Communicating the Deity of Yeshua to Postmodern Jews

© Akiva Cohen

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו אינו גוף ולא ישיגוהו משיגי הגוף ואין לו שום דמיון כלל

I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, is not corporeal, and that He is beyond all corporeal concepts, and there is nothing at all comparable to Him.

—Maimonides, article no. 3 from his "Thirteen Articles of Faith" 12th Century CE[1]

"The Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity present two main challenges to traditional Jewish study. One challenge is that the narrative of God's incarnation in one Jew belongs to a history that Jews do not share and cannot accept as part of their story. In this case, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation appears comprehensible but simply wrong: the event did not occur. A second challenge is that the doctrine of God's having three identities appears incomprehensible: the Jewish biblical record does not speak of God in a way that allows us to characterize His nature as a relation among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ... The traditional Jewish response is therefore to walk away from any discussion of such things. ... we must, instead, find a way to reason Jewishly about them."[2]

—P. Ochs, in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*

"This final word of the credo of Jesus [the *Shem'a*] and all his brothers and sisters in the flesh, *echad,* which demythologizes and disdains every polytheism, appears to this very day in every Jewish prayer book in large-size bold print, for the final letter, daleth, can purely optically only all too easily be misread as resh—which would change 'One God' to 'another God' (*acher*), which according to rabbinic opinion could call forth the end of the world."[3]

—P. Lapide, in *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine*

"It is pleasing to know, that in our Land, this sign will never appear as a cross, rather it will always be slightly tilted to the side (see illustration). The reason for this is that we are living in a Jewish State."

—Israeli Driver's Manual 2010 (translated from the Hebrew)

My task in this session is to offer some suggestions as to how we may communicate the mystery of Yeshua's Deity with our 'postmodern Jewish community.'[4] My modest goal in this paper is to simply point to some of the signs on the postmodern Jewish road and offer some 'driving tips.'

The literature and prevalence of Postmodernism's (PM) influence on contemporary culture is vast. In a nutshell, PM is the rejection of several claims: the claim that truth is universal, absolute, and knowable, and that language is capable of conveying truth. PM deconstructs language as merely 'semiotics' (i.e., here: random signs resulting in language-games[5]). Truth claims are deconstructed as only 'socially constructed' and thus relative.[6] PM also rejects the heritage of the Western Canon of Literature (classic literature) and the Judeo-Christian meta-narratives[7] (the over-arching biblical stories for both Jews and Christians) as political texts that seek to maintain the oppression of 'minority voices.'[8] PM argues for dialogue with other community stories as all equally valid and '*true*' for each community.

I will begin with a cursory sample of two PM Jewish thinkers and then turn to the social characteristics of the current generation of youth growing up in the PM context. This will serve as an indication of the cultural soil with which we are seeking to be engaged. Then I will offer some suggestions as to how to communicate the Deity of Yeshua to the PMJ community.

Postmodernisms' Strange Jewish Garments: Doing Teshuvah and Wearing Sh'atnez?[9]

According to Daniel Breslauer,

> Jews in this new type of [postmodern] world require a new mode of constructing a Jewish identity, an identity that is both recognizably Jewish but fluid enough to evolve with time … Perhaps the most important marker of such Judaisms will be their lack of 'religion,' their rejection of bonds preventing a freely creative betrayal of the past. … Reading Jewish stories as a means to criticize modernity, for example, retains traditional sources but uses them in

postmodern ways. The stories that religion has traditionally utilized to unite lives and provide a fastening point for adherents no longer seem to command attention or belief.[10]

Breslauer represents an extreme postmodern proposal, namely, the creation of Judaism "without religion." Breslauer argues that skepticism is already present in the Tanakh as evidenced by the two versions of the Creation story in Genesis. In Gen 1:1–2:4 we have an evolution of undifferentiated darkness to successive stages of differentiation culminating in the creation of humanity. However, "Gen 2:4–3:24, tells of a devolution from a complete and perfect beginning."[11] Breslauer notes, "both are equally authoritative," and goes on to argue for continuing examples (e.g., the schools of Hillel and Shammai; Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewish practice).[12]

Breslauer rejects all attempts at confining Jewish identity to not only the traditional Jewish mindset, but also to the modern worldview that argues for objective truth. "The choice of one act to refer to Jewishness rather than another arises from the subjective experience for the actor but is drawn from a community of symbols and possibilities."[13] Breslauer's range of choices includes not only the traditionally forbidden, but also an unabashed exaltation in cultural *sh'atnez*, "mixing types with abandon."[14]

Breslauer enlists Buber's 'I-Thou'[15] theology applying it to the postmodern value of 'awareness of the other' that calls for tolerance of the other. According to Breslauer, such tolerance demands a Judaism "that moves beyond religion," by which he means freeing Jews from their tie to community with only other Jews. Breslauer believes that only such a movement away can facilitate a return.[16] Although I understand Breslauer's dilemma as representing the PM Jewish search for meaning, one wonders if such 'movement-away' really has the Jewish and spiritual vitality to bring about the envisaged 'return' of which he speaks.[17]

If Breslauer represents the radical edge of Jewish response to modernity's demise, Stephen Kepnes represents something of its creative forefront. Kepnes and his PMJ colleagues gladly dispense with 'the hegemony of the historical' by which Kepnes means that the dominant

Jewish approach to texts (their dating, location, the meaning of the words, etc.) has now given way to *semiotics* (here: words as [random] 'signifiers' of the 'signified'), *discourse theory* (how writing, texts and discourse shape identity), and *deconstruction*[18] (every text contains contradictory meanings and thus is open to endless interpretation).[19] The exegetical application of these new theoretical approaches is often brought into contact with the biblical and rabbinic schools of interpretation.[20]

Kepnes sees postmodern Jewish thought as

> a kind of *teshuvah*, a return. ... Jewish modernism at its root involves ... a repression of the Jewish for the sake of the modern. ... Modern Jews tried to replace Judaism with ethics and rationality...[P]ostmodern Judaism is its [Modern Judaism's] repair, return, and rehabilitation. ... a return to Torah, to revelation, to theology; it means a reappreciation, in a myriad ways, of rabbinic Judaism. ... Postmodern Jews, Christians, and Hindus are no longer concerned with elevating their language-game to the status of the one true religion.[21]

It immediately obtains that on the one hand Yeshua-centered-Judaism shares some similarities with PMJ and on the other hand some extreme dissimilarities as illustrated in the following table. I have **bolded** concepts that have common discourse between both communities (even if *understood differently by each community*).

	Postmodern Jewish Community	MJ Community
Text-based 'readings'	*Open Canon of texts:* **Tanakh**, **Rabbinic Corpus**, **Hasidic stories**, Modern Jewish Literature Kabbalah, Secular Texts	*Closed Authoritative Canon:* **Tanakh** and the New Testament *Open Canon of (i)nspired Texts*: **Rabbinic Corpus, Hasidic Stories**
Hermeneutic Employed	Semiotics, Discourse Theory, Deconstruction, Feminist and Queer Theory, etc., **Rabbinic Hermeneutics**, Rejection of all meta-narratives **Community story** as one legitimating local worldview among many other diverse communities	Grammatico-Historical and Narrative Theology, **Rabbinic Hermeneutics** *Yeshua as the center* of the traditional Jewish meta-narrative God's Truth (Scriptures) as our **Community story** establishing a local and global incarnational expression of Messiah's body
Spirituality	Privatization of the sacred Sacred/Secular dichotomy, return to the (*reinterpreted*) tradition, **liturgy and Jewish lifestyle**, God of Israel as Jewish myth **Community-based**	Holistic view of the sacred Return to elements of (*reinterpreted*) tradition, **liturgy and Jewish lifestyle** God of Israel as Reality/Truth **Community-based**

MJ, for the most part, embraces a 'modernist' grammatico-historical hermeneutic re the historical Jesus, a modernist belief in objective truth and a pre-modernist belief in God and his 'supernatural' intervention into the natural order ('miracles'). Our faith rests upon the historical reality of the physical resurrection of Yeshua from the dead[22] and the actual indwelling of the Ruach HaKodesh as the seal of our faith.[23] Our hermeneutic stands at polar opposites to that of PMJ's private ritual piety which is based upon a naturalist understanding of life.[24] MJ 'readings' of authoritative community texts (the Tanakh and the NT) and PMJ 'readings' (of eclectic and all equally [un]authoritative texts) cannot, for us, "both be the words of the living God." Although the dominant hermeneutic in our modern movement has been more closely aligned with the Grammatico-Historical and Narrative

Theology approaches; a promising approach towards finding common discourse with the PMJ community is through the use of Midrash. Midrash holds much promise as a fruitful rabbinic genre with which our community needs to become more familiar. A better acquaintance with Midrash can also teach us how to express our own theological perspectives in more Jewish ways.[25]

From a cultural standpoint, what 'language' may we employ to communicate our message to PMJs, and specifically the topic of this Symposium, the Deity of Yeshua? In order to answer that question we need to situate PMJs sociologically. Here I am especially thinking about the current up-and-coming generation who will be society's next cultural influencers.

The Social Location of (Young) Postmodern Jews

I believe that our communication of Yeshua's Deity needs to take place in Yeshua-Centered Jewish Community, engaged in Yeshua-Centered Jewish lifestyle and Yeshua-Centered Jewish belief.

Let me begin by briefly situating today's postmodern Jewish community in the larger categories of community (קהילה), lifestyle (הלכה) and faith (אמונה/belief) within the context of Jewish history and culture.[26] According to the late Mordecai Kaplan, z.l., founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, there are three possible ways of identifying with a religious community: *by belonging, behaving and believing*. Kaplan argued for 'belonging' as the primary Jewish category of Jewish identification, so that what we Jews believe and how we behave serve supportive roles to a shared destiny and sense of kinship.[27]

For the traditional Jewish community one's maintenance of a Jewish lifestyle is what defines one's *belonging* to the Jewish people. The theological outworking of Kaplan's perspective explains the emphasis of the Reconstructionist movement upon *community* as determinative for defining behavior.

Clearly, PM Jews are closer to the Reconstructionist/Reform *community-view* of Jewish identity than the more traditional *behavior-based* view of Jewish identity.[28] As we explore Jewish *belonging* the attraction of the younger generation to *community* (their Synagogue/Beit Midrash community connection is often 'Starbucks, Facebook,' etc.)[29] should not be missed by our attempts at 'connection.' Here I am thinking as a member of the last wave of baby boomers that overlap the Gen X'ers.[30]

Our audience is essentially generation X'ers, (who invented Google, MySpace, Facebook, Starbucks, etc.) and generation Y'ers,[31] who live in those physical and cyber-spaces and have now taken their generation to the next level of instant-and-continual-connection through *Twitter*.[32] So we have a technologically savvy, connection-obsessed generation whose postmodern education has conditioned them to doubt not only the authority of the Bible, but to view any meta-narrative[33] or claim to transcendent morality as simply a social construct.[34] Furthermore, for the most part their spirituality happens in/with less formally Jewish spaces/texts than Synagogue/Siddur.[35] How do we communicate with this mindset?[36] While any appeal to the Authority of the Tanakh (let alone an attempt to speak authoritatively to a PMJ from the NT!) has lost its binding address with this generation; we can engage PMJs with our story and our community.

Since our faith is based on *stories* about Yeshua, I believe that the Gospels are as relevant as ever as literary vehicles to communicate the truth of our faith. In addition to the Gospels, our personal 'life-story' provides us with the opportunity of sharing how we have found (Jewish) meaning in life. Our MJ communities are the social expression of community that provide opportunity for us to offer 'connection' with PMJs.[37] This may be likened to the current *Havurah* movement and its obvious appeal to young Jewish singles and couples. The motto of the National Havurah Committee is illustrative of my argument for communicating Yeshua's Deity from the place of authentic Jewish community: אין התורה נקנית אלה בחבורה "The Torah Cannot be Acquired Except through Fellowship."[38]

Another important development which continues to impact the Jewish community is a current interest in Yeshua's *Jewishness* as a result of the "Third Quest for the historical Jesus."[39] There are no doubt many Jewish University students who, as the result of taking some "Intro to Christianity" religion class, have come to find out about the interest of NT scholars in the Jewishness of Yeshua. Our 'assignment' as has been defined for this session, is "to suggest ways to communicate that Yeshua is more than just a Jewish teacher/Rabbi," i.e., his status as Deity.

I am suggesting in this paper that we cannot compartmentalize the communication of a *belief* apart from connection with a *community*. As PMJs come into contact with our story and with our community and its small Havurah-type groups, they are brought to the place where encounter *of* Yeshua (in all his fullness including his Deity) can begin to take place.[40]

However, even with our best efforts at building our MJ communities as part of our nexus of *belonging, behaving* and *believing*, I am cognizant of the fact that such an approach is viewed as repulsive and deceitful to the guardians of our wider Jewish community. I can easily articulate their typical objection: "Sure, reel them in to your wide-eyed 'loving' community and expose our assimilated and vulnerable Jewish youth to the Gospels and your *pseudo-Judaism*, and then spring the trap on them as you baptize them out of the Jewish community and into your thinly-disguised Christian community!"[41]

Here I gladly acknowledge that I strongly identify with those in our movement who are laboring to create authentic Jewish community. It is only from such a community setting that we can communicate the Deity of Yeshua in a properly Jewish manner.[42] This may be illustrated by referring to both the manner and the content of traditional Jewish prayer. Here "the medium is the message," namely, prayer as a community expression. This community ethos may be seen clearly in the *Shemoneh Esreh,* the Jewish community prayer *par excellence.*[43]

In this ancient prayer 'Israel' speaks to God both individually and corporately. The six corporate benedictions (#10-#15) focus exclusively upon community needs demonstrating that Jewish theology is essentially part of a community-based-liturgical construct. By the time we come to benediction #15 and pray for the צמח דוד עבדך (the branch of David your servant) to speedily flourish, it is abundantly clear that we are praying for Israel's Messianic King to bring about Israel's deliverance, for which *we* have waited all day.[44]

Now as to our challenge: Are there viable ways to bridge the gap between where most PMJ youth live and the Jewish heritage with which most of them are at best only vaguely acquainted? Of course the non-Messianic Jewish community faces the same challenges, namely, how does one hold forth a Judaism that is winsome to young PM Jews? Our answer is: come and meet Yeshua and his community and you will discover *why* your being Jewish actually matters! In other words Yeshua is (for us) the existential factor that (or better 'who') is able to connect PMJs to the God of Israel, to their heritage and to their calling to bear witness to him as Jews.

Many secular Diasporic[45] and Israeli youth are returning in various creative ways to Jewish heritage. They are hungry for connection with Jewish heritage and Jewish spirituality expressed in Jewish community. So if we have been reading the road-signs on the postmodern Jewish highway, we need to consider how to use *story* to communicate the Deity of Yeshua and to strive towards authentic Jewish *community* as the place from which we 'do' our theology and live it out. The Gospels provide an incremental revelation of Yeshua's Deity by their presentation of his words and actions, both of which receive a retroactive and definitive vindication by his resurrection. Exposure to Yeshua's teaching of Torah[46], his actions[47], his resurrection,[48] and our MJ communities are the invitation to young PMJs to 'encounter' Yeshua as Deity.[49]

What is the Concept/Doctrine We are Seeking to Communicate?

My brief paper will not allow me to address the question of how to communicate the Deity of Yeshua in terms of its *theological* articulation. I only offer here some brief comments. This central doctrine of our faith is agreed upon by virtually all Messianic Jews. Yet, *how* to explain that belief does not enjoy as much of a consensus. On the one hand, it is perhaps easier to say what we do *not* believe. We are certainly not advocating an adoptionist-type Christology which argues that Yeshua *became* divine.[50] It was the 'low' Christology of some first-century Jewish followers of Yeshua that provoked Patristic scorn of the 'Church of the Circumcision,' who they accused of being "paupers in their views about Messiah."[51]

Some in our movement may claim that the easiest way out of this difficulty is simply to state that "what the NT teaches is what we affirm." Such an approach tends to focus more upon Yeshua's functional subordination to the Father rather than upon his ontological status. By 'ontology' I mean who Yeshua is in the nature of his *being*, not just the way he *functions*, e.g., as the *representative* (Shaliah) of the Father. However, it is naïve to think that we can escape the task of theological articulation when trying to *explain* to someone *what* we believe about Yeshua's status vis-à-vis God without engaging in theological expression. When a Jew asks you "Is Yeshua God?" the minute you open your mouth and attempt to articulate your answer, you are 'doing' theology. So the only question becomes what is the *quality* of our theological expression, not, whether or not we think we need to engage in theological reflection and articulation.

Among the main voices of the MJ community, there are different approaches as to how we can best stay true to our calling as Jews and also remain true to what the NT teaches about Yeshua.[52] Some MJs would argue for a Maimonidian-type of negative theology and the kabbalistic idea of the אין סוף Ein Sof, ('The One who has no end') when talking about God, (or more accurately not talking about Him!). Yet, it is incorrect to claim that such an approach reflects a type of pure Jewish conceptual space. It is widely acknowledged that Maimonides was heavily influenced by Greek philosophical thought via the Muslim Arabic

translations of the classical Greek philosophers.[53] Second, to claim that we cannot talk about God's positive attributes is an affront to God's "last [definitive] word" and revelation concerning His Son who is the exact representation of God's being (see Heb 1:2-3; John 1:14, 18).[54]

The "high Christology" of the NT requires us to deepen our own understanding of who Yeshua is, and how to best explain that understanding to the wider Jewish community. E.g., it is now widely discussed by many scholars that Paul apparently had no problem inserting Yeshua into the *Shem'a* (1 Cor 8:6). And all are familiar with the way John begins his Gospel with the pre-incarnate *Logos* who was *with* God and *was* God and *through whom* all things were created (1:1–3). This same *Logos* became flesh (1:14).[55] How do we explain *that* to our Jewish contemporaries outside our MJ community?

Aside from the polemical use of rabbinic literature from medieval to modern times, there have been few creative proposals employing Jewish/rabbinic categories to articulate our understanding of the person of Yeshua. However, recent developments indicate promise for more mature MJ theological reflection on the subject of Christology.[56]

In our attempt to recover Jewish community and Jewish space, we need not be intimidated by the wider Jewish community's delegitimation of our affirmation of Yeshua's Deity. It is not Greek (read: Gentile) idolatrous conceptual space to claim that Yeshua is Deity, rather, this is Hebraic revelation that Yeshua said is "from my Father in Heaven" (Matt 16:17).[57] Furthermore, "in the fullness of time" the mystery latent in the Tanakh became explicit through the (Jewish) Apostolic witness.[58] In spite of our being misunderstood by the wider Jewish community our faith is still a monotheistic one. It is what Larry Hurtado calls a "mutation" of monotheism. Hurtado calls its earliest form "binitarian," that is Yeshua is worshiped alongside God, as opposed to "di-theism," which is the worship of two gods.[59]

Connecting with Postmodern Jews

Returning to my subject for this session, how do we communicate the truth of Yeshua's Deity with Jewish postmoderns? As I have already stated, there is no substitute for the hard work of community reflection and dialogue. In terms of how to best understand the way that PMs (including Jews) think, I believe we can learn some lessons from the Emerging Church[60] (EC) and its attempt to 'connect' with the PM mindset. However, we also need to be warned by the jettisoning of the historic faith by some of its more extreme proponents. Some positive aspects of the EC are: preference for dialogical witness, a focus on 'missional living' (as a result of their core conviction of the incarnation of Yeshua) and a focus upon temporal and social issues as opposed to a fixation on 'eternal salvation' at the expense of community connection and impact. Here the call is for a balance between 'proposition' and 'incarnation,' what Darrell Bock has called the need to retain both sides of the double-helix (incarnational living and propositional truth).[61] I think we also can learn something from the EC's community ethos. For the type of thinking here, see Paul Hiebert's application of set theory to missiology, i.e., the distinction between a "bounded-set" (emphasis upon 'in' and 'out' definitions of whose 'in' the group and who is 'out') vs. a 'centered set' (although still holding to a clear sense of who is in the group and who is not; the emphasis is upon a relational movement towards the center).[62]

However, we need to stay clear of the difference between 'contextualization' and 'relativization.' Paul was willing to tell the Greek philosophers at Mars Hill that the God of Israel *is* the "Unknown God" that they had been ignorantly worshipping. He then filled that symbol/sign with *biblical content*, even as he employed some extra-biblical citations from their culture. What I am arguing for here is that in our attempts at communicating Yeshua's Deity in a Jewish manner (e.g., *Logos, Memra, Shekinah, Metatron, Sar HaPanim, Tzimzum,* etc.,)[63] we must remain faithful to the biblical witness in our use of contextualization.

Although Postmodernism has offered this generation new paradigms and ways of thinking humbly about life's big questions and what it means to live out one's faith; only the challenge of Yeshua to "take up one's cross and follow him," has the existential vitality to impart a vision worth living and dying for. God does not reveal his Son to the merely curious. But to those who are sincere seekers after the Truth, God is faithful to reveal the identity of his Son. And if there is anything that PMJs are lacking, it is a coherent vision of why their lives are ultimately significant. If we believe anything, it is that Yeshua is the existential answer to that need. Yeshua and the wonder and mystery of his person as Israel's promised Messiah: his pre-existent glory with the Father, his incarnation, life, call to self-denial and to "follow," his death and resurrection. That is our "story" about Yeshua, including his Deity. And this story needs to be told in the framework of Israel's history and destiny.

I must, of necessity, close even as I have barely begun to explore the issues under discussion. I believe that we need to be clear about what we believe; namely, that Yeshua is *the pre-existent and eternal Son of God*. Furthermore, our worship of the God of Israel *and* Yeshua remains in the category of monotheism.[64] It behooves us to 'speak' to fellow PMJs by demonstrating authentic Jewish community (in its many authentic—more traditional and less traditional—Jewish expressions), sharing our story (the Gospels and our personal-life stories), and allowing those 'encounters' with our community and story to lead to encounter with Him.

James Dunn, in his book, *A New Perspective on Jesus,* in which he discusses the much publicized "Quest for the historical Jesus," states,

> As is well known, the quest began by way of reaction against the Christ of Christian dogma. The Christ of the Chalcedonian creed, "perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man," was just too unreal a human being. The Pantocrator, the world ruler, of Eastern iconography was too far removed from the man who walked the shores of the Sea of Galilee. How can we believe in such a Christ when, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, he was able "to sympathize with our weaknesses [and] . . . in every respect has been tempted

as we are" (Heb. 4:15)? It is the human Jesus, the one who truly knew and experienced the reality of everyday existence in first-century Palestine, the Jesus who lived among the poor, who counted people like Martha and Mary as his close companions, who was known as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19), that we prefer to hear about. Is he not a more meaningful Savior than the almost mechanistic God-man or the remote Pantocrator? No wonder the cult of Mary, the mother of Christ, became so popular when her Son was so divine and so remote. The heart yearning for comfort and an inspiring role model needed a mother figure to intercede with this awe-inspiring Christ, needed to rediscover the human Jesus behind the divine Christ.[65]

Dunn's insight here is instructive to our community and to this Symposium. Namely, that it makes more sense to speak of Yeshua in terms of his *Jewish humanity* and then build upon that. We might call such an approach a 'bottom-up-Jewish' Christology, rather than a 'top-down-Creedal' Christology. If postmodernity and the Emerging church are supposed to teach us anything, perhaps it is that God is not under any obligation to follow our formulas. Nor is He obligated to our sense of how we 'think' someone (especially a *Jewish* someone) is supposed to come to comprehend the truth of Yeshua's Deity.[66]

To illustrate this on a personal note, I remember as vividly as if it were last month, that in 1979 as a 19 year old High School grad, I stood gazing in awe at the "Day of Judgment" fresco of Michelangelo magnificently painted on the huge side wall of the Sistine Chapel. As a Jewish adolescent trying to decipher the scene before my eyes, the thought began to dawn on me, that the guy sitting on the throne was, well, err …. yes, Jewish!

Only moments earlier I had entered St. Peter's Cathedral spellbound at the perplexing scene before my eyes: Yeshua and his nail-pierced hands and feet sprawled in serene resignation upon Miriam's lap. Time seemed to stop as I starred at the uncannily real-to-life depiction carved by Michelangelo out of a slab of white-marble. Those 'encounters' with Yeshua constituted a formative experience that set my feet on a focused two-year journey that culminated upon my knees before the revelation of the Son of God.

My point is that I was as equally intrigued by the depiction of Yeshua as "truly God and truly man," the "Pantocrator," (although those theological terms would have been completely foreign to me) as I was with the far-more-accessible Yeshua lying so peacefully upon his mother's lap.

Thus, I really don't think there are any *formulae* that we can employ in communicating the Deity of Yeshua with our PM Jewish community. God can and does use, as he sees fit, any and every means at his disposal (e.g., our prayers and His good pleasure) to reveal Yeshua to the sincere and seeking heart.[67]

---

[1] It has been noted that unlike the centrality of 'doctrine' to Christian theology and catechism, Maimonides' 13 principles of faith appear at the end of the Siddur's *Shahrit* service and the poetic version (*Yigdal*) sung at the beginning of Shahrit and by some at the end of *Ma'ariv* and the *Musaf* on Shabbat. This reflects the fact that the 13 principles are considered an optional part of the prayer service (Hasidic and many Sephardic Jews do not even sing *Yigdal* since in their eyes it diminishes the sanctity of the 613 commandments) indicating the peripheral and optional role of 'creed' in Jewish liturgy/theology. For the priority of 'commandment' over 'creed' in Judaism, see the typical ethos reflected in the following midrash, "Would that they abandoned Me, but kept My Torah—since by occupying themselves therewith, the light which it contains would have led them back to the right path" (Intro to Lam Rab, commenting on Jer 16:11).

[2] P. Ochs, in T. Frymer-Kensky, et al., eds., *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, (Theology in a Postcritical Key; Boulder: Westview, 2000), 59. Och's mention of his difficulty in comprehending the Christian claim for the Trinity in the Tanakh should challenge us to careful reflection and articulation of our understanding of the subject. See B. Marshall, "Israel: Do Christians Worship the God of Israel?" in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 231–64.

[3] P. Lapide, "Jewish Monotheism," in *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine: A Dialogue by Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann* (trans. L. Swidler; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002 [1979]), 29.

[4] Mark Twain's purported response to the announcement of his premature obituary in a newspaper that "the report was greatly exaggerated!" may be applied to Postmodernity: its burial of Modernity is premature. Note the brilliant tongue-in-cheek comment by one of my former teachers at Tel Aviv University, (in response to a postmodern ethno-musicologist guest lecturer from the USA), "Is what you are asking us to do, to simply go down to the Library and move all the books from the History section into the Fiction section?" The literature on Postmodernism is vast and impinges on all disciplines. Postmodernism in the West tends to focus more upon epistemology (the nature and limits of knowledge) whereas the European version has a stronger focus upon literary theory. The personification of the evil imperialist perpetrator of modernism: the 'dead white male' is now hackneyed to say the least. There are clearly positive aspects of postmodernism: openness to the 'other,' i.e., the 'minority voice,' awareness and analysis of 'interested' readings (read: 'white-male,' 'political,' 'chauvinist,' 'colonialist,' 'imperialist,' etc.) and literary works; pedagogical strategies of empowerment (e.g., in a technological environment that provides educational access through distance-learning, electronic access to eLibraries, Wikipedia, Google, Twitter, etc.). However, postmodernism also has weaknesses, e.g., jettisoning the Western Canon of Classics in favor of the all-too-often kitsch 'minority voice' literature and art, and an obsession with deconstructing art and literature to expose the lurking colonial, sexual and racial oppression

intended (!) by the author/artist. As I just hinted at, Postmodernism's main weakness, which needs to be patiently explained to any avid enthusiast, is that it is a self-contradictory worldview. If the claim is made that "all truth/meta-narratives/'readings' are subjective/relativistic/etc.," than why should I believe *that*? For some basic orientation to the subject and some Evangelical and Jewish responses, see S. J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); M. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); idem, *Truth or Consequences: the Promise and Peril of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); For the negative impact of Postmodernism upon Education and Art, see R. Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998); idem, *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2004). For Jewish engagement with postmodernism, see nn. 10, 19–21.

[5] The term 'language-games' (*Sprachspiel*) was coined by the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein (of Jewish ancestry and considered by some as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century). Wittgenstein used this concept to speak of simple forms of language as illustrated by songs children sing but do not understand the meaning of the words. Words are used in their simplest sense in grammatical rules that are likened to a sort 'move' on a game board. Jean-François Lyotard applied Wittgenstein's language-games to his postmodern discussion of the multiplicity of communities of meaning. E.g., applying language-games to the concept of justice, "A modernist might ask: 'is this good?' But a postmodernist might ask 'who/what is it good *for*?'" (i.e., all ideals and values are equally valid). See G. Ward, *Teach Yourself Postmodernism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003).

[6] A. Mohler, Jr. offered this succinct definition in an informal discussion on the subject viewable at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gv6uxCch7oc Mohler elsewhere states, "As Michel Foucault—one of the most significant postmodern theorists—argued, all claims to truth are constructed to serve those in power. Thus, the role of the intellectual is to deconstruct truth claims in order to liberate the society." Cited from Mohler's article, "Ministry is Stranger Than it Used to Be: The Challenge of Postmodernism," accessible on his web site www.albertmohler.com Although Mohler's comments on postmodernism are helpful, his warnings concerning the Emerging Church need to be nuanced by writers like Scot McKnight whom I will reference later in this paper.

[7] See n. 33 for a definition of meta-narrative.

[8] These texts, however, can be deconstructed and thus reinterpreted and liberated from their traditional oppressive and political exploitation of the minority voices.

[9] *Sh'atnez* refers to the prohibition in Scripture (Lev 19:19; Deut 21:11) of wearing a garment in which wool and linen have been spun, woven, or sown together. See A. Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: A Reference Guide* (New York: Random House, 1989), s.v. "שעטנז".

[10] S. Daniel Breslauer, *Creating a Judaism without Religion: A Postmodern Jewish Possibility* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 8.

[11] Ibid., 10.

[12] This type of statement is typical of postmodernism's celebration of antinomies ("contradictions between two apparently equally valid principles").

[13] Ibid., 13. For Breslauer, the "community of symbols" of which he speaks is clearly the universal community and not a distinctive Jewish one. Breslauer's range of Jewish 'possibilities' include his affirmation of the famous Israeli transvestite Dana International's employment of Jewish symbols in her lyrics so that in her betrayal of Jewish tradition she has created "a new Jewish reality, a new possibility for Jewish living." It appears that the only thing 'Jewish' about Breslauer's vision for a "Judaism without religion" is its trendy deconstruction of anything that remotely resembles identifiable Jewish identity.

[14] Ibid., 16.

[15] Buber's "I-Thou" theology refers to his classic work by that name in which he articulates his concept of dialogue. God the "Eternal Thou" is always addressing us through the experiences of life which in turn demand a response from us. This process of dialogue is one in which each partner affirms the 'presence' of the other.

[16] Ibid., 23. Breslauer's 'deconstruction' of Buber hardly represents the latter's theology,—although Buber did embrace freedom from Jewish 'law' but not freedom from the divine summons to the 'I-Thou' relationship— which certainly did not seek to free Jews from Jews! The author's call for the integration of women is applauded by this author and I believe by our movement which places a premium upon the model of Yeshua and Paul's high view of women (despite Paul's feminist accusers of his alleged misogyny). Breslauer's call to be open to sexually displaced Jews regardless of their sexual orientation should also, for our community, follow Yeshua's compassionate engagement for the displaced other without affirming a lifestyle choice that is dishonoring to God (cf. John 8:1–11 Yeshua and the adulterous woman).

[17] For a 'snapshot' of a Jewish application of the postmodern turn, see Breslauer's postmodern reclamation of the quaint Hasidic story by the 'modernist' writer S. Y. Agnon. The story focuses upon a Rabbi Ezekiel who, while travelling in an open wagon, sought to light his pipe. After repeated failed attempts due to a strong wind, the Rabbi then recites a tale about a former *rebbe.* The said *rebbe* Menachem sought to kindle the Sabbath lights but the wind from the window immediately blew out the candles. R. Menachem then went to the window and declared, 'Master of the World, isn't it true that I must light these candles for the Holy Sabbath?' Immediately the wind, continuing to blow outside, did not blow through the house. Rabbi Ezekiel then orders his pipe to be lit and the wind does not blow it out, upon which he exclaims, "Do not think that a great miracle has occurred. It is rather that the power of stories is so great that telling of a righteous man's acts has an efficacious affect." [How much more when we tell the stories of Yeshua?!] Breslauer then deconstructs the story as illustrative of his 'Judaism without religion.' Rabbi Ezekiel's lighting of his pipe replaces a traditional Jewish ritual act (lighting of the Sabbath candles) and becomes *a private Jewish ritual act.* The value of the act is created by its association with a Jewish text (story). Finally, the myth of the supernatural has been replaced by the natural (R. Ezekiel disavows any miraculous element in his act of lighting his pipe) (ibid., p. 9).

[18] Jacqes Derrida (b. 1930, d. 2004) the French-Algerian scholar (of Jewish descent), is best known for his writing on Deconstruction. Derrida focused upon the instability and indeterminacy of meaning resulting in a loss of authoritative interpretation of texts and their consequent similarity to an arbitrary game. Derrida called into question what he called "Logocentrism" which is the idea that a word is 'present' to us in our minds prior to its communication to others; that words communicate fixed meanings. Derrida calls this belief "the metaphysics of presence," something he considered was one of the great illusions of Western thought. For a concise summary of Derrida's thinking (which I have drawn from here), see S. Sim, *Derrida and the End of History* (New York: Icon, 1999).

[19] S. Kepnes, ed., *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 3. Missing from Kepnes work is the current darling of literary theory: Queer theory. 'Queer theory' functions as a hermeneutic to facilitate 'queer' readings of texts. I.e., gay, lesbian and feminist perspectives. The late M. Foucault, one of several cult figures for PMs, is hailed as one of the leading theorists/exponents of this approach. Current publications indicative of this approach are, D. Boyarin, ed., *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); G. Drinkwater, J. Lesser and D. Sheener, *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). The latter book notes the penetration of Queer Theory into Jewish mainstream by reporting, "*Torah Queeries* includes the voices of some of the most central figures in contemporary American Judaism today, from the rector of one of Conservative Judaisms seminaries to the president of a national rabbinic association, highlighting, in some ways, just how central the topic of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) inclusion has become, at least in the American Jewish world" (p. 5). For anyone in our movement who may be so out of touch with where the current generation 'lives,' that your only reaction to this is that you find yourself disgusted by this subject (rather than moved with compassion for our lost Jewish community) what will you do with Jesus' embrace of tax-collectors, prostitutes, lepers and the Samaritan woman [i.e., LGBT, or HIV infected Jews]? After I wrote these words I came across R. Newman's, helpful perspective from his *Questioning Evangelism*, "Why Are Christians So Homophobic?" (chap. 8; see n. 49 for the full reference).

[20] For the integration of modern literary theory with traditional Rabbinic texts, see S. A. Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (New York: University of New York Press, 1982).

[21] S. Kepnes, P. Ochs and R. Gibbs, *Reasoning after Revelation: Dialogues in Postmodern Jewish Philosophy* (Theology in a Postcritical Key; Boulder: Westview, 1998), 25–26.

[22] 1Cor 15:14, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is futile and your faith is empty." (NET).

[23] Ezek 36:27, "I will put my Spirit within you; I will take the initiative and you will obey my statutes and carefully observe my regulations"; John 14:17, "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you"; Rom 8:9, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him"; Eph 1:13, "And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)–when you believed in Christ–you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit." (NET)

[24] Rabbi Ezekiel's invocation of the power of story and PMJs denial of the miraculous (see n. 17).

[25] See the contribution of Carl Kinbar who succeeds in engaging in a fruitful interaction with Midrash and the theological vistas it can open up for the development of Messianic theological perspectives. C. Kinbar, "Israel, Interpretation, and the Knowledge of God: Engaging the Jewish Conversation," Hashivenu Forum, 2010. I would argue further, that in spite of our very different epistemological frameworks, both PMJs and MJs share—in the words of Kepnes cited above—"a reappreciation, in a myriad ways, of rabbinic Judaism."

[26] For the following I am indebted to N. Gillman, *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew* (Jerusalem: JPS, 1990), xvii–xviii.

[27] Among Kaplan's works his magnum opus is, *Judaism as a Civilization: Towards a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* (repr.; Philadelphia: JPS, 1994 [1934]).

[28] For a provocative analysis of Judaism's lack of appeal to many postmodern American Jews, see T. Zahavy, "The Predicament of the Postmodern American Jew," in C. Selengut, ed., *Jewish Identity in the Postmodern Age: Scholarly and Personal Reflections* (St. Paul: Paragon, 1999), 235–48. Zahavy places the blame for the problem of viable Jewish identity upon the leadership of the Jewish community. Using a market metaphor Zahavy blames the "corporate executives" of Judaism for a defective "product." While recognizing Lubavitch talent at "product development" and marketing, as evidenced by their increasing "market share," Zahavy comments that the Messianic dying-rising version of a marginal sector of Lubavitch failed to realize they "were supposed to be developing Judaisms, not Christianities!" Zahavy maintains that "such products need to be pulled from the market for product redesign." Zahavy further sees what he calls Holocaust-and-Redemption-Judaism, where, for example the Nazis replace the Egyptians, as starting out well but that the product remains in the *development* phase due to its overwhelming horror which keeps its reality distant from most Jews who prefer to remember it in superficial ways. Zahavy, notes J. Neusner's claim that this type of Judaism does not have the power to "transform the inner life of the Jew" (as does the Judaism of the dual Torah according to Neunser). How much more should our Yeshua-centered Judaism have 'market-appeal' to transform the inner man! Zahavy also comments on 'Cyber Jewry' as cyber communities where "Jews online study Torah together, argue about politics, inter-marriage and the like, exchange recipes, find their roots, make dates and even find spiritual solace" (p. 245).

[29] The Israeli equivalents are also Facebook (Hebrew interface) type connection sites and the ubiquitous Israeli coffee houses.

[30] No, I never saw the Beatles in concert; yes I bought the Abbey Road LP, and turned my parents' stereo speakers way up to hear McCartney's awesome base lines and did the same for Jimi Hendrix's guitar licks. For those younger participants at the BPS, an LP ("Long Playing") is: a record that spins at 33⅓ rpm. For those

who have never seen an LP, they look like this: (but is about 12 in [30 cm] in diameter).

[31] Also called 'Millennials' since they have spent formative years around the turn of the millennium.

[32] The potential for engaging GenY'ers through cyber-space—Facebook, You Tube, Chat-rooms, blogs, Google, Wikipedia, iPhone, iTunes, Kindle, eBooks, SMS, Twitter—type environments and Coffee shops is clear; note CPM's recent Coffee shop initiative in Tel Aviv and numerous Diasporic (mostly, but not exclusively North American) and Israeli MJ web sites. The traditional Jewish community (esp. Chabad!) seems to be out in front here, but see MJTI's network site and the UMJC site which is closing the gap e.g., see their 'Webinars.' I did a search at www.twitter.com and several hits came up for Messianic Judaism of which Beth HaDerech (which appears to be a Toronto-based Latino-Hasidic-style Messianic Jewish Congregation) was dominant and linked to their web site which attempts to use Hasidic categories to communicate Yeshua. The site also makes disclaimers for their employment of Hasidic voices who are, nonetheless, not believers in "Maran Yeshua."
For the application of Twitter to Education, see e.g., the University of Texas at Dallas, where Twitter has been incorporated into the actual classroom setting with large groups of students. This innovative approach gives more students the opportunity to express their views in class discussions; furthermore, the limit of 140 characters forces them to get to the central point. For 'posting' in class, see the following video:
http://twitterforteachers.wetpaint.com/page/Twitter+in+the+Classroom.
Twitter's political power was demonstrated in the recent Iranian June 09 elections by protesters after the Government blocked other media outlets. I am not trying to suggest 'Twitter-tracts' should be sent to Jewish College students, (whose leaders are trying to 'block the message,' etc.), but some in our movement may not resist such evangelistic temptation! Clearly the GenY'ers cyber spaces present ethical issues for our community attempts at 'connection.'

[33] Meta-narratives as defined by J. F. Loytard are large-scale theories and philosophies of the world, e.g., the progress of history, the claim by science of the knowability of everything, and the possibility of absolute freedom. See Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Minuit, 1979); Eng. trans., *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Theory and History of Literature, vol. 10; trans. B. Massumi; Minnesota.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[34] For all of postmodernism's claims to reject meta-narratives, I believe the case can be argued that it has one, namely, the predictable outworking of a Neo-Darwinist worldview: "That in the beginning there was always the multi-verse, and through time and chance, in a remote and lonely corner of one of an infinitesimal number of universes, on one teeny and otherwise wholly insignificant speck of a planet, in one small and unimpressive galaxy, the first living organic matter came into being. And then through random mutation and natural selection the first simple cells began to evolve until the appearance of *Homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens* recently fell into the hubris of Modernity's veiled power-claims for rationality and progress, but has now evolved to recognize that there are no absolutes or meta-narratives with a binding address but only community stories that reflect the social location of each cultural group."

[35] The following is simply illustrative of some of the (admittedly over-simplified) distinctions (from the Emerging Church's Perspective of the traditional Evangelical Church). My purpose in including this table is to suggest that we need to think and re-think how we are 'doing congregational meetings' in our Jewish cultural settings. I will briefly discuss the Emerging Church later in this paper. The content is based on a talk given by D. Carson, "Is the Emergent Church Biblical?" at the C. F. Henry Center for Theological Understanding on 9/21/2005, accessible at http://www.henrycenter.org

Traditional/Evangelicalism	Emerging Church
Emphasis on Propositional Truth	Experience Focused
Belief Focused	Belonging Focused
Traditional/Fundamentalist and non-ritualistic	Eclectic embrace of ritual/mystical Spirituality
Too polished/Performance Orientated (Mega-Church included here)	Participation-based
Showman/audience hierarchy	Relational Emphasis
Over-Cerebral/Rational	Embraces Feelings/Emotions
Intolerant of Others	Tolerant of Others

[36] Cultural influence takes place on three levels: Level 1) theory/philosophy/epistemology, 2) the Arts and Humanities 3) popular 'coffee table' setting conversations. I realize that most people (PMJs included) live in between the 2nd and 3rd levels and this is where most of our congregational leaders live and rub shoulders with their communities. However, it is imperative that we address the 'level-one' thought-shapers/intellectual trend-setters of the Jewish community, because it is only by interacting with PMJs' leading theorists that we can make an inroad that has the potential to filter down to the second and third level settings (the Arts and Humanities and coffee-table conversations).

[37] I am fond of the model I have discussed with Jhan Moskowitz (my dialogical partner for this session) which both of us are applying (he in NYC and myself in Israel) of gathering in small groups around *meals* in homes to discuss texts. Jhan and I both found it ironic and challenging that our assignment has been how we communicate a doctrine in a generational *Zeitgeist* that shuns doctrinal orthodoxy [Emergents] or simply denies it exists [Postmoderns].

[38] The National Havurah Committee (NHC) uses this Talmudic saying (*b. Ber* 63b) as their motto. The NHC define themselves as: "a network of diverse individuals and communities dedicated to Jewish living and learning, community building, and tikkun olam (repairing the world). For nearly 30 years, the NHC has helped Jews across North America envision a joyful, grassroots Judaism, and has provided the tools to help people create empowered Jewish lives and communities." The Havurah movement began in the late 60s and 70s as a type of Jewish grass-roots revival movement protesting an overly institutionalized Judaism. These small egalitarian groups function without the employment of rabbis and are popular in the Reconstructionist, Reform and Conservative movements. The name derives from Havurah (חבורה) small groups of religious fellowships that originated in Second Temple times among the Pharisees. See the NHC website: http://www.havurah.org.

[39] Both Christian and Jewish scholars are engaged in the "third quest." The three 'Quest's' for the historical Jesus are: First Quest) Mid-18th-mid-19th century. This quest used rational historical research to discover the historical Jesus as opposed to the "Christ of Faith." This Quest was effectively brought to an end by A. Schweitzer who demonstrated that the picture of Jesus that emerged from this quest was simply a reflection of the liberal scholars who projected their own humanistic image onto Jesus. Schweitzer introduced Jesus' Apocalyptic teaching and Jesus' expectation for the end of history into the discussion; Second Quest) In the 50s the quest was revived with the claim that there was historical data that could lead us to the historical Jesus. This quest sought to re-connect the Jesus of history to the Christ of Faith using existentialist categories; Third Quest) Since the late 70s this quest seeks to focus upon Jesus' Jewishness and Jewish context.

[40] This relates to Paul Hiebert's model of a "centered-set," instead of a "bounded-set" model of community inclusion, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994). Certainly the hope for any disciple of Yeshua is that they will come to understand and embrace his Deity as part of their understanding of his person, however, we need to allow people the space and pace to move towards that center as they participate in community life.

[41] For a typical critique of "Jewish Christianity" and a warning to the Jewish community to beware of 'us' (!) from the distinguished Jewish spokesman of the Holocaust, see E. Wiesel, "The Missionary Menace," in *Smashing the Idols: A Jewish Inquiry into the Cult Phenomenon* (G. D. Eisenberg, ed.; New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1988), 161–63.

[42] Towards the conclusion of writing this paper, I received a copy of the (yet unpublished) paper by M. Kinzer, "Finding our Way Through Nicaea: The Deity of Yeshua, Bilateral Ecclesiology, and Redemptive Encounter with the Living God," 2010 Hashivenu Forum (Los Angeles): 1–32. Kinzer discusses the Nicene Creed and the *Ecclesia* of the Nations vis-à-vis its relationship to MJ. Kinzer sees our position as one of "dialectical ecclesial continuity," by which he means the unique vantage point of MJs situated in covenantal bond with *both* the Jewish and Christian communities. Re Kinzer's insight of the inextricable link between behavior and belief, the following is illustrative of his thoughts, "For the Jewish people, the chief community-defining positive commandment was 'You shall observe the Torah' and the chief negative commandment was 'You shall not believe that Jesus is the Son of God.' For the Christian Church, the chief community-defining positive commandment was 'You shall believe that Jesus is the Son of God' and the chief negative commandment was 'You shall not observe the Torah' " (p. 3). Kinzer's view of Nicaea is one of critical but affirming embrace, e.g., "Paul offers a Yeshua-faith interpretation of existing Jewish tradition [the *Shem'a*], and the Nicene Creed offers an expanded interpretation of Paul's teaching" (p. 16). Cf., the important article by C. Blaising, "Creedal Formation as Hermeneutical Development: A Reexamination of the Nicene Creed," presented at the Biblical Interpretation in Early Christianity session of the SBL Congress, 2008, and the Patristics and Medieval History Group at the ETS, 2008. Blaising draws upon letters written before and after the Nicene council which he believes demonstrate that the language of the creed (esp. the "*ousia*" language) is the result of a preoccupation

by its framers with biblical hermeneutics rather than a particular system of ancient philosophy. The basic controversy is succinctly illustrated by the following claim/counter claims from one of Arius's letters: "The Son is from God Himself (ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ)" is the view of Alexander (as cited by Arius's letter). "He [Yeshua] is from nothing (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐστίν)" represents Arius's view, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, ca. 319 CE. See Blaising's article (pp. 9–13) for the way both parties sought to base their claims on reference to Scripture. The whole subject of the relationship of the Messianic Jewish movement to the historic Creeds of the Church and MJ Hermeneutics is a desideratum for a future Symposium.

[43] Our individualistic Western predisposition leads us to place an over-emphasis upon Yeshua's instruction to pray "in secret," as if Yeshua, himself, did not pray in community! It is certainly reasonable to assume that Yeshua's custom growing up would have been to gather together with 'Israel' (in a *minyan*) to pray the *Amidah* in whatever form current in his day. As noted by modern commentators, Yeshua's emphasis re praying "in secret" is certainly not on prayer's *locus* but rather upon its *manner*. The early disciples of Yeshua (see esp. the book of Acts) hardly understood this as a literal command.

[44] I am suggesting that Yeshua-Centered Jewish prayer/liturgy needs to 'spin around Yeshua' in the Jewish Yearly cycle. I am not advocating a wholesale renewal of the Siddur but I am advocating the adoption of a centering of Yeshua's death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Ruach HaKodesh as an integral part of our liturgical cycle.

[45] The "Taglit-Birthright" program (www.birthrightisrael.com) that brings young 18–26 year old Jewish youth to Israel for a free 10-day trip has achieved measurable success in connecting Jewish youth with their heritage. As of January 2010 (in which Birthright celebrated its 10 year anniversary), the program saw 250,000 young Jews and children of Jews from around the world come to visit Israel. Without any statistical data to reference I believe it is safe to say that for MJs the experience of coming to know Yeshua has been the major factor in their re-connection with Jewish heritage. The implication for covenantal theology related to Messiah (Messianic Jews) and the Land of Israel (for mostly non-Messianic Diasporic Jews) as the two main factors that have reconnected young Jews with their heritage is in itself a sociological/theological phenomenon that merits reflection and exploration.

[46] For the new openness among Jewish scholars to 'reclaim' Jesus as 'ours,' see D. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984; repr. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1997). See also the seminal study of S. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Among many examples that continue to be published: G. Vermes, *Jesus in His Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); D. Flusser, Jesus, (with S. Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997 [Ger. Orig. 1968; now in Hebrew trans. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001]); A.-J. Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFransico, 2006). For the interest of the early Zionists in Yeshua, see the now the invaluable contribution of T. Sadan, *Flesh of our Flesh: Jesus of Nazareth in Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008 [Hebrew]); see also *Jesus through Jewish Eyes* (A. Shinan, ed.; Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 1999 [Hebrew]).

[47] What I like to call Yeshua's 'c.v.' sent back to John the Baptist from Isa 61 and Isa 35 (see Matt 11:2-5): Yeshua's 'acts' consist of proclaiming God's good news to Israel, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, causing the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, healing lepers, and raising the dead.

[48] For a succinct and cogent articulation of the arguments for the truth of Jesus' resurrection, see W. L. Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (3d ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), Chap. 8 deals with the Resurrection of Jesus. Craig's approach is important for our postmodern Jewish audience (for whom the authority of the Tanakh let alone the NT Scriptures does not have intellectual purchase) since his appeal is *not*

based on the *divine inspiration* of the Scriptures, but rather an examination of the NT as an *historical document.* Craig argues persuasively from the inference to the best explanation re the following three points: 1) The Fact of the Empty Tomb 2) The Postmortem Appearances 3) The Origin of the Christian [faith in Yeshua as Messiah and Lord] faith. As I note in n. 4, postmodernists need to be shown the self-contradictory nature of their own worldview. Once this is done they can be challenged to examine the evidence for the Resurrection and come to their own conclusions after a careful perusal of the NT corpus. For a philosophical defense of Yeshua as God incarnate, and the atonement and resurrection, see R. Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[49] I believe that as we tell the story of Yeshua it remains useful to refer to Messianic prophecy to convince PMJs even though they don't believe in Yeshua (since they are Jewish) or the concept of a Messiah whose coming was prophesied in the Tanakh (since they are PMJs)! See M. Rydelnick, "The Ongoing Importance of Messianic Prophecy for Jewish Evangelism in the New Millennium," in D. Bock and M. Glaser, eds., *To the Jew First: A Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 261–91; However, Rydelnick's case needs to be complimented by an informed sensitivity to the current worldview shift of postmodernism, see W. E. Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture: Implications of a Video-Dependent Society," [first published in 1995! So read "DVD/Streaming Video-Dependent" for "Video-Dependent"!] in D. S. Dockery, *The Challenge of Postmodernism* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 169–83, e.g., "No longer is the question, 'Is there a God?' but rather, 'Which God?' The question is not 'Was Jesus the Son of God?' but 'How can I believe there's just one way to heaven?' 'Is the Bible true?' has become 'Is there truth?'" (p. 179). The Jewish versions of these can be easily adapted, e.g., not 'How can I believe that Jesus is *our* Messiah,' but 'How can *you* believe that there *is* an actual Messiah!' Brown also notes, "Rather than telling people what to believe — a didactic approach — people must now be led to discover the truth for themselves through a more Socratic method" (ibid.). See also the articulation by one of our most gifted and seasoned communicators, R. Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004).

[50] This early heresy that Yeshua was a man who became God by adoption is found in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (ca., 150 C.E.), and then by Theodotus around 190 C.E. who came to Rome from Byzantium and believed that Yeshua was virgin born, but that only after he was tested did he become the Christ at his baptism when the Spirit descended on him, and then only after his resurrection became fully God.

There is no space in the current paper to explore what J. D. Dunn and others have referred to as a 'two-stage' Christology. See Dunn's exposition of Romans, (Word Biblical Commentary: vol. 38a; Dallas: Word, 1988), esp. ad loc, 1:3-4, περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, (concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh, who was appointed the Son-of-god-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, NET) where Dunn's discussion of ὁρισθέντος "designated," (RSV) "declared to be," (BGD [BDAG], NEB, NIV) is instructive, e.g., the Old Latin tradition prefixed προ- ("a point of time prior to another point of time") to the verb so that the "appointment" of Yeshua as υἱοῦ θεοῦ (Son of God) is moved 'back' to eternity. Paul's understanding of Christology is also developed in the following phrase ἐν δυνάμει (in power), see Dunn's discussion and his explanation that such a Christology is *not* to be equated with adoptionism.

L. Hurtado has written extensively on the early worship of Jesus within the context of Second Temple monotheism. Hurtado is also recognized for having overturned W. Bousset's theory that Jewish worship of Yeshua developed in a Gentile-Hellenistic environment. E.g., Bousset's theory has no explanation for the use

by early Jewish followers of Yeshua of the Aramaic liturgical expression: μαράνα θά (*maranatha*) "O Lord, Come!" [1 Cor 16:22] and the very early worship of Yeshua alongside God among his *Jewish* followers.

51 Eusebius, History of the Church, Book III, 27, pp. 91–92. Cited by G. Nerel in the following important article, "Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Modern Yeshua-Movement," *Mishkan* 39 (2003): 65–86, (here, p. 83).

52 It is instructive to look the UMJC and the IAMCS statements of faith with regard to Christology. The UMJC lists their "statement of shared convictions" as affirmed by their delegates in 2003 (which they are careful to note does not replace their doctrinal statement) about Yeshua as:

Cited from: http://www.umjc.org/resources-mainmenu-101/documents-mainmenu-110/cat_view/119-theology

"The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations holds that the One GOD, the GOD of creation, the GOD of Israel, the GOD of our ancestors, of Whom our tradition speaks, reveals Himself uniquely, definitively, and decisively in the life, death, resurrection, and return of Yeshua the Messiah.

Yeshua is the incarnation of the Divine WORD through Whom the world was made, and of the Divine GLORY through Whom GOD revealed Himself to Israel and acted in their midst. He is the living Torah, expressing perfectly in His example and teaching the Divine purpose for human life. Yeshua is completely human and completely divine.

As the risen Messiah and the heavenly Kohen Gadol (High Priest), Yeshua continues to mediate GOD's relationship to His people Israel, to those of the nations who have joined the greater commonwealth of Israel in Him, and to all creation. GOD's plan of salvation and blessing for Israel, the nations, and the entire cosmos is fulfilled only in and through Yeshua, by virtue of His atoning death and bodily resurrection, and GOD's gift of life to both Jews and Gentiles, in this world and in the world to come, is bestowed and appropriated only in and through Him."

The relevant section of the official UMJC doctrinal statement reads:

"We believe in the deity of the L-RD Yeshua, the Messiah, and His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory."

The MJAA lists their congregational network (IAMCS) doctrinal statement about Yeshua as follows:

Cited from http://www.iamcs.org/WhatWeBelieve.php

GOD THE SON (HaBen)

The Son is God (Deity), and is worshipped as God, having existed eternally [Ps. 110:1 (cf. Heb. 1:13); Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 28:18–20; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–19; Rev. 3:21 (Heb. 1 - worshipped by angels); Rev. 4:8, 5:5-14].

The main difference between the UMJC and the IAMCS doctrinal statements re Yeshua is that the IAMCS statement speaks of Yeshua as "God" whereas the UMJC statements retain a more nuanced distinction. Although the UMJC statement does speak of Yeshua as "deity," and in their more recent addition as "completely divine," it does not refer to him as "God," although one use of the word typed "L-RD" (instead of "L-rd") does seem to go as far as one can go (in English) without actually saying that Yeshua is "God." I think

that this illustrates the difficulty for many MJs to adopt a Nicene articulation of "very God of very God" and thus makes it imperative that we engage in the hard work of theological reflection, discussion and articulation of this central belief of our faith.

[53] Maimonides' 'negative theology,' or 'apophatic theology' (an attempt to describe God through negation), follows the Islamic Neo-Platonic tradition, that one cannot predicate anything of God as that would suggest a limitation in God. All that may be predicated of God is that "He exists." Maimonides denied that God has attributes. For a fascinating angle on this whole question, see now Kinzer's article, "Finding our Way," in which he notes the similar theological move between the Kabbalists' view of the unity of the Ein Sof and the *Sefirot* against the Jewish Philosophical writers (i.e., Saadia Gaon/Yehuda HaLevi/Maimonides) avoidance of recognizing an uncreated hypostasis. Kinzer likens the Kabbalists' theological move to that of Nicaea's defense against an Arian view of a separate hypostasis. *In this sense* the Kabbalists are closer to our concept of God than the Jewish philosophers, however, their use of Ein Sof is noted here as a further example of negative theology.

[54] That negative theology (the Ein Sof, etc.) can be a helpful cross-cultural conceptual voice to speak to Hasidic Jews is not what I am addressing here.

At the 12th Annual Hashivenu Forum (the same day I had to submit this paper!) entitled "Encountering the God of Israel in the Messiah of Israel," there was a fruitful discussion of how we, as Jews, can best engage in the theological articulation of Yeshua's status vis-à-vis God. Perhaps the most fruitful suggestion was the integration of Liturgy and our confession about Yeshua in Scriptural terms (e.g., Phil 2 passage) woven into our liturgical worship. This parallels the singing of the creeds by many "High church" traditions and the Eastern Church. I mention this here also because of the Postmodern Jewish and Christian penchant for sacred and mystical space including the liturgical creation and expression of such 'spaces.'

[55] That Yeshua's speech was understood by the Jewish leadership as a claim to Deity is explicitly stated in John's Gospel, "For this reason the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God." (John 5:18); 'Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good deeds from the Father. For which one of them are you going to stone me?" The Jewish leaders replied, "We are not going to stone you for a good deed but for blasphemy, because you, a man, are claiming to be God [or 'a god']" ' (John 10:32–33). M. Kinzer speaking of the *taxis* (cf. τάξις, Eng., 'taxon,' order of relationship) between the Father and the Son, emphasizes Yeshua's Deity as articulated by the Nicene Creed, "Though the Son is ordered after and in relationship to the Father, he is not a demigod, a secondary divinity at a lower level of being from the Father." ("Finding our Way," p. 18). This limited 'sounding' on the topic is clearly not the place I can develop this. Suffice it to say here that some central Pauline texts, such as the *hymn to Yeshua*, embedded by Paul in Phil 2:6–11, is a rich early text that bears witness to the faith of the earliest community in Yeshua and hearkens back to Isa 45:23 where the reference is clearly God Himself. See the works of L. Hurtado, e.g., his only work currently translated into Hebrew: *How on Earth Did Jesus Become God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); the Hebrew translation כיצד הפך ישוע לאל? published by Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006. This opens the whole discussion of Jewish texts that reflect mediator figures and the extent of God's mediated or unmediated manifestations. For one such reflection on the subject see the parallels between Metatron and Jesus as discussed by A. Segal, "Ruler of This World: Attitudes about Mediator Figures and the Importance of Sociology for Self-Definition," in E.P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (Vol. 2; London: SCM, 1981), 245–68; For Segal's discussion on the Two Powers heresy in Rabbinic Judaism, see his, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

[56] See R. Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), chapter 5 (pp. 96–139) entitled "Yeshua the Messiah: The Shaping of Messianic Jewish Christology." As I have noted in this paper, Kinzer's "Finding our Way," paper has certainly advanced this discussion in many helpful ways.

[57] See O. Skaursaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), esp. ch. 3; and chs. 15-16; idem, "From the Jewish Messiah to the Creeds of the Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 32 (2008): 224–37, "To those who perceive the Christology of the Nicene creed as very Hellenistic or Greek, I have one basic challenge: how do you then explain that all Greek writers we know of, reacted with an instinctive disgust to the most obvious implication of the Nicene Creed, namely that it portrayed a God who suffered in his Son, of one essence with him? If there was one theological dogma shared by all educated Greek men and women, it was the impassibility ["incapable of suffering or of experiencing pain"] of God or the divine nature." Having acknowledged Skaursaune's point concerning Christology, the same cannot be said of conceptuality: see Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 125, "While the Greeks saw God in intrinsic terms, as supernatural, omnipotent, and omnipresent; the Israelites knew him in relational terms, as Creator, Judge, and Lord. They also referred to him as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our forefathers."

[58] Some of the ways that the Gospels imply Yeshua's Deity are: his act of forgiving sins, his miracles (e.g., commanding the storm to be still, walking on water, raising the dead), the Transfiguration, his unique filial relationship with the (his "own") Father (esp. in the Gospel of John), his claim that the final destinies of people rest on their response to him, and his parabolic teaching. For the latter, see P. B. Payne, "Jesus' implicit claim to deity in his Parables," *TJ* 2 (1981): 3–23. Other Jewish 'storylines' that I believe ultimately are 'fulfilled in Yeshua' are Buber's "I-Thou" (as a reflection of the Eternal Relationship between *the Father and the Son*), Heschel's "God in Search of Man," (Yeshua *is* the ultimate expression of that search and esp. God in search of lost *Jewish man* [Israel], see Matt 10:5); Borowitz's Covenant Theology reflects the way that the covenant has become an existential reality for us in our encounter with Yeshua . . .).

[59] L. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 48.

[60] It is important to distinguish between the 'Emergent' Church and the 'Emerging' Church. The former refers to "Emergent Village" (www.emergentvillage.com, where they define themselves as: "a growing, generative friendship among missional Christians seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Jesus Christ"). 'Emerging Church' is "the wider, informal, global, ecclesial (church-centered) focus of the movement, while Emergent is an official organization in the U.S. and the U.K." described by S. McKnight in the linked Christianity Today article cited in n. 59. McKnight notes that there is much confusion amongst Evangelicals re the difference between 'Emergent' and 'Emerging.' The latter, McKnight notes, is really more about ecclesiology than epistemology.

McKnight's lecture on the Emerging Church at Westminster Seminary in 2006 may be accessed at http://www.foolishsage.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/McKnight%20-%20What%20is%20the%20Emerging%20Church.pdf

[61] D. Bock, posting "Christology and the Emergent Movement," posted May 2, 2008, http://blog.bible.org/primetimejesus/content/christology-and-emergent-movement-may-2
For an informative summary and assessment of the positive aspects of the emerging church, see S. McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html
McKnight lists these as 1) Prophetic: Emerging Christians believe the church needs to change, and they are beginning to live as if that change had already occurred. 2) Postmodern, citing L. Shults, "The truly infinite

God of Christian faith is beyond all our linguistic grasping, as all the great theologians from Irenaeus to Calvin [include here Rambam?] have insisted, and so the struggle to capture God in our finite propositional structures is nothing short of linguistic idolatry." 3) Praxis-oriented: how faith is lived out. 4) Worship: esteem for sacred space and ritual that is not afraid to ask questions like: "Is the sermon the most important thing on Sunday morning? If we sat in a circle would we foster a different theology and praxis?" 5) Orthopraxy: how a person *lives* is more important than what he or she *believes*. 6) Missional: participating, with God, in the redemptive work of God in this world and in the community where God's redemptive work occurs. Holistic: ministering to the whole being. This emphasis finds perfect expression in the ministry of Jesus, who went about doing to bodies, spirits, families, and societies. 7) Post-evangelical by being Post-systematic theology, God didn't reveal a systematic theology but a storied narrative, and no language is capable of capturing the Absolute Truth who alone is God. 8) Skeptical of an "In versus Out" mentality. [I believe the following self-critique by McKnight, a respected Evangelical scholar who is also aligned with the Emerging Church applies equally to our movement.] "This emerging ambivalence about who is in and who is out creates a serious problem for evangelism. The emerging movement is not known for it, but I wish it were. Unless you proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, there is no good news at all—and if there is no Good News, then there is no Christianity, emerging or evangelical." 9) Political in the sense (as I understand McKnight here) of focusing on ministering to the poor and working *for* social justice rather than just being *against* abortion or homosexuality.

Of interest is the following self-description that employs the 'emergent' language for Messianic Jewish Congregations from one of Kesher's recent articles (http://www.kesherjournal.com/Issue-23/Complexity-in-Early-Jewish-Messianism): "Joshua Brumbach recently relocated to Washington, DC where he and his wife are the founders of Yinon, an organization committed to revitalizing congregations and planting *emergent Messianic Jewish communities* that inspire young Jews toward a vision of Jewish life that is progressive and engaging, rooted in the enduring legacy of Mashiach (emphasis mine)."

[62] P. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*. As far as I know Hiebert (d. 2007) was not aligned with the Emergent or Emerging Church, however, his missiological insights are highly relevant to some of their thinking about paradigms. Hiebert argues for Yeshua, Paul, and the Hebraic mindset as a "centered set," i.e., "people in covenant relationship with God, and therefore as people-in-community."

[63] See J. Fischer, "Yehsua: The Deity Debate," *Mishkan* 39 (2003): 20–28. (The whole issue is dedicated to the Divinity of the Messiah).

[64] See Paul's 'filling out' of the *Shem'a* in 1 Cor 8:6 where he includes Yeshua into Israel's central creedal declaration.

[65] J. D. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 16–17.

[66] Usually spoken of by postmoderns as the need for modernists/traditionalists to humbly acknowledge a sense of "chastened epistemology."

[67] My story is the story of a 'modern' Jew who climbed (traditional) Mt. Sinai at the age of 19 that set me on my two-year all-consuming search for God that took me through geographical journeys: Israel, Europe, Canada, South Africa, and spiritual ones: Reform Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, Eastern Religion, to faith in Yeshua as my Messiah and Lord. I would further argue that faith in Yeshua (including belief in his Deity), ironically, is the answer to Emil Fackenheim's call (as a response to the Holocaust) to fulfill the 614th commandment: Jewish survival. Now, more than a quarter of a century after first trusting in Yeshua for

forgiveness of my sins, I am as passionate as ever about embracing my Jewish identity and celebrating the riches of Jewish heritage in my life journey. My zeal and conviction for the preservation and celebration of Jewish peoplehood and heritage is not *in spite* of Yeshua but *because* of him! (To use Rosenzweigian terms, if Judaism is the sacred fire and the Gentile church is the flame of God's salvific light, then Yeshua is *the blue center of the flame*).

The challenge I have presented in this paper is to develop authentic Jewish community and lifestyle from which our contextualized theology re Yeshua's Deity can take shape. Our communities will share continuities with our Jewish past, and by virtue of our Yeshua-centered Judaism, stark discontinuities. Nonetheless, whatever our Yeshua-centered Jewish communities end up looking like, we need to take seriously the (tendentious but inescapable) conclusion of L. H. Schiffman, *Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (New Jersey: Ktav, 1985), 77, "In retrospect, the *halakhot* we have studied were what maintained the identity of the Jewish people. Had the rabbis relaxed these standards, accepting the semi-proselytes or the earliest Gentile Christians into the Jewish people, Christians would quickly have become the majority within the expanded community of 'Israel.' Judaism as we know it would have ceased to exist even before reaching its codification in the Mishnah ... observance of the commandments of the Torah would have disappeared within just a few centuries ... In short, it was the *halakah* and its definition of Jewish identity which saved the Jewish people and its heritage from extinction as a result of the newly emerging Christian ideology."

The other side of Schiffman's claim is complemented by noting that the Apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) came to the same conclusion that he advocates for the Jewish people as also relevant (as understood by Yeshua) for Messianic Jews. (As is well known the question of *Jewish* observance of Torah's commandments was not even a discussion item at the Jerusalem Council). This is no less than a properly contextualized understanding of what Yeshua was asking of Israel,

"[T]he primary kind of conversion to Jesus is intensification, that is, the revitalization of a previously existing Jewish faith. In light of this general orientation to the mission of Jesus it needs to be said that Jesus' strategy was not so much evangelization (as defined by most today) as *the attempt to awaken Israel,* especially marginalized Galileans, to his prophetic vision for Israel. This vision was not just for the Galilee; he had a mission for the entire nation." S. McKnight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 148 (emphasis original).