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*"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us  
and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten  
from the Father, full of grace and truth."  
(John 1:14)*

ISSN 0792-0474



Caspari Center  
for Biblical and Jewish Studies

"Who  
is  
Jesus?"



# MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Issue 39 / 2003

JERUSALEM

The  
Divinity  
of  
Messiah



MISHKAN is a semi-annual journal dedicated to biblical and theological thinking on issues related to Jewish Evangelism, Hebrew-Christian/Messianic-Jewish identity, and Jewish-Christian relations

MISHKAN is published by the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies

MISHKAN's editorial policy is openly evangelical, committed to the New Testament proclamation that the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah is "to the Jew first." MISHKAN is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors

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## Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Modern Yeshua-Movement: Some Comparisons

Gershon Nerel

The first pioneering translation into modern Hebrew of the renowned *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea (c.260-c.340 AD), was released spring 2001.<sup>1</sup> This book is, indeed, a significant landmark for both professional historians and students, as well as for local believers and inquirers. Scholars and "laypeople" are now equipped with wide-open access to the primary source that portrays the comprehensive history of the early church. This doorway to the primal chronicles of the Church, following directly the *Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament, is invaluable. No longer can any Israeli thinker assume that the narrative of the early *Kehila*, the primitive followers of Yeshua, ends in the book of *Revelation*.

Eusebius' historiography demonstrates the gradual triumph of Christianity against her opponents—Paganism and Judaism—and how the "Church of the Circumcision" was transformed into the "Church of the Uncircumcision." All this occurred within three intensive centuries of painful martyrdom, diverse sects and dissident heretics. The fast growth of the churches took place within all walks of society around the Roman Empire.

The appearance of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (EH) in modern Hebrew removes a serious linguistic barrier for those Israelis dependent on that language. With the elimination of this obstacle, Eusebius' drama of the early church is now presented to the Hebrew reader with great transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Bishop Caesarea, *Toledot Haknessia* (History of the Church), NCMI/Caspari Center, Printed by Akademon, Jerusalem 2001. Hard cover. XXX + 373 pp.



### “Hebraic Eusebius”—Relevant for Today

The initiators of the “Eusebius Project,” which lasted for about seven years, were Dr. Ray Pritz and the *Caspari Center* of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The translator, Rimona Frank, skillfully turned the ancient text into idiomatic and fluent Hebrew, and Pritz added some annotations within the footnotes. The translation into Hebrew was carried out from an English text, based upon the versions of K. Lake (vol. 1) and J.E.L.Oulton (vol. 2) in the series of the *Loeb Classical Library* (1926-'32), and not from the original Greek. However, the Hebrew rendering carefully consulted the Greek in specific passages where the Loeb text is obscure. In general, the newly born “Hebraic Eusebius” closely follows the original manuscript, as noted by Dr. Oded Irshai of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Aryeh Kofsky of Jerusalem and of the Haifa University, an expert on Eusebius,<sup>4</sup> contributed an extensive and erudite introduction. His preface brings the reader to the most updated research on the “Father of Church History.” Kofsky’s synthesis rightly points to the fact that Eusebius, functioning simultaneously as a historian, a theologian and a geographer, was one of the greatest luminaries of late antiquity. This was reflected in Eusebius’ long ecclesiastical career and in his prolific writings. Furthermore, the *EH* also preserves some important texts that were lost, and otherwise would have been completely forgotten.

In his introductory words, Kofsky does not hesitate to voice the meaningful name *Yeshua*, and not “Yeshu.” Deplorably, the distorted appellation “Yeshu” is still widely used today within Jewish circles. Thus, Kofsky is in line with prominent young Israeli historians at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, such as Israel Y. Yuval, Yehuda Liebes and Yair Zakovitsch, who insist on pronouncing the correct name *Yeshua*. In other words, unlike the older generations of Israeli historians, such as the late Joseph Klausner and David Flusser, Kofsky reflects a new trend within the contemporary Israeli intelligentsia, which more and more realizes that *Yeshua* is indeed the proper name to use—not only within Israeli historiography and literature, but also in the media.

Further to Kofsky’s conclusion that Eusebius powerfully combined past and present (p. ix), we may add that same combination characterizes the modern movement of Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY). Namely, in their keen desire to shape a historic identity, contemporary JBY combine the present issues with those of their forerunners in the early centuries. Just as Eusebius lived and

<sup>2</sup> Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, 36 Jaffa Rd., PO Box 46, Jerusalem 91000, Israel. See [www.caspari.com](http://www.caspari.com)

<sup>3</sup> In a private conversation, Summer 2001.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism*, Leiden 2000.

wrote at a historical juncture, during the emergence of Christianity to the forefront of history, so it is also with the re-emergence of the Messianic movement on the modern historical arena. With Eusebius’ model of the *EH* we are able to point to some parallelism, even synonymous developments, between ancient gentile Christianity and the modern Messianic Jewish movement. A historic comparison, for example, of orthodoxy and heresy, is helpful in understanding the present issues with a deeper perspective.

In modern times, the need of the Yeshua-movement to safeguard its orthodox teaching by discerning between false and true doctrines is no less acute than it was in the early church. Some issues remain quite the same—arguments about the divinity of Yeshua, or the involvement of the modern movement of JBY in new religions and cults such as the syncretistic polytheism of the New Age and Freemasonry.<sup>5</sup>

Eusebius wrote about the globalization of the Christian faith and the globalization of the church as an institution. He reveals how within a most formative epoch Christianity affected the world. Similarly, today one may also talk about the global appearance of the modern Messianic movement, as demonstrated during the last two centuries. Thus, from a comparative perspective I wish to point to several topics that coincide *thematically* in the narrative of Eusebius and the issues that presently shape the modern Messianic movement. Practically, indeed, the relevance of Eusebius for today is within the parameters of similar themes existing across two formative periods: in the fourth century on the one hand, and in the 21st century on the other. In my comparative approach, therefore, I place a “reflective mirror” in the center of the discussion, to analyze the phenomenon of the Messianic Jewish movement as it is shaping its corporate identity.

### Torah Observant Jewish Yeshua-Believers

In his narrative of the church’s history, Eusebius does not say very much about the communities of JBY of the early centuries. Except for some brief lists of Jewish bishops in Jerusalem,<sup>6</sup> and the reference to the heretical views of the *Ebionites*,<sup>7</sup> Eusebius knows very little about the collective identity of the ancient JBY. In fact, the “Father of Church History” does not differentiate substantially between the heterodox Ebionites and the orthodox Nazarenes.<sup>8</sup> It seems that

<sup>5</sup> J. Ankerberg & J. Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Eugene, Oregon 1999, pp. 214-273.

<sup>6</sup> *EH*, Books III, 11, p. 79; III, 35, p. 98; IV, 5, pp. 107-108.

<sup>7</sup> *EH*, Book III, 27, pp. 91-92.

<sup>8</sup> R.A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity From the End of the New Testament Period Until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1992; and recently

Eusebius "was scornful" of the "Church of the Circumcision" because JBY refused to abandon the Torah.<sup>9</sup> Because the "Ebionite sect" kept "every detail of the Law,"<sup>10</sup> it was actually seen by Eusebius as a "Judaizing" danger, and therefore viewed as heretical.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Eusebius and other Church Fathers were supportive of the historic exclusion of both Ebionites and Nazarenes from the church.<sup>12</sup>

Today too, the issue of observing the Torah is often the cause of divisions between Jewish and gentile believers, as well as within the inner circles of JBY themselves. Thus, for example, Baruch Maoz from "Grace and Truth" Assembly in Israel argues that JBY should *not* keep the Torah at all.<sup>13</sup> Others, like Ariel Berkowitz from Jerusalem, claim that not only the Torah should be kept, but *also* the rabbinical traditions.<sup>14</sup> A third group, following the footsteps of the late Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David, believes that Torah observance today is strictly subject to the teaching of Yeshua himself in the canonical New Testament, yet without the rabbinical law.<sup>15</sup> De facto, all three streams within the modern movement of JBY regard themselves as the revived "*Kehila* of the Circumcision" of ancient times. However, most gentile churches now avoid the rejection of JBY who basically keep the Torah, i.e. circumcision and the Jewish Shabbat or other Jewish Holy Days, like Passover. On the contrary, many gentile believers approach Torah-observant JBY with an inclusive attitude.

Modern JBY raise the same ancient issue of Torah observance when they talk about creating a "Messianic Halakah."<sup>16</sup> They actually attempt to shape their Jewish identity by keeping the Torah and by explaining that they are not a new religion. In fact, Eusebius also highlighted the "ancient character of Christian origins," thus confronting the attacks of "those who imagine them to be recent

F. Blanchetière, *Enquête sur les racines juives du mouvement chrétien (30-135)*, Paris 2001, p. 321 ff.

<sup>9</sup> See "Who's Who in Eusebius", in Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, Translated by G.A. Williams, Revised and edited with a new introduction by A. Louth, Penguin Books, London 1989, p. 366. Cf. *ibid* pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>10</sup> *EH*, Book III, 27, 5, pp. 91-92. See especially note # 4 on page 91.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., for example, V. Martin, *A House Divided: The Parting of the Ways between Synagogue and Church*, Stimulus Book, New York 1995, esp. pp. 162-170.

<sup>13</sup> B. Maoz, *Judaism is not Jewish: A Friendly Critique of the Messianic Movement*, Glasgow 2003, esp. pp. 223-230.

<sup>14</sup> A. & D. Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered*, Littleton, Colorado 1996, esp. pp. 187-191.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. Nerel, "Observing the Torah according to Yeshua," in *Chai*, The Magazine of the British Messianic Jewish Alliance, Summer 2001, # 212, pp. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, John Fischer, "Yeshua and Halakah: Which Direction?", at: [www.lcje.net/papers/2000/LCJE-Fischer.pdf](http://www.lcje.net/papers/2000/LCJE-Fischer.pdf) See also under John Fischer at: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

and outlandish, appearing yesterday for the first time."<sup>17</sup> In a sense, modern JBY keep the Torah for the same reasons and connect themselves directly with their forefathers in antiquity.<sup>18</sup> Yet today, JBY constantly face the need to discern between different forms of Torah observance, especially because of historical developments within the last 20 centuries.<sup>19</sup> In addition to that, the question of "Judaizing" the believers among the nations still remains a major controversy within the contemporary movement of JBY.<sup>20</sup>

Historically, as corporate entities, congregations of JBY slowly disintegrated and totally disappeared until around the 10th century.<sup>21</sup> Following the gentilization process within the universal church, JBY were forbidden by the church to maintain their Torah-observant identity, both as individuals and as congregations.<sup>22</sup> Individual believers, however, were accepted into the gentile churches after being asked to reject their Jewishness completely.<sup>23</sup>

In recent generations, however, we observe ongoing attempts among gentile believers to return to their Jewish and biblical heritage, almost as a reactionary step against the church's anti-Torah policy of the past two millennia. Today churches also acknowledge the uniqueness of Israel according to their Covenant and Election in the Torah. This process is taking place, for example, within the Catholic Church,<sup>24</sup> and recently through the attitude of churches towards developing congregations of JBY.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, JBY presently point to the

<sup>17</sup> *EH*, Book I, 2, p. 2. Cf. *ibid*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, G. Nerel, "Primitive Jewish Christians in the Modern Thought of Messianic Jews", in S.C. Mimouni & F.S. Jones, eds., *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états*, Cerf, Paris 2001, 399-425.

<sup>19</sup> See G. Nerel, "Torah and Halakhah among Modern Assemblies of Jewish Yeshua-Believers", in S.N. Gundry & L. Goldberg, eds., *How Jewish is Christianity? (Two Views on the Messianic Movement)*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2003.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, M.G. Lew, "Messianic Judaism: A Return to Judaizing?", in *The Messianic Outreach*, vol. 21:2, Winter 2002, pp. 11-15.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Sh. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings, vol. 2, # 13, Jerusalem 1966.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism*, New York 1979, 92-115.

<sup>23</sup> Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425*, Littman Library, London 1996, pp. 65-68; 237-254.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, J.M. Garrigues, ed., *L'unique Israel de Dieu (Approches chrétiennes du Mystère d'Israël)*, Limoges 1987. Cf. *Il Dono della Torah (Colloquio ebraico-cristiano)*, Camaldoli 1985.

<sup>25</sup> P. Hocken, *Toward Jerusalem Council II – The Vision and the Story*, Ventura, CA 2002. See also at: [www.TJCII.org](http://www.TJCII.org) and at [www.umjc.org](http://www.umjc.org)



Apostle Shaul/Paul as a model of a Torah-observant Jewish believer in Yeshua, who was misinterpreted by the churches for many centuries.<sup>26</sup>

### Jewish Pessah (Passover) and the Church Calendar

The issue of how and when to fix the date of Easter (*Pascha*), so that it would always fall on a Sunday, was well noted by Eusebius.<sup>27</sup> For many decades the early church struggled to separate Easter from the Jewish Passover, which could be any day of the week, and not necessarily a Sunday. Eusebius writes that the controversy about the Easter festival arose "because all the Asian dioceses thought that in accordance with ancient [i.e. Jewish] tradition they ought to observe the fourteenth day of the lunar month [i.e. Nissan] as the beginning of the Paschal festival."<sup>28</sup>

Eusebius also marks that since the lunar calculation of the Jewish Passover could fall on any day, not necessarily Sunday, this was *not* in accordance with apostolic tradition in the western churches. The "problem" was that the eastern churches had a tradition of fasting before the Passover until the 14<sup>th</sup> of the lunar month, and they were named "people of the fourteenth day" (*Quartodecimani*), because they followed the Jewish calendar.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, the biblical/Jewish foundation of beginning the Passover celebration on the fourteenth of Nisan was overruled by Bishop Victor, head of the Roman church.<sup>30</sup> The church adopted a new solar calendar, which was instrumental in the sharp transformation from the Jewish Sabbath to the church's Sunday, as well as to Easter-Sunday.<sup>31</sup>

The Easter controversy reached its climax towards the end of the second century.<sup>32</sup> Bishop Victor of Rome (Pope AD 189-198) enforced his view that Easter should always be fixed according to the solar calendar on Sunday, "the Day of the Lord's Resurrection."<sup>33</sup> Victor actually exercised his papal authority,

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, G. Nerel, "Reinventing Paul," in *Eretz Acheret*, vol. 9 (2002): 8-9 (in Hebrew); and J.G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, Oxford—New York 2002.

<sup>27</sup> *EH*, Book IV, 14, p. 118. See also Book II, 17 {21}, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> *EH*, Book V, 23-25, pp. 177-181.

<sup>29</sup> See "Quartodecimanism", in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, London 1974, 1150 (=ODCC).

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion on the *Quartodecimani* within a broad historical perspective, including references to JBY, see I.Y. Yuval, "Two Nations in Your Womb": *Perceptions of Jews and Christians*, Tel Aviv 2000, 75-91; 223-225 (in Hebrew).

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity), Gregoriana, Rome 1977, esp. pp. 74-89; 142-167.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1970, 82-83; 106.

<sup>33</sup> S. Bacchiocchi, *Ibid*, 179.

and compelled all churches to deviate from the Jewish Paschal tradition under threats of declaring them as heterodox. Thus, because of explicit intimidation of excommunication, the eastern churches also abandoned the Jewish Paschal tradition.

In contrast to the "gentile Easter" that has developed since the early church history, contemporary JBY now return to the biblical calendar and observe both the Jewish Seventh-Day Sabbath and the Passover on the eve of Nisan 14. For modern JBY, the Sabbath commandment is still a valid sign between God and Israel. This Seventh-Day Sabbath has a specific sign of God's eternal covenant with Israel.<sup>34</sup> Yeshua, in fact, never abolished the Sabbath. In the State of Israel, for example, JBY actually keep the Sabbath — not Sunday — as their day of rest and congregational worship.<sup>35</sup> The same holds true with regard to Sunday — Easter. Most Israeli JBY who celebrate Passover on Nisan 14-15, regardless of the day, do not set aside a special day for the Lord's resurrection. What actually happens is that JBY combine the remembrance of Yeshua's resurrection together with the Passover celebration itself (during the "Seder" meal), usually without keeping a specific day as the "Resurrection Day."<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, we easily observe that on the one hand Eusebius' narrative represents the church's wish to differentiate herself from Jewry and from the Jewish calendar revolving around the Sabbath and Passover. Yet today, on the other hand, many modern JBY abandon the Sunday-keeping and return to observe the Seventh-Day Sabbath, and at least in the State of Israel, JBY also keep Pesach on Nisan 14, usually without a Sunday-Easter. Thus, in their calendar, modern JBY make a U-turn as they go back to their Jewish/biblical roots and that of the *Quartodecimani*. At the same time, however, we should also mention the modern Hebrew Catholics that still keep the Sunday according to the church's calendar.<sup>37</sup> However, today even Hebrew Catholics aspire to express a distinct Jewish identity within their gentile surroundings.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, M.I. Ben-Maeir, "Remember to Sanctify the Sabbath Day!", in *Tal*, no. 2, November 1962, pp. 5-7 (in Hebrew). Cf. D. Juster, "A Messianic Jewish Understanding of the Sabbath", in *Mishkan*, vol. 22 (1995): 9-22.

<sup>35</sup> J. Shulam, "The Sabbath Day and How to Keep It", in *Mishkan*, vol. 22 (1995): 23-28. See also B.F. Skjott, "Sabbath and Worship in Messianic Congregations in Israel", *ibid*. 29-33.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, G. Nerel, 'Messianic Jews' in *Eretz-Israel (1917-1967): Trends and Changes in Shaping Self-Identity*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996, 224-239 (in Hebrew).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, "Calendar", in *The Hebrew Catholic*, # 78, Winter-Spring 2003, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> See recently D. Christiansen, "A Campaign to Divide the Church in the Holy Land", in *America*, vol. 188, # 17, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003; and also I. de Gaulmyn, "Les chrétiens de Terre sainte se divisent", in *La Croix*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002, 6.

### Authority and Apostolic Succession

The legitimate succession of the bishops and their authority in the church is a central theme within the *EH*. Thus, towards the end of the *EH*, Eusebius boasts that he "dealt fully with the apostolic succession in seven books."<sup>39</sup> The principle of solid apostolic succession in the church is of utmost importance in Eusebius' understanding.<sup>40</sup> He sees in this matter the key for preserving "the stamp of apostolic orthodoxy" in its purity. Therefore, Eusebius insists on providing, as accurately as possible, the proper lists of the episcopal dynasty in the major cities, mostly in the patriarchal Sees of Jerusalem,<sup>41</sup> Rome,<sup>42</sup> Antioch<sup>43</sup> and Alexandria.<sup>44</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, he writes systematically about the early Jewish *Kehila* in Jerusalem and that "up to Hadrian's siege of the Jews there had been a series of fifteen Hebrew bishops."<sup>45</sup> With regard to the episcopal See of Jerusalem, as in all other Sees, Eusebius highlights the uninterrupted continuation from apostolic times, even when the succession of the "bishops of the Circumcision" ended, following the second Jewish revolt in AD 135, and the succession of the "bishops of the Uncircumcision" began.<sup>46</sup>

Ya'akov (James), the brother of the Lord, surnamed the "Righteous," appears throughout the entire book of the *EH* as a highly esteemed authority within the foundational dynasty of apostolic succession. Ya'akov, who was the first Jewish bishop elected to the "episcopal throne of the Jerusalem Church,"<sup>47</sup> was respected not merely within the "Mother Church of Jerusalem," but throughout the whole Christian world.<sup>48</sup> In fact, Eusebius also finds space to describe the physical "Throne of Bishop James" – that "has been preserved to this day."<sup>49</sup> Eusebius underlines the historic fact that Ya'akov was the first to receive from Yeshua *himself* and *all* his apostles the episcopacy of the Jerusalem *Kehila*. In other words, there existed a strong awareness that the primitive episcopal authority in Jerusalem had a unique origin and prestige.

<sup>39</sup> *EH*, Book VIII, preamble, p. 270. The Hebrew translation here refers to "seven full books", while the English translation of G.A. Williamson (Penguin Books), writes "full dealing" with the theme of apostolic succession. See above note # 9.

<sup>40</sup> *EH*, Books III, 37, p. 100; IV, 11, p. 115.

<sup>41</sup> *EH*, Books IV, 5, p. 107; V, 12, p. 164; VI, 8, 10, pp. 193-195.

<sup>42</sup> *EH*, Books III, 21, p. 83, IV, 4, p. 107; IV, 19, p. 130.

<sup>43</sup> *EH*, Books III, 22, p. 83; VI, 21, p. 206.

<sup>44</sup> *EH*, Books IV, 4, p. 107; IV, 19, p. 130; VI, 35, p. 215. Cf. p. 234, n. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *EH*, Book IV, 5, p. 107.

<sup>46</sup> *EH*, Book V, 12, p. 164.

<sup>47</sup> *EH*, Book II, 1, 2, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> *EH*, Books II, 23, pp. 57-59; IV, 5, p. 107.

<sup>49</sup> *EH*, Book VII, 19, p. 246.

At the same time, however, Eusebius also refers to the increasing demands of the Bishop of Rome to establish his own primacy in the universal church.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the historian from Caesarea demonstrates that gradually the See of Rome, upon the Petrine Doctrine, assumed the leading authority in the church.<sup>51</sup> Yet during the early centuries, the bishop of Rome could not totally ignore the apostolic status and the Hebraic heritage of the primitive bishopric in Jerusalem. Apostolic succession was pivotal in the struggle over theological hegemony within the consolidation of the ecclesiastical organization. Rome's bishop, as installed on Peter's See, wanted a hierarchical pyramid with himself in the top. In order to achieve that goal, Rome demanded a unified liturgy, through the new calendar with a "Catholic Easter" apart from the Jewish Holy Days.<sup>52</sup> Eusebius clearly defends the claim of having *one* bishop, i.e. in Rome, who leads the church.<sup>53</sup> This, *de facto*, also implies that the theological hegemony moved from James to Peter, or, from Jerusalem to Rome. This remains an issue for the modern movement of JBY.<sup>54</sup>

In modern times, the Messianic movement also struggles with the issue of apostolic authority and apostolic succession. Thus, in "*Kesher*," a journal of Messianic Judaism published by the "Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations" (UMJC) in the USA, the editors dedicated an entire volume to the topic of "Authority."<sup>55</sup> Modern JBY find it difficult to comply with the "authoritative traditions" of the historic churches. Habitually, for example, within their own ordination of leadership, or succession mechanism, JBY avoid the *imprimatur* of the different Christian denominations. Practically, when the Messianic movement searches for spiritual authorization, it is usually found in linkage with the pre-exilic times of the *Kehila* in Jerusalem—just as modern Herzlian Zionism bridges itself to pre-exilic Israel.<sup>56</sup> Except for the Hebrew Catholics, Messianic Jews do not accept the primacy of the Bishop of Rome and

<sup>50</sup> *EH*, Book VI, 43, pp. 225-226.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *EH*, Book V, 24-25, pp. 178-181.

<sup>52</sup> For the topic of a *pyramidal organization* in the shape of a universal Church, see *EH*, Books V, 23-25, pp. 177-181; VI, 43, 3, p. 224; VII, 6, p. 237. Cf. [http://www.catholic.com/library/Authority\\_of\\_the\\_Pope\\_Part\\_1.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Authority_of_the_Pope_Part_1.asp)

<sup>53</sup> *EH*, Book VI, 11, p. 226. See, for example, O. Irshai, "The Church of Jerusalem—From 'The Church of the Circumcision' to 'The Church from the Gentiles'", in Y. Tsafir and Sh. Safrai, eds., *The History of Jerusalem*, (The Roman and Byzantine Periods, 70-638 CE), Yad Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 61-114 (in Hebrew).

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, G. Nerel, *Dissertation*, 188-197.

<sup>55</sup> M. Schiffman and M. Wolf, "Authority to Lead: What is the Source?", in *Kesher*, vol. 4 (1996): 123-136.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, J. Shulam, "Theological Breakthrough and the Success of Messianic Judaism in Our Time", in *Teaching from Zion*, vol. 11 (1998): 16-36.



the authority of its Magisterium.<sup>57</sup> In reality, contemporary JBY regard themselves as a prophetic movement, authorized by God through the Holy Spirit. This is the restoration of the authority of the early Mother *Kehila* in Jerusalem, headed by *Ya'akov Hatzadik*, i.e. James the Just.

Today, some JBY view *Ya'akov Hatzadik* as a model for the "Jerusalem Community's Head Rabbi." *Ya'akov* is presented as a Torah-observant Jew, whose relationship to the Torah would be similar to Yeshua's relationship to the Torah. Thus, for example, David Friedman of Jerusalem refers to *Ya'akov* as "*Nasi*," in the sense of Chief Rabbi, because of *Ya'akov's* position in the early *Kehila*.<sup>58</sup> Nowadays, *Ya'akov's* teachings and lifestyle are grasped as a prime example of what was considered "normal Messianic Judaism—at least for his time and location."<sup>59</sup> In other words, within their restorationist thinking, modern JBY look for authoritative inspiration from *Ya'akov*, "who unfortunately is still called James,"<sup>60</sup> and not towards Rome, Canterbury or the Lutheran World Federation.

Interestingly, in his book *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, Ray Pritz writes about the position of *Ya'akov Hatzadik* and Jerusalem's loss of authority as follows: "Authority rests not so much in a geographical place as in a relational position [...] As the apostles died or moved away, so also the authority of Jerusalem began to diminish [...] By that time (c. 100), considerable attention was already being given to apostolic writings."<sup>61</sup>

For modern Yeshua-believers, the early Jewish *Kehila* in Jerusalem, as depicted in the New Testament, represents an authentic Jewish cathedral authority. The Jewish "Mother of all churches" has an enormous symbolic importance for the Yeshua-movement. Jerusalem is not merely the place where the first council of the apostles took place (Acts 15), but through the *apostolic writings* of the New Testament it is also grasped as *the* model for *the* pure and genuine faith—for both Jewish and gentile believers in Yeshua. Because "the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled," in the eyes of JBY it is *not* an anachronism to connect the restoration of the modern Yeshua movement directly to the first century *Kehila*.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> See G Nerel, "Haim (Haimoff) Bar-David: Apostolic Authority among Jewish Yeshua-Believers", in *Mishkan*, vol. 37 (2002), 74-75.

<sup>58</sup> D. Friedman, "How did They Live? – A Look at the Jerusalem Messianic Community's Head Rabbi", in *First Fruits of Zion*, vol. 46 (1996), 33-36.

<sup>59</sup> D. Friedman, *ibid.*, 34.

<sup>60</sup> Ts. Sadan, "In the Name of the Brother – The Ossuary of *Ya'akov*, Brother of Yeshua", in *Kivun*, vol. 30 (2002), 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, (From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century), Magnes, Jerusalem 1992, p. 124.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, M. S. Alexander, "Farewell Sermon", {esp. # 8; 17}, London 1841. I owe special thanks to Jorge Quinonez for providing this material to me. See also G.

### The Canonical Bible and Unauthenticated Scripture

On many occasions Eusebius refers to the topic of sanctioned Scripture,<sup>63</sup> as contrasted with writings that were unauthorized by the Church Fathers.<sup>64</sup> Thus, for example, he writes as follows: "the second Petrine epistle we have been taught to regard as uncanonical; many, however, have thought it valuable and have honoured it with a place among the other Scriptures."<sup>65</sup> However, other Petrine writings, like the "Acta" attributed to him, the "Gospel" and the "Preaching" that were called Petrine, Eusebius describes as excluded from the *Catholic*, i.e. whole, Scriptures.<sup>66</sup>

As for contemporary JBY, almost all of them accept the canonical Holy Scriptures comprising the Old and New Testaments as the "fait accompli" Word of God.<sup>67</sup> In principle, modern Jewish believers hold no claims that would question the validity of that Canon.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, mainstream JBY have no aspirations to initiate a theological process that would re-canonize the existing sacred texts. Jewish believers in Yeshua also make no attempts to canonize new or particularistic texts of their own.<sup>69</sup> Yet, at the same time, they do insist on their full right to provide independent scriptural interpretations.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, the modern Yeshua-movement recognizes that the gentile church at large crystallized the final shape of the New Testament. JBY give the church significant credit for canonizing and preserving the New Testament. As a result of that, nowadays JBY do not only follow those texts defined by the church as orthodox, but also reject many other texts which the church defined as heretical or eccentric.

Eusebius deemed it important to point to the "External Books," alongside the Canonical Bible, such as the Book of Maccabees, "entitled Sarbeth

Nerel, "Hebrew Christian Associations in Ottoman Jerusalem: Jewish Yeshua-Believers Facing Church and Synagogue", in *Revue des études juives*, vol. 161 (2002), 431-457.

<sup>63</sup> For example, *EH*, Books III, 24-25, pp. 86-90; IV, 25, pp. 137-138; VI, 20, pp. 205-206.

<sup>64</sup> *EH*, Book III, 3, pp. 64-65.

<sup>65</sup> *EH*, Book III, 3, p. 64

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> K. Kjær-Hansen and B.F. Skjøtt, eds., *Facts & Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel*, *Mishkan* vols. 30-31 (1999), 30.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, G. Nerel, "The Authoritative Bible and Jewish Believers", in *Messianic Jewish Life*, vol. 73, # 4 (2000), 16-19.

<sup>69</sup> This is manifested, for example, by the recent publications of the Hebrew Bible comprising Old and New Testament in one volume, by *Yanetz*, a Messianic Printing Press in Jerusalem.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, M.I. Ben-Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem, Excerpts from the Diary*, Jerusalem 2001, esp. pp. 88-89, 169-170; Cf. G. Nerel, *Dissertation*, 342-344.

Sabanaiel," that existed in his times.<sup>71</sup> Today, the question of the *Apocrypha*, namely the unauthorized books to both the Old and New Testaments, is irrelevant for the Messianic movement. However, modern Hebrew Catholics do accept the Apocrypha to the Old Testament, including the books of *Maccabees*, *Baruch*, *Jesus Ben-Sirah*, *Tobit* and *Judith*—as does the entire Roman Catholic world. In other words, the Messianic movement, together with mainstream Jewry, and most Protestant churches, excludes from the Canonical Bible the apocryphal Old Testament.

Concerning the ancient "*Apocryphal New Testament*," Eusebius mentions not only the so-called "Gospel of Peter,"<sup>72</sup> but also the "Epistle of Barnabas"<sup>73</sup> and the "Gospel of Thomas."<sup>74</sup> Today, while mainstream Messianic Jews relate to the Apocryphal New Testament as unbiblical, in Israel we still find a group of bohemian Jews who believe in Yeshua through harmonizing the Bible with ancient apocryphal literature. This trend of thought is developing under the patronage of Shlomo Kalo, a "spiritual leader" who immigrated to Israel from Bulgaria. With his new wife, Rivka Zohar, Kalo teaches syncretism—a reconciliation of different religious tenets. Thus Kalo composed a prayer book where he combines verses from the Old Testament, the New Testament, Hinduism and the Koran.<sup>75</sup>

Kalo is also responsible for a modern translation into Hebrew and dissemination of an *Unknown Gospel* - the *Gospel of Thomas*. Within a leaflet that was produced by the followers of Kalo, one finds among various publications a reference to a *Hidden Gospel*. The advertisement in this brochure reads as follows: "The Unknown Gospel - A translation of the Gospel according to Thomas (one of the disciples of Yeshua), that was discovered in an ancient Gnostic library in Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1946. Added is an original and surprising interpretation. Hard cover, 128 pages."<sup>76</sup> Thus, nowadays Kalo endeavors to create an extraneous "New Jewish Christianity." In reality,

<sup>71</sup> *EH*, Book VI, 25, p. 209. See especially notes # 4 and 7 on p. 209.

<sup>72</sup> *EH*, Book VI, 12, p. 196.

<sup>73</sup> *EH*, VI, 14, p. 199. Cf. *Early Christian Writings*, (The Apostolic Fathers), Translated by M. Staniforth, Penguin Books, Middlesex 1968, 189-192.

<sup>74</sup> *EH*, Book III, 25, p. 90. Cf. *The Gospel of Thomas*, Translation, Introduction and Commentary: Amir Or. Foreword by R.J.Z. Werblowsky, Carmel, Jerusalem 1992 (in Hebrew).

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, D. Israel, "The Guru of Bohemians", in *Olam Haisha*, January 1995, pp. 48-50 (in Hebrew). Cf. B. Fastman, "Shlomo Kalo—Wolf or Lamb?", in *Kivun*, vol. 5 (1997), 2-4 (in Hebrew).

<sup>76</sup> See "Thomas, Gospel of", in *ODCC*, p. 1370.

however, such apocryphal texts are now promulgated merely within Kalo's esoteric circles.<sup>77</sup>

Modern Jewish believers also raise the argument that when Yeshua himself was teaching, he never quoted from the apocryphal literature of the second temple period. In other words, modern JBY emphasize the fact that Yeshua, though he quoted the Old Testament frequently, always referred only to the canonical Hebrew writings, whether the Torah, the Prophets or the Psalms. (Ktuvim/Writings). The same is true about Yeshua's evangelists and apostles. This is another reason that the Apocrypha has no divine significance in the teachings of the modern Yeshua-movement. For most JBY the New Testament links itself immediately with the end of the Old Testament, as if no inspired writing came between.<sup>78</sup> And when modern JBY embrace a historic *textual succession*, directly following the Canonical Scripture, they view themselves as the legitimate and authoritative heirs of the early Jewish apostles.<sup>79</sup>

### Ancient and Modern Paganism

In the *EH*, Eusebius highlights the confrontations, mostly violent, between Christianity and the pagan world. This deadly encounter with paganism is depicted alongside the church's metaphysical struggle with Judaism. Yet the pagans are presented as the instigators of the cruelest persecutions against the Christians. Frequently Eusebius contrasts the deep faith and martyrdom of the Christians with the inhuman activities of the heathen.<sup>80</sup> The sufferings and bloody massacres of the believers in Yeshua while facing the idol-worshippers is a leitmotif in that narrative. For example, throughout the Roman Empire everyone was required to take part in sacrifice to the gods. When the Christians refused to do that, this resulted in martyrdom.<sup>81</sup> Occasionally some Christians were exempt from participation in such ceremonies.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Eusebius' *History* actually functions as a polemical and apologetic text,<sup>83</sup> also referring to other clashes with paganism on philosophical grounds.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Sh. Kalo, *The Day is Coming*, Jaffa 1997 (Original Hebrew Edition: *Ve'Hineh Hu Bah*).

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, B. Berger, *Eine Herde – Ein Hirte*, Berlin/Wuppertal 2002.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, H. & M. Benhayim, *Bound for the Promised Land*, (The Story of the First American Messianic Jewish Couple to Make Aliyah to Israel), Jerusalem 2003, 144-145.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, *EH*, Books V, 1, 36, p. 148; VI, 42, 1, p. 222.

<sup>81</sup> *EH*, Book VIII, 10, 10, p. 281.

<sup>82</sup> *EH*, Book VIII, 1, 2, p. 270.

<sup>83</sup> *EH*, Books IV, 3, pp. 106-107; IV, 12-14, pp. 116-119.

<sup>84</sup> *EH*, Books V, 10, p. 162; VI, 3, pp. 188-189.



Unlike the ancient bloody collisions of Christianity with heathenism, today one observes a "peaceful encounter" between contemporary JBY and modern heathen cults. In modern heathenism we refer mostly to Hinduism, Buddhism and the spreading "oriental spiritual truths," which have even produced a mixture of heathenism from the Far East with popular Judaism.<sup>85</sup>

"Religious meetings" between JBY and heathenism take place through various outreach ministries, while JBY confront eastern religions and the New Age movement at full moon trance and drug parties.<sup>86</sup> In the modern State of Israel, for example, there is great fascination with oriental cults, classical and popular. It is almost a norm for thousands of veteran soldiers who have finished a lengthy and difficult military service in the IDF to organize pilgrimages to India and the Far-East, to search for "light from the east."<sup>87</sup>

In Israel, therefore, certain JBY feel that it is their responsibility to act against the modern heathenism that sweeps Israelis both in the land and overseas. A number of seminars dealing with the New Age have been organized. In visits to New Age festivals, as in the "Boombamela Festival" at Nitzanim Beach during Pesach week 2003, some JBY tried to convince the youngsters to return to their biblical roots. People like David and Martha Stern of Jerusalem shared there their own experiences as hippies in the 1960s and how they found Yeshua.<sup>88</sup> Others even travel as far as India to convince Israelis to find the real light in Yeshua. *Caspari Center* and its director, Lisa Loden, have taken a leading role in these activities.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, we should also point to the growing heathen cults within normative Judaism, mainly the adoration of *Tzadikim*, i.e. "Saints", and the prayers at their "holy graves," such as the *Hilula* or Festival of "Baba Sali" at Netivot. Thus, JBY increasingly place themselves in positions where they confront various heathen phenomena in Israel and abroad.

However, one should not look for modern "paganized cults" only beyond the Messianic movement. In fact it is Eusebius who set a model for confronting pagan teachings and heathen practices that had penetrated into the body of believers. The *EH* is full of names of individuals and groups such as Gnosticism and Montanism that attempted to introduce heretical doctrines into the church

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Yair Sheleg, "Young Observant Jews in the Paths of the New Age", in *Ha'aretz*, Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000, p. B2. Cf. "Long Live the New Age", in *Ha'aretz*, (Mussaf), Rosh Hashana Supplement, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

<sup>86</sup> "Israelis in India", in *Caspari Views from Jerusalem*, The Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, Spring 2003, 3.

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, F. Barr, "The New Age and Similar Movements in Israel", in *Mishkan*, vol. 38 (2003), 15-23.

<sup>88</sup> D. Stern, "Evangelize at the Festivals!", in an *Open Letter*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

<sup>89</sup> See L. Loden, "The New Age in Israel at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", in *Mishkan*, vol. 38 (2003), 24-38. Cf. H. Pedersen, "Hinjew, JUBUs and New Age Judaism", *ibid*, 39-46; and J. Ross, "A Fatal Attraction—Israeli Youth in India", *ibid*, 57-63.

and needed to be exposed.<sup>90</sup> Today too, special attention should be given to the existence of paganized syncretism within the modern Messianic movement itself. By this I mean the forgiven and forgotten field of Freemasonry, with its god and secret worship opposed to the Bible. The god of Freemasonry is described as an architect or geometrician rather than creator.<sup>91</sup> Here I wish to point particularly to the presence—probably indirect and concealed—of Freemasonry within the "International Hebrew Christian Alliance" (*IHCA*) during at least the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is no secret that the first President of the *IHCA*, Sir Leon Levison, was an ardent and active freemason. He joined the freemasons as a believer in Yeshua while living in Scotland, and after World War I he became a founder-member of St. Leonard's Lodge. From 1921 to 1923 he was its "Right Worshipful Master."<sup>92</sup> Levison was fascinated with the esoteric, kabbalistic and Old Testament references of Freemasonry. Freemasonry with its cryptic vows was, among other things, a social tool for Leon to consort with men from all walks of life.<sup>93</sup> However, it appears that in daily routine the Masonic secret rituals and symbols deeply affected his private thoughts and public practices. Although he was fully aware of criticisms of his Masonic life, he dismissed them "as no different from that of the idolater of sport."<sup>94</sup>

Levison keenly served both freemasonry and the *IHCA*. As the President of the *IHCA*, he often traveled to Eretz-Israel on Alliance business, in which he also incorporated his Masonic interests.<sup>95</sup> Because of the international characteristics of both the *IHCA* and freemasonry, with a tendency towards universalistic encounters worldwide, it would not be unrealistic to assume that in Jerusalem and in the Galilee he found close contacts among the local freemasons. Thus, in Eretz Israel he probably developed further links with the Persian Bahais, under the motto of creating a "world brotherhood" between Hindus, Moslems, Parsees, Christians and Jews.<sup>96</sup>

One cannot avoid the impression that it was through Levison that the cult of Freemasonry, with heathenish tendencies, actually penetrated the policies of the

<sup>90</sup> *EH*, Books IV, 7, pp. 109-112; II, 13, pp. 46-47; V, 14, pp. 165-166. Cf. *ODCC*, pp. 573-574; 934.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, J. Lawrence, *Freemasonry: A Christian Perspective*, London 1999, esp. 137-140.

<sup>92</sup> These and more details appear openly in the biography of Sir Leon Levison, written by his son, Frederick. See F. Levison, *Christian and Jew: The Life of Leon Levison (1881-1936)*, Edinburgh 1989, 141.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*. Cf. J. Katz, *Freemasons and Jews: Real and Imaginary Connections*, Jerusalem 1968 (in Hebrew).

<sup>94</sup> F. Levison, *Christian and Jew*, 141.

<sup>95</sup> F. Levison, *Ibid*, 152-153.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. F. Levison, *ibid*, 73; 221.

IHCA. In a conversation with Dr. Robert (Bob) I. Winer, M.D., an experienced activist in the "Messianic Jewish Alliance of America" (MJAA), he shared with me his own assumption<sup>97</sup> that Masonic influences largely infiltrated the IHCA since its inception.<sup>98</sup> Masonic interests probably affected the selling of the property called "Abraham's Vineyard" in Jerusalem<sup>99</sup> and the attempts to establish another Hebrew Christian colony in the Land.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, in some similarity to Eusebius' references to people who worship "pictures and images,"<sup>101</sup> or accept "deadly poison brought from Persia", in describing, for example, the demonic deviation of the Manicheans,<sup>102</sup> modern JBY also confront diverse occult beliefs in the form of neo-paganism.

### The Divinity of Yeshua

From the outset of the *EH*, Eusebius stresses the pre-existence and divinity of Yeshua. In his own words: "the nature of Messiah is twofold; it is like the head of the body in that He is recognized as God, and comparable to the feet in that for our salvation He put on manhood as frail as our own."<sup>103</sup> Without any concession Eusebius strongly attacks heretics like Paul of Samosata, who taught that in his nature the Messiah was just an ordinary man, merely a person of flesh and blood.<sup>104</sup>

Like the church in ancient times, the modern movement of JBY is shaping its corporate identity through theological debates and doctrinal definitions. In recent years in particular ongoing discussions have occurred concerning the topic of Yeshua's divinity and the Trinity. Such christological themes have been on the agenda of JBY for decades,<sup>105</sup> but the debate about Yeshua's full divinity

<sup>97</sup> Private talk with Bob Winer at General Conference of the *International Messianic Jewish Alliance*, Mexico, May 1997.

<sup>98</sup> For the vast masonic network in the Land during Mandatory times see D. Tidhar, ed., *Barkai Lodge No. 17: Jubilee Album 1906-1956* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv 1957, esp. pp. 17-33.

<sup>99</sup> F. Levison, *Christian and Jew*, 189-197.

<sup>100</sup> For the plans of establishing a Hebrew Christian colony in Eretz-Israel see R.I. Winer, *The Calling: The History of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (1915-1990)*, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, 1990.

<sup>101</sup> *EH*, Book II, 13, 3, p. 47.

<sup>102</sup> *EH*, Book VII, 31, p. 263.

<sup>103</sup> *EH*, Books I, 2, p. 2; I, 13, p. 29; II, 1, p. 33; II, 14, p. 47; II, 23, p. 57; III, 33, p. 97; V, 28, pp. 182-183.

<sup>104</sup> *EH*, Book VII, 27, p. 257; VII, 30, pp. 260-261.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, R. Harvey, "Jesus the Messiah in Messianic Jewish Theology: The Shaping of Messianic Jewish Christology," in K. Kjær-Hansen, ed., *Proceedings of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE)*, Seventh International Conference,

and the meaning of the Trinity came sharply to the forefront of the local movement following an article which appeared in November 2001 in the monthly *Israel Today*.<sup>106</sup> Basically, this "article" is a brief interview with 12 Israeli JBY, in which they reveal their beliefs about Yeshua's divinity. According to the responses of the interviewees, about half fully accept Yeshua's divinity, and the other half rejects it. Thus, for example, Ofer Amitai, pastor of the "El-Roi" congregation in Jerusalem, believes without reservation in Yeshua's divinity, while Uri Marcus, director of the "Nehemiah Fund" from Ma'ale Adumim, declares that "Yeshua is God's plan, but not God Himself."<sup>107</sup> However, certain local believers reacted to this article by saying that it was "poor journalism" creating a misleading impression. They insist that many more than 50% of Israeli believers do accept Yeshua's divinity. Ray Pritz of the *Caspari Center* in Jerusalem, for example, estimates that "no more than five percent [!] would hold a formal doctrinal position that does not affirm the divinity of Yeshua."<sup>108</sup>

Following the interview in *Israel Today*, the public debate among Israeli JBY concerning Yeshua's divinity and the Trinity continued on the pages of *Kivun*, an Israeli bi-monthly magazine edited by Tsvi Sadan.<sup>109</sup> Thus, for example, Rami Danieli of Kfar Yona, in a letter to the Editor of *Kivun*, expressed his view as follows:

*there is a clear distinction between the Messiah and God. The Messiah is sent from God. He is the mediator between God and Humanity, doing only what his father (God) commands him. Additionally, in the Old and New Testaments there is no commandment to believe that Yeshua is 'God'. It is simply and solely clear that we have to believe that Yeshua is the 'Son of God.' Gentile Christianity developed the concept of the Trinity. This concept is neither biblical nor Hebraic.*<sup>110</sup>

Danieli's position actually denies Yeshua's divinity. His statement was soon confronted in the following issue of *Kivun*, where Rina Preiss from Zichron Ya'akov, and Daniel Yahav (who is the Pastor of the "Peniel" Messianic

Helsinki, 9 August 2003, Third of Five Booklets, Århus, Denmark 2003, 136-166. Cf. Zvi Nassi (Hirsch Prinz), *Haraz Deshlosha (The Mystery of the Trinity, or How Three are One)*, Yanetz, Jerusalem 1988 (in Hebrew).

<sup>106</sup> A. Schneider, ed., "Messianic Jews Debate the Deity of Jesus", *Israel Today*, November 2001, p. 21. Cf. the same in the German version - *idem*, "Ist Jeschua Gott oder nicht?", *Nachrichten aus Israel (NAI)*, November 2001, # 279, 23.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* Uri Marcus also distributed a booklet called *Zehuto Shel Hamashiach* (= Messiah's Identity), Haifa 2002, which is a Hebrew translation of Anthony Buzzard's original booklet named *Who Is Jesus?* (The Hebrew version was edited by Immanuel Gazit). This booklet seems to be the foundation for the beliefs held among believers in Ma'ale Adumim.

<sup>108</sup> See R. Pritz, "The Divinity of Jesus," in *Chai (Life)*, Issue # 218, Summer 2003, 6.

<sup>109</sup> U. Tzoref, "The Trinity Hits Again," *Kivun*, vol. 26, Nov.-Dec. 2001, 5 (in Hebrew).

<sup>110</sup> R. Danieli, "From Three Emerges One," *Kivun*, vol. 27, 15 (Hebrew).



Congregation in Tiberias) expressed their belief in the full deity of Messiah Yeshua.

In her letter to the Editor of *Kivun*, Preiss emphasized the fact that the Old Testament verses clearly speak about the deity of the Messiah as expressed by the terms "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father" (Isa 9:6) and "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer 23:6). However, Preiss also concludes that the "Messiah, son of God, is smaller than His Father, as He is sent by the Father and does only the Father's will, yet Yeshua should be fully worshiped because His name is the Father's name: Jehovah."<sup>111</sup>

In the same issue of *Kivun*, Daniel Yahav highlights the fact that Yeshua is no less than Jehovah Himself, the "Word" (Logos) that had existed before his bodily incarnation (John 1:1), and that "He made the worlds"; i.e. he is the creator of heaven and earth.<sup>112</sup> In conclusion, Yahav challenges his readers not to tolerate false teachers that deny Yeshua's complete divinity, even if this will result in polarization and splits within the local body of believers. In fact, such uncompromising views were also expressed verbally by many other congregational pastors and elders. Consequently, *Kenes Artzi*, the national gathering of local pastors and congregational elders, initiated a special conference to discuss "The Divinity of Yeshua" in order to issue a unified statement. In this gathering, which took place at "Beit Assaf" Assembly near Netanya on 7 June 2002, the following brief statement was publicly issued:

*God: 'The Lord our God, the Lord is One.' The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the only God and Creator. There is no other besides Him and all the divine attributes are His alone. His unique unity consists of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Each of them eternal and divine in the perfection and fullness of deity. The Son, our Messiah, who was born without sin by the Holy Spirit to the virgin Miriam, is also human in the full sense of the term.*

This text was promulgated in four languages—Hebrew, English, Russian and Amharic, and about half of those who were present, around 40 leaders, accepted this credo by adding their signature to a common paper. Some who were present, however, also commented that the reference to Messiah as "human in the full sense of the term" could be misinterpreted as implying the possibility of sinfulness. In other words, the statement needed a specific clarification that Messiah was not merely born without sin, but also that his human nature remained sinless. Interestingly, because the "*Kenes Artzi*" took place near the grand "Ikea" Mall, it was half-seriously named the "Ikea Synod", referring, by associative thinking, to the orthodoxy fixed at the first ecumenical synod at Nicaea in AD 325.

Yet the debate did not stop with the "Ikea Conference." David Stern of Jerusalem, for example, responded to the "Ikea Council" with an article also

<sup>111</sup> R. Preiss, "As a Divine Mystery" (in Hebrew), *Kivun*, vol. 28, Mai-June 2002, 14.

<sup>112</sup> D. Yahav, "To Change Direction, and Fast" (in Hebrew), *Kivun*, vol. 28, *ibid*, 15.

published in *Israel Today*. In order "to unravel the knot," Stern expresses his opinion that when JBY formulate their creeds very briefly, just in few sentences, they are primarily concerned *not* to become "Gentilized," as only few have theological training. In other words, Stern stresses the point that when JBY condense their creed within few sentences, "in such cases the statements should be evaluated less as theology than as a heart cry to preserve Jewish identity."<sup>113</sup> Stern's conclusion is that gentile believers should allow and encourage JBY to develop their creed within a Jewish mind-set, not within a "Hellenistic and western" orientation.

Further views on Yeshua's divinity were printed in the next issue of *Kivun*. An anonymous person wrote to the editor as follows:

*The term 'Trinity' was introduced in AD 325 to describe God, but it has no biblical foundation [...] There is a direct link between the teaching of the Trinity and the fruits of Anti-Semitism, growing on the branches of institutional Christianity [...] Again there is a negative result of the Trinity: the person that refrains from signing that creed is rejected.*<sup>114</sup>

And in the following issue of *Kivun*, David Tel-Tzur and Immanuel Gazit, co-leaders of the "Hephtzibah" Congregation in Ma'ale-Adumim near Jerusalem, published their explicit theology. Within their letter/statement one finds again a clear denial of Yeshua's divinity. Tel-Tzur and Gazit write as follows:

*In essence, Yeshua is not God! He is not Jehovah! [...] John (the Evangelist) is not teaching that the Son (of God) was living prior to his birth. The Son appeared for the first time as an entity when he was miraculously created as the 'Second Man' in his mother's womb. The 'Word' (Logos) in Scripture never appears in the meaning of an entity or a person [...] The Trinity is paganism, contrasted with 'Hear [Shma] O Israel our God is One'. Yeshua is not the creator of the world, but the world was created for him.*<sup>115</sup>

This statement speaks for itself. Historically, however, in his *EH* Eusebius does refer to Yeshua as the "great Creator of the universe, the Word."<sup>116</sup> Additionally, Eusebius informs us that within the early "Church of the Circumcision" the sect of the *Ebionites* (Evyonim), who were "paupers in their views about Messiah," rejected Yeshua's divinity as well as his miraculous birth and his existence prior to his incarnation.<sup>117</sup> Yet today, unlike the situation in antiquity, because the mainstream of JBY accepts the entire Scripture from

<sup>113</sup> D.H. Stern, "Israel's Messianic Jews and the Deity of Yeshua", *Israel Today*, July 2002, # 43, p. 23.

<sup>114</sup> Anonymous, "Double Standard," *Kivun*, vol. 29, July-Aug. 2002, 15.

<sup>115</sup> D. Tel-Tzur & I. Gazit, "On Martyrdom," *Kivun*, vol. 30, Sept.-Oct. 2002, 12.

<sup>116</sup> *EH*, Book X, 4, 69, p. 334.

<sup>117</sup> *EH*, Book III, 27, pp. 91-92. Cf. R. Pritz, *ibid*, passim.

Genesis to Revelation, that canonical text serves as a solid platform for JBY in their theological understanding about Yeshua's full divinity.

With these recent theological arguments in the background, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel (MJAI) decided to organize during its bi-annual national meeting a special seminar on the theme "The Trinity—In What Do We Believe?" That conference took place on 7 February 2003, at Moshav Yad-Hashmona. About 120 people gathered from all over the country, most of whom held leadership positions.<sup>118</sup> Several elders presented short papers, and an open discussion followed.

Asher Intrater, from congregation "Tif'eret Yeshua" in Tel Aviv, raised in his talk the following question: "Is Yeshua God?" His own answer was that the New Testament definitely states that Yeshua is God, however, the primary presentation of Yeshua in the New Testament is as the *Son* of God. Intrater highlighted the holy *modus operandi* in the Godhead, as according to the Scriptures the Father is unseen, while the Son is visible. Victor Smadja, from the Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem spoke on "The Nature of the Holy Spirit."<sup>119</sup> Smadja emphasized that according to Scripture the Holy Spirit is divine and fully belongs to the Godhead. That eternal Spirit, according to Smadja, has a unique personality and acts among the believers as an independent and divine person.<sup>120</sup>

Baruch Maoz, from Grace and Truth Assembly in Rishon LeTzion, spoke on "Messiah's Nature." Maoz highlighted the point that while believing in Yeshua's divinity, one should not forget his real humanity. Maoz also underlined that Yeshua's real humanity was sinless, because factually, sin entered humankind *after* the creation. Joseph Shulam, from congregation Roeh Israel and Netivyah in Jerusalem, spoke on "The Trinity as Seen through Judaism." Shulam stressed the point that the church's traditions and dogmas about creeds, both Catholic and Protestant, should *not* be forced upon JBY. Shulam also mentioned that "within Judaism there is no problem to call Messiah by the name *Jehovah*."

In my talk, I mentioned that the concept of tri-unity is not un-Jewish.<sup>121</sup> Schematically, in God one can see a vertical or hierarchic relationship between

<sup>118</sup> The Proceedings of the lectures at the "MJAI Trinity Seminar" are due to appear in *Zot Habrit*, organ of the 'Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel,' vol. 19, 2003 (in Hebrew), and in its forthcoming English version, vol. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Smadja reprinted portions of a book by Joseph Samuel C.F. Frey, under a new title: *The Divinity of the Messiah*, Yanetz, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 234-252 (originally named "Joseph and Benjamin," vol. 2, New York 1836).

<sup>120</sup> See also, for example, V. Smadja, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Yanetz, Jerusalem 1995 (Hebrew Pamphlet).

<sup>121</sup> See also, for example, R. Frydland, "Trinity is Jewish", in M.G. Einspruch, ed., *A Way in the Wilderness*, Baltimore 1981, 93-98.

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, whereby the Son submits himself to the Father. Although the Father and the Son are one, within this holy relationship there exists a divine and a perfect "functional differentiation" between the Father and the Son. In other words, the Father was never incarnated, and it was only the Son who died on the Cross of Golgotha and was resurrected. The vertical rather than horizontal "roles" within the Godhead absolutely do *not* diminish Yeshua's divinity. At the end of the seminar, all agreed that these matters are a mystery.

### Future Publications of the 'Ecclesiastical History' in Hebrew

One hopes the next editions of the annotated *EH* in Hebrew will include additional bibliographic tools which would be of special help to non-professionals, and particularly Israeli and Jewish readers. Therefore, I would recommend as follows:

1. Adding an explanation for abbreviations, for example, *PG* (= *Patrologia Graeca*).

2. Improvement of the existing index by enlarging the paginal references to items which are already there such as *Ya'akov* (James), the 'Brother of the Lord' and *Tevila* (Baptism).

3. Enlarging the existing yet limited index by adding further new items. Terms like *Torah*, *Shabbat* (Sabbath), 'Pessah-Pascha-Passover'; *Natzrut* (Christianity); *Batei-Kvarot* (Cemeteries); *Gnosis*; *Pagans* and *Evyonim* (Ebionites) would be helpful.

4. In my opinion, instead of "Palestine," *Eretz Israel* should appear in most places throughout the Hebrew book. Namely, as we now already have E.Z. Melamed's Hebrew translation of Eusebius' *Onomastikon*, a work on biblical topography, why not use that valuable precedent concerning the Hebraic transliteration of geographical sites? This is true also, for example, with regard to Jerusalem (*Aelia*) and Pechal (*Pella*).<sup>122</sup>

5. Addition of a brief yet updated bibliography, in both Hebrew and English, dealing with major issues relevant to the *EH*.

6. The editor's note on the *Labarum* standard (p. 306, n. 6) should be corrected. The Christian monogram adopted by the Emperor Constantine with the two Greek letter X and P are *not* the "two first letters of the Greek language," but rather the first two letters of the *word* CHRISTOS (Messiah).

All in all, I have no doubt that the readership of historical source books would warmly welcome further Hebrew translations of authentic materials, by Latin authors as well, even those that originate from the Middle Ages. Such translations may come in the format of shorter pamphlets, etc.

<sup>122</sup> See *The Onomastikon of Eusebius*, Translated with notes by E.Z. Melamed, The Israel Exploration Society, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1966 (in Hebrew).



### Epilogue

Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* is not merely the history of the "Church of the Uncircumcision" and the early gentile believers in Yeshua. In fact, the *EH* belongs to the narrative of the entire Jewish Yeshua-movement, past and present. Truly, the *EH* demonstrates how the gentile church developed and shaped its identity by distancing itself from the early Jewish *Kehila* in Jerusalem. However, the *EH* is a unique historical document, full of lights and shadows about the relations between the gentile church and her biblical and Jewish roots. While the *EH* manifests the gradual institutionalization of the gentile church and her theological orthodoxy, it still remains a common heritage for both Jewish and gentile believers in Yeshua. This rich heritage enables *everyone* to construct historic comparisons, and so to deepen our understanding of the history of salvation.

Today, similarly, the church among the nations should view, with great openness and modesty, the contemporary history of JBY as part of its own history. The emergence of the modern Yeshua-movement during the past two centuries is an integral part of the eschatological and prophetic developments within the global body of believers. It is particularly in Eretz-Israel, the land of Israel, that the modern Yeshua-movement has the full potential to revive and reshape the *Kehila* portrayed in the New Testament within a Jewish majority and in daily life. Thus, as the universal church is increasingly searching for her Hebraic roots, here and now the current Messianic movement is able to mature and cure the relationship between Jewish and gentile believers in Yeshua.

The continuing significance of the Hebrew garb of Eusebius' *EH* should be valued in three contexts: education, edification and evangelism. First, the *EH* is a reliable tool for historical education and research for both secular and religious students; second, this is an inspirational and powerful testimony about believers who sacrificed their lives for the spiritual truth they adopted; third, this is an evangelistic tool especially among the Jewish people—demonstrating that faith in Yeshua is not an opportunistic step for social mobility and/or the improvement of economic standing. On the contrary, Eusebius' *EH* demonstrates that the price of becoming a disciple of Yeshua might be not only a person's property and dignity, but even his life. This price was paid until AD 313 by thousands of martyred believers. Indeed, Eusebius' monumental work demonstrates that the history of the gentile church is in its multifaceted perspective also the history of Jewish believers in Yeshua.