts] shows us how he could, if he only wished, employ a style superior in splendour to that of his letters" (ibid.).

22 Ibid., 17.

23 Ibid., 18.

24 Ibid., 19.

25 Ibid., 20-21.

26 Ibid., 23.

cluded himself in his wanderings, full of zeal for Jehovah and there he drank from the fountains of salvation. What place was better suited than this place for the thoughts of the man following them?²⁸

In his solitude, Paul's meditations led him to conclude that neither Gentiles, who were immersed in idolatry, nor the Jews, who knew the Torah but did not do it,²⁹ could achieve righteousness. In the case of the Jews,

their knowledge made the weight of their guilt all the greater, because they sinned while facing the light. While the Gentiles went in darkness and to a certain extent only sinned without evil intent, the Children of Israel sinned willfully and intentionally. Their being chosen was their disgrace! They aroused Jehovah's wrath more than the Gentiles whom they hated and despised, and Jehovah's judgement was harsher upon them.³⁰

This was all part of God's plan: like "an expert doctor who sometimes strives to bring about a headache by artificial means prior to a cure," God allowed the Gentiles to follow their desires and the Jews Torah, "so that man's nature, evil from his youth, would be fully revealed in all its distressing character."³¹ Levertoff's Paul is an abrogator of the law, and even a Lutheran in that he believed that faith alone was necessary for salvation,³² although this is presented as an idea foreshadowed in the Old Testament.³³ Echoing Christian church fathers,³⁴ Levertoff's Paul believed that Adam's descendents were burdened both by a state of sin from which they were unable to free themselves and by a physical nature incapable of righteousness.³⁵

In a chapter entitled "His Great Dispute," Levertoff discusses the key question of the relationship between Messianism and Judaism. He argues that while many of the Children of Israel had regarded the law as a heavy burden that was necessary if God was to create a unique people (for this required "a furnace and a trial for the spirit of the Israelite People"³⁶), yet

28 Ibid., 33.

29 Levertoff cites *Avot* 1:17, "It is the deeds that count and not the study" (ibid., 35).

30 Ibid., 35-36.

31 Ibid., 36.

32 "The Torah had never been the definite way to salvation. [...] It only served as a negative means by which to demonstrate the necessity of salvation" (ibid., 36). "The one human condition for receiving God's righteousness is - faith; and this is as possible for a gentile as for a Jew" (ibid., 38).

33 "In truth, the secret had already been known in the past, too. It was heralded by the Prophets and also hinted at in the Torah. The Torah gave testimony for it only negatively; the Prophets grasped it more positively. Abraham, too, had already glanced into that secret: he became righteous through God not by action but by faith. [...] But the patriarchs and the prophets saw only the first rays of sunrise; daylight in its full force burst through only in Paul's day" (ibid., 38-39).

34 Interestingly, Levertoff translated some of Augustine into Hebrew. Paul Levertoff, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (London: Luzac & Co., 1908).

35 Levertoff, *Polus ha-Shaliach*, 39.

36 Ibid., 39.

others who were proud and arrogant saw it as evidence that they were a superior nation and even added new laws to separate themselves further from the surrounding peoples.³⁷ This "national arrogance" led them to an expectation that the kingdom of the Messiah would in fact be the kingdom of Israel.³⁸ "National arrogance and ancient traditions" also meant that even after Peter's dream, which had demonstrated that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised were acceptable to God, the question of whether Gentiles should be included without conversion to Judaism remained contentious.³⁹ Paul had come to a similar conclusion independently of Peter. Partly this was because "he was a man of the world and understood better than his fellows and compatriots in Jerusalem how dangerous were the conditions which they imposed, for the spreading of Messianism outside Palestine," bearing in mind that neither the "haughty Romans" nor "the high-minded Greeks" would have agreed to undergo circumcision and "generally to imprison their lives within the narrow confines of the national traditions of the People of Israel."⁴⁰ In other words, Paul was an opportunist of sorts, for "a religion entailing such heavy burdens could not possibly become a world religion."⁴¹ Partly, the opposition which Paul faced was due to the self-interest of the Messianic Jews, who did not want to be ostracized from their fellow Jews and who were therefore determined to avoid the complications of socializing with Gentiles with their different modes of behavior and customs. There would also have been religious jealousy regarding Gentile inclusion.⁴² Paul's success in defeating these Judaizers was highly significant: "If the outcome had been reversed, Messianism would now be a forgotten Jewish sect, not the faith of most enlightened peoples."⁴³

Perhaps Levertoff's most interesting comments lie in his speculations regarding the attitude of pro-Pauline Jewish Messianics towards the law. Admitting that it was possible that they believed themselves to be free from the burden of the law along with their Gentile brothers in Christ, yet Levertoff points out that Paul never explicitly argued against circumcision in particular, nor observance of the law in general, for Jews by birth. Thus,

we see clearly that he did not see it as part of his work to interfere with the Jews holding on to their national customs. [. . .] . . . [I]f any man of Israel held on to Israelite customs as a mark of his nationality, Paul was very far from reproachful; on the contrary, he himself had a certain fondness for those customs.⁴⁴

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 81.

39 Ibid., 82.

40 Ibid., 83.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 84.

43 Ibid., 86.

Effusive in his admiration for Paul, Levertoff regarded him as a Jewish hero who took Jesus' true Judaism or "Messianism" to the Gentile world. The apostle's letters, especially Romans, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians, were "one of the most sublime resources of human thought and whose influence is still spreading to this very day."⁴⁵ They revealed Paul's originality, which "gave the human race a new world of thoughts and ideas [. . . and] all progress and renewal that has ever taken place within Messianism took its cue from these writings."⁴⁶ Paul's innovations, although strictly limited to working out the teachings implicit in Jesus' ministry, lay in his genius for understanding the non-Jewish world and articulating to them the nature of true Judaism. While Levertoff spoke about Paul in general historical terms, his fellow Hebrew Christian missionary, Sanford Mills, and the Israeli Messianic Jew Joseph Shulam, would reach similar conclusions in their commentaries on the apostle's epistle to the Romans, specifically.

Sanford C. Mills

Sanford C. Mills was born in Poland to an Orthodox Jewish family, and was given a traditional Jewish education before he moved with his parents to the U.S. in 1921. He converted to Christianity as a young man and dedicated his career to the mission field, mostly among Gentiles, although he was also associated with the American Board of Missions to the Jews.⁴⁷ He regarded himself as "a Hebrew Christian" and "Jewish,"⁴⁸ although he was also happy to be described as "a Christian gentleman" and a Baptist who firmly believed in the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture.⁴⁹ His commentary, *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, is written primarily with a Gentile audience in mind, although it was also regarded by supporters as "a valuable contribution to Jewish evangelism."⁵⁰ For the former, Mills offered correctives to Christian doctrine arrived at from his knowledge of Talmud, Targum, and Tanakh⁵¹; for the latter he offered a strange mix of empathy and Baptist fire-and-brimstone invective in response to their stubbornness of heart.

Mills was concerned from the outset to demonstrate that Paul was not, "as the Jews say," the one who changed Jesus' message and spread Christianity throughout the world. The gospel preached by Paul was not foreign

45 Ibid., 69–70.

46 Ibid., 70. Admittedly, the letters were often written hurriedly, and were certainly unsystematic in nature (ibid., 71).

47 Daniel Fuchs, introduction to *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, 2nd ed., by Samuel Mills (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing, 1969), 10. Fuchs was Secretary of the Board. Mills writes of himself as one "who has spent decades of time as a field evangelist in the active work of Jewish missions" (Mills, 290).

48 Mills, 167, 173.

49 Noel P. Irwin, foreword to *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans*, 2nd ed., by Samuel Mills (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing, 1969), 8–9. Irwin was pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, South Bend, Indiana.

50 Ibid., 9.

51 For example, Mills was concerned to correct Catholic conceptions of Mary mothering God, and the proper protocol for "Believer's Baptism" (Mills, 71, 173).

to the preaching of Christ but was one with it; crucially, it was a *Jewish* gospel through and through.⁵² Thus "there is no such thing as a Gentile church [. . . for] such an idea is a monstrosity in theology."⁵³ It followed that a Hebrew Christian was not abandoning his faith. Rather, "a Jew who becomes a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a *completed Jew*."⁵⁴ Despite a general rejection of the gospel among the populace, there had always been a remnant of true Jews who were prepared to accept Christ.⁵⁵ Paul himself, of course, is described as a "Hebrew Christian warrior of the cross"⁵⁶ who was a highly trained and educated Pharisaic Jew.⁵⁷ Many of his teachings that were often regarded as Gentile inventions were no such thing. For example, in a discussion about Christ's redemptive sacrifice he argued that, despite what was often claimed, "substitutionary atonement is not foreign to Judaism" and was an integral component of the Day of Atonement.⁵⁸ He was prepared to acknowledge, however, that Paul did deliver "body blows to Judaism,"⁵⁹ especially in terms of the apostle's view of the law, which was "to bring Jew and Gentile to the realization that both are sinners. For by the law is knowledge of sin."⁶⁰ But Mills was wary of exaggerating Paul's attitude towards the law, cautioning his readers: "We must guard ourselves against antinomianism, a sect which holds that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation."⁶¹

A constant theme in the book is Mills' call for renewed mission to the Jews. He points to the efforts made to take the gospel to China and Africa, and bewails the lack of interest in the Jews in this context.

We all believe that the Jews are lost, but what are we doing for them today? We talk of the Jews in prophecy. We speak of the Tribulation Period as a time of Jacob's trouble. We elaborate upon the atrocities that the Jews will suffer, and of the handful, the remnant, that will be saved. This is good. But how terrible it is when we realize that we have done and are doing so little for the Jews in the missionary program of many of our churches.⁶²

52 "The Gospel is not new. Basically and fundamentally the Gospel is Jewish, Jewish in origin, Jewish in its message, 'for salvation is from the Jews' (John 4:22). It is not from the Gentiles" (ibid., 20-21).

53 Ibid., 103. "The term 'Israelites' [Romans 9:4] applies only to the nation of Israel. . . . It does not and cannot mean the Church of the New Testament, in any sense of the word. To apply the term Israelites to the Church does violence to the Word of God" (ibid., 291).

54 Ibid., 75.

55 For Mills it was "not true to say that the Jews, as a people, rejected Jesus as their messiah. The *Jewish leaders and their politicians* rejected him, but the multitudes, the common people, as recorded in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, followed him" (ibid., 297).

56 Ibid., 492.

57 Ibid., 29, 76.

58 Ibid., 102.

59 Ibid., 77.

60 Ibid., 90.

61 Ibid., 104.

62 Ibid., 106.

While Mills did not underestimate the problem facing missionaries to the Jews in the light of centuries of their maltreatment by Christians,⁶³ he was frustrated by a lack of Christian commitment to this end. He wrote disparagingly of those Christians who did not take Paul seriously at his word that the gospel was for "the Jew first,"⁶⁴ and expressed disappointment in having attended "hundreds of Christian meetings where mission of all kinds, domestic and foreign, have been presented," yet having rarely ever heard "any mention made of the plight of the Jews, and their need of the Gospel." The Jew, he said, is "joked about, and in many cases, slandered when he isn't maligned, and often pointed to as an example of disobedience, but scarcely ever prayed for, and almost never represented as a people needing the Gospel."⁶⁵ His passionate plea was to refuse to give up on the Jews.

By what stretch of the imagination can anyone claim that the Jews have had their chance and lost it, and that now they have been set aside in order that the Gentiles may have *their* chance during the present age? How can it be claimed by anyone familiar with the history of Christianity that the Jews have had their chance and lost it, when the Jews, at best, have only heard the Gospel in its entirety for about forty years, from 30 to 70 AD?⁶⁶

Expousing a Baptist ideology, Mills' pronouncements were Bible-based,⁶⁷ anti-Catholic,⁶⁸ and suspicious of evolution.⁶⁹ It is his anti-rabbinic statements that are of most interest here, however. He attacks their rite of cir-

63 "The Gentiles, from the beginning of Jewish history until the present time, have far exceeded the sum total of Israel's transgressions and guilt. The guilt of one Gentile nation, Germany, in just ten years has been a million times greater than the guilt of all the Jews throughout their entire existence. The history of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, Spain, Italy, France, England, and Russia, teems with Jewish persecution, murder and exile" (ibid., 365-66). Mills himself writes of having experienced anti-Semitism in his youth: "The writer is a Jewish Christian and he cannot be blind to the Jew-hate of today and the experiences of his people Israel through past and present ages. He knows from childhood what it means to be called 'a dirty Jew.' The memory of this and other painful experiences can never be forgotten. Opprobrious epithets such as 'Christ-killer!' and the haunting words of the Polish people, 'Why can't you go home to your own country?' still ring in his ears. Who can blame the Jews in Israel if they do not want the Gospel preached to them? The terrors of past persecutions, ostracisms and banishments by those who called themselves Christians but never knew the meaning of the word, make it extremely difficult for Jews in Israel, and elsewhere, to tolerate the Gospel" (ibid., 431-32).

64 "Usually, the person who will not accept the fact 'to the Jew first' will not take it [the gospel] to the Jew at all. This has been the experience of this writer for over twenty-five years" (ibid., 106).

65 Ibid., 290. Partly, Mills explained this in terms of "the unscriptural philosophy of the 'Gentile Church,' claiming that we are now in the 'Gentile Church age'" (ibid., 350).

66 Ibid., 389.

67 "The Word of God must always be the final authority. We cannot, we must not, question it" (ibid., 22). It was also progressive revelation, in that it led towards the gospel (ibid., 92). "This writer is not only Jewish, but he is also biblical" (ibid., 173).

68 Ibid., 24, 31, 62.

69 Ibid., 50.

cumcising the dead,⁷⁰ the laws of *kashrut*,⁷¹ their Talmudic learning,⁷² their prayers,⁷³ and their refusal to accept traditions that supported Christian teachings.⁷⁴ In general, the Jews are condemned for their pride, since they know the truth but do not follow it,⁷⁵ and two thousand years of suffering are interpreted as God's punishment for their sins.⁷⁶ Even when defending their probity, he cannot help but condemn them for their "works-righteousness."⁷⁷ Despite all this, Mills was quick to draw upon stories and sayings from traditional Jewish literature that he believed strengthened his reading of Paul's epistle to the Romans.⁷⁸ Most important in this context was the link he frequently made between original sin and the evil inclination (or "evil imagination" as he called it).⁷⁹ Like Levertoff before him, the overall impression made by Mills is that of pride in his Jewish heritage and a burning desire to evangelize the Jews. To recover the Jewish roots of the Christian gospel as announced by Paul is therefore a means to a very specific end. At the same time, Mills, even more so than Levertoff, uses his treatment of Paul to express his indignation at the indifference of Gentile Christians to the precious Jewish resources and understanding available to

70 Ibid., 60–62.

71 Ibid., 66.

72 Ibid., 68.

73 Ibid., 157, 222.

74 "Modern Judaism does not accept this [idea of Adam's sin bringing death to all (Zohar in Num. 52)]. The Jews, like all religionists, change 'with every wind of doctrine.' Like all the unregenerate theologians, the Jewish rabbis teach that their own works will save them. . . . The Bible teaches contrary" (ibid., 164). "Modern Judaism has changed this idea that God created the evil in man [citing, *inter alia*, Sanhedrin 91b and Tanhumah Beshalla 3]" (ibid., 222).

75 Ibid., 65, 76.

76 Ibid., 67, 70. "Israel as a nation may be wallowing in sin. She may be scattered among the nations and seemingly lost in the maelstrom of iniquity" (ibid., 366).

77 "The problem with Israel is, and has always been, a lack of faith. The Jewish people do not lack morals, or standards, or laws. They boast of having all of these. The divorce rate among Jews is low; dope addiction among Jewish teen-agers is surprisingly low; the number of Jews in penal institutions is insignificant; and alcoholism is rare among Jews. They are a moral people. Works of righteousness supercede faith in the Jewish mind. To a Jew, no matter what a man believes, so long as he is morally upright he is a righteous individual. 'Prayer, charity and fasting overcometh all evil deeds.' This brief prayer summarizes the Jewish concept of righteousness – works!" (ibid., 329–30).

78 Parallels offered include "all things work together for the good" (Rom 8:28) with "whatsoever heaven does is for the best" (Berahhot 60b) (ibid., 274); "for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom 2:11) with the story of Yochannan Ben Van Zakki, who exclaimed, "If I am to come into the presence of this kind of King, should I not weep?" (ibid., 61); Paul's call to live "in diligence not slothful" (Rom 12:11) with "The day is short, the work is much, and the workmen are indolent (slothful), and reward much; and the Master of the house is insistent" (Mishnah 2:15) (ibid., 417); Paul's call to "put ye on of Christ" (Rom 13:14) with the rabbinic "putting on of the cloak of the Shekinah" (ibid., 442); and Paul's claim that "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of law shall be-justified" with Gamaliel's son, "a classmate of Paul's," in Pirque Aboth 1:18 (ibid., 61). The Davidic ancestry of the Messiah (Rom 15:12) is also reinforced by reference to Rabbi David Kimchi, Rabbi Aben Ezra, the Targums of Jonathan, and the Prayer Book (ibid., 471).

79 Ibid., 94, 178, 222, 230, 265–66. He cites in support *inter alia* Midrash Haneelam in Zohar Gen. 68:1; Midrash Kobleth 70:2; Sanhedrin 91b; Tanhumah Beshalla 3; Caphtor 14:2;

them. They share an awareness that both Jewish and Christian audiences were frustratingly ill-disposed toward their message.

Joseph Shulam

The final example of a Pauline study by a Jewish believer in Jesus is different from the previous examples in that it is by an individual who, as a Messianic Jew, belongs to no Christian congregation. Nevertheless, it follows a similar approach in arguing for Jewish legitimacy, and in fact takes the idea of locating Paul and his ideas within a Jewish context to its logical extreme by attempting a systematic review of relevant Jewish literature from the biblical and post-biblical periods.

Joseph Baruch Shulam (1946–) is a Bulgarian-born Jew whose family immigrated to Israel in 1948. In 1962, he came to believe that Jesus (or Yeshua) was the Messiah and joined the Messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem; he is now an Elder of the Messianic Congregation Roeh Israel.⁸⁰ He has taught at Abilene Christian University in Jerusalem and has written *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*,⁸¹ which draws upon parallels in biblical, Qumranic, and rabbinic literature to establish Paul as a profoundly Jewish writer whose authentic Jewish theology is best interpreted in a Jewish literary context.

In the introduction to the commentary, Paul is acknowledged as a Roman citizen, either because his parents had been Roman citizens or because, as a citizen of Tarsus, he was automatically entitled to such status.⁸² It is his Jewish credentials which Shulam emphasizes, however. Thus the future apostle was probably educated under the supervision of "Rabban Gamaliel," or Gamaliel the Elder of the school of Shammai, after his Pharisaic parents had "encouraged him to seek a good rabbinic education in Jerusalem."⁸³ As a result of his choice of education, Paul's main identity lay with rabbinic Judaism, and he became "a master in rabbinic thought and forms."⁸⁴ No mention is made of any conversion. He was known by his Hebrew name, Sha'ul, as well as by the Roman name Paul,⁸⁵ and spoke Hebrew as well as Greek.⁸⁶ While the letters of this Diaspora Jew were written

80 After attaining an M.A. in the History of Jewish Thought in the Second Temple Period from Hebrew University and three years' study of Rabbinics and Jewish Thought at Diaspora Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Shulam established the Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry, which aims "to study and teach the Jewish background of the New Testament, providing a bridge between Jews and Christians and Judaism and Christianity, and nurturing the Messianic Jewish community in Israel" (Joseph Shulam and Hillary Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* [Baltimore, MA: Lederer Books, 1997], 529).

81 Shulam's research assistant, Le Cornu (1959–), studied at Edinburgh and at Hebrew University. A staff member of Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry, she is also committed to Messianic Judaism, having worked at the Messianic Midrasha in Israel.

82 Ibid., 12.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 5, 12.

85 Ibid., 23. Shulam cites Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1, 11, 17.

86 Ibid. Shulam cites Acts 21:27, 40.



in Greek, they nevertheless reflect his training in a rabbinic tradition and Hebrew linguistic and thought patterns.⁸⁷ Shulam has no doubts whatsoever in this regard. As he puts it,

Paul himself, of course, was Jewish, and his language, terminology, methodology, and style all reflect the Jewish education which he received and the Jewish traditions in which he was brought up.⁸⁸

Texts (mainly from the book of Acts) are cited to show how the apostle referred to himself as a Pharisee,⁸⁹ lived his life as a Pharisee, and was "Torah-observant, obedient to rabbinic regulations, and proud of his Jewish heritage."⁹⁰ At the same time, he is said to have had a close relationship with the Sanhedrin, as indicated by their letters of recommendation permitting him to bring followers of Yeshua to Jerusalem to trial. What little doubt Shulam shows concerning the accuracy of the New Testament evidence about Paul's life tends to be expressed as criticism of occasional lapses of knowledge of Jewish custom or law. For example, the Actian account of the execution of Stephen is censored for having missed the halakhic significance of Paul's role as cloak-holder, which reflected his official capacity as a representative of the priestly authorities.⁹¹

Shulam is keen to convince the reader that the apostle's key arguments and goals are derived from the prophets, and that his teachings about Israel, the end times, the nature of the Messiah, and God's interest in the Gentiles are well integrated in the theological landscape of Second Temple Judaism. The idea that there is anything new about Paul's conclusions is, he argues, the result of an over-emphasis upon the Hellenistic background of the New Testament and ignorance among Christian scholars regarding its Jewish and rabbinic character.⁹² Jewish scholars, too, have been misled by the overwhelming power of the Reformation view of Paul as the champion of a "theology of grace," and later as the main exponent of the gentilization of the Jewish Scriptures and the resultant new Christian faith.⁹³ It is therefore incumbent upon this Messianic Jew to correct the erroneous view of mainstream Jewish and Christian scholars on the place of Paul in salvation history.

It has become obvious through time that this neglect or contempt for the Jewish character of the New Testament has played a large part in the formation of the claim that Paul was in fact the author of

87 Ibid., 1.

88 Ibid., 3.

89 Shulam cites Acts 23:6; 26:5; and Phil 3:5.

90 Shulam, 12. Shulam cites Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-7; 28:17; Rom 9:3; 2 Cor 11:22; and Phil 3:5-6.

91 Shulam cites Sanhedrin 42b as evidence of the halakhic requirement for an official to stand at the door of the court with a cloak, in order to signal for the accused to be brought back if new witnesses appeared, even four or five times (ibid., 12).

92 Ibid., 3.

a new religion (Christianity). We are endeavouring as far as possible to redress this "historical aberration" and to demonstrate that the New Testament is a Jewish book *and that Jews who believe in Yeshua remain Jews.*⁹⁴ [italics mine]

Once one has rescued Paul from the charge of inventing Christianity, Shulam suggests, the Jewish authenticity of the first-century apostle's thought can be extrapolated to those who have come to acknowledge his Messiah in the modern era.

The methodology adopted in the book resembles in many respects the methodology of post-modern literary theory and the concept of inter-textuality. While little or no attempt is made to historically situate Paul's letter or to conduct any kind of source criticism,⁹⁵ the text is to be interpreted subjectively by the reader in the light of parallel readings from other texts; the commentary simply assists in this process by facilitating the reader's access to a range of potentially relevant texts.⁹⁶ The uncritical inclusion of materials found in rabbinic works compiled centuries after Paul wrote Romans, which Shulam acknowledges that some will regard as anachronistic, is justified by the observation that such rabbinic literature contained oral traditions with an ancient pedigree.⁹⁷ His treatments of Romans 5 and 12 are illustrative of these issues. In the first case, he purports to demonstrate the apostle's use of rabbinic exegetical principles:

Romans 5 is a masterful illustration of an analogy [*binyan av*] built upon a string of variations of a *fortiori* [*kal ve-chomer*] inferences: "if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God [. . .] how much more we shall be saved by his life" [v. 10]; "if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, how much more those who receive the abundance of grace [. . .] will reign in life through the one, Yeshua the Messiah [v. 17]."⁹⁸

94 Ibid., 4.

95 The one gesture in this direction is made when Shulam argues that Paul's letters are written for the public forum, and therefore, "the genre of rabbinic thought takes precedence over that of private communication." Having said that, he makes it clear that "since Paul is not engaged in talmudic debate with other Rabbis, his letter is not as tightly bound by the constraints of dialectic argument in the Talmud itself." As a source, "Romans could be added to the list of contemporary midrashic compilations of the period" for it (i) is an exposition of scripture, and (ii) employs midrashic principles such as verbal analogy (*gezerah shavah*), analogy (*binyan av*), and a *fortiori* (*kal ve-chomer*) (ibid., 6, 7).

96 Ibid., 9.

97 Shulam cites the Israeli Second Temple specialist, David Flusser: "The entire corpus of rabbinic literature is an expression of a constant stream of oral transmission. . . . Thus the specific character of rabbinic literature not only permits us, but even obligates us to include post-Christian rabbinic sources as an inseparable part of the investigation of the Jewish roots of Christianity" (David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988], iii-xv), as cited in Shulam, 9.

98 Shulam, 17, 191, 199.



In the second case, Shulam defends Romans 12:9–21⁹⁹ against those commentators who are uncomfortable with the apparently politically quietist attitude Paul espouses, by pointing to two principles derived respectively from Talmud (relating to conversion) and from the Qumran community (relating to the Day of Judgment). Thus Hillel reportedly said that in order to win converts, “a man should not rejoice when among people who weep or weep when among those who rejoice. [. . .] This is the general rule: A man should not deviate from the custom of his companions or from society.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, certain Qumran documents suggest that it is correct to submit to evil rulers so that God will punish them in the Day of Judgment.¹⁰¹ By juxtaposing such parallels, Paul’s apparently *laissez faire* attitude becomes embedded within a Jewish worldview that many within the Messianic community today would recognize as a pragmatic strategy rather than an expression of quietism. And, in fact, much of the *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* is profoundly shaped by such ideological aims and objectives. As Shulam himself puts it,

We offer this commentary on the book of Romans as a Jewish text in the hope that it will bring to the reader a broader and deeper appreciation of the Jewish nature of the New Testament writings as a whole. [. . .] We also hope that this volume will go some way in redressing the historical mistake committed by the Church of cutting itself off from its own roots. Our most fervent desire is perhaps that this commentary will also serve to return Yeshua himself to his own people, in demonstrating that the New Testament is not a Christian book representing a different faith but a Jewish text embodying an authentic Jewish interpretation of the Tanakh [Old Testament].¹⁰²

Thus Paul not only embodied Messianic Jewish theology for Shulam, but his writings remain a key resource for modern Messianic Jews who wish to correct Gentile errors of understanding, to reclaim Paul as a Jew and, it is clearly implied, to convince the people of Israel of the good news of their Messiah’s coming.

Historically, the Hebrew Christian community has been notoriously fragmented, something that is perhaps inevitable insofar as it is composed of strong-willed, Jewish individuals who have taken the momentous, socially disastrous decision to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Nevertheless, a few generalizations can be made about the use of the Apostle Paul as a platform from which to articulate their views. Jewish believers in Jesus such as Levertoff, Mills, and Shulam are uncompromising in their insistence

99 “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. . . . If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

100 Shulam, 417. Shulam cites *Derekh Erez Rabbah* 7:7 and *Derekh Erez Zuta* 5:5.

101 *Ibid.*, 411. Shulam cites (Community) Rule 1QS 9:21–23, 10:17–25.

that their perspective is not only legitimately Jewish but is, in fact, the most authentic form of Jewishness extant. While they are not slow to criticize the misunderstandings of Gentile Christians, which perhaps explains the medium of commentary, they are quicker still to strike out pre-emptively against the views of other Jews who are opposed to their very *raison d’être*. This is unsurprising, and simply reflects the fact that the issue of Jewish belief in Jesus is one of the rawest, most bitter ideological disputes within modern Jewry. For the thinkers discussed above, the image of Paul that emerges is that of a Messianic hero who, following the path opened up by his Nazarene master, realized the Jewish dream of bringing all mankind to God, who was profoundly attached to (and not hostile toward) Jewish tradition and custom, and whose ostensibly unfamiliar emphases, such as original sin, are presented as entirely unproblematic from a Jewish perspective. In contrast to other Jewish approaches, such Jewish believers in Jesus offer a caveat-free reclamation of a Jewish Paul.

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