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## Sibling Rivalry between Church and Jews: Commentaries on Esau and Jacob

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# **Sibling Rivalry between Church and Jews: Commentaries on Esau and Jacob**

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**SIBLING RIVALRY BETWEEN CHURCH AND JEWS:  
COMMENTARIES ON ESAU AND JACOB**

*Asher Finkel, Ph.D.*

This essay is based on a paper delivered at the Society of Biblical Literature Conference (Anaheim, 1989). I am honored to have this study of the rivalry between Jews and Christians as depicted in Biblical imagery, appearing in the memorial volume for Father Edward Flannery. His insightful work on The Anguish of the Jews challenges all who seek to know why and how the Jews faced the Christian world as the antagonists over the millennia. Only true knowledge can lead us to light, as we seek to enjoy the heavenly light in our lives that is now resting on my colleague, Edward.

**Biblical Narrative as Semeion (sign)**

The biblical narrative of Genesis preserves early ethnographic accounts that were viewed as paradigmatic stories, relating God's plan in the history of patriarchal progeny. This interpretative approach is defined in early rabbinic exegesis<sup>1</sup> as follows: the story of the patriarchs is a sign (siman) for their descendants". The Mishnaic Hebrew word for sign is the Greek semeion. The semeiotic approach views, therefore, the biblical saga as a "Vorgeschichte," a prefiguration for the unfolding history of Israel under God. Such a view is reflected already in the Prophetic tradition that utilizes the critical events of the redemptive past as the historiosophical guide to the present and the coming future. In later neo-prophetic works, the apocalypticists offered an eschatological vision that was governed by a prototypical principle,<sup>2</sup> "Urzeit wirdt Endzeit" (former time becomes end time). Thus, prefigurative understanding guided the way biblically oriented faith communities perceived themselves in the "Heilgeschichte" of divine conception. The prefigured past disclosed the historical dynamics of conflict and war, the succession of earthly powers and the advancement of theistic religion in the world. The past holds the eschatological promise of victory and fulfillment.

In the latter period of the Second Temple era, the vision of Daniel (ch. 7) depicted a succession of beastly kingdoms ending in the establishment of the heavenly kingdom on earth. In the same work (ch. 9), Daniel seeks a messianic calculation for the historical process of redemption, that was anchored in a visionary understanding of the prophetic words of Jeremiah (29:10). The Teacher of Righteousness in the Dead Sea community during the Hasmonean period also claimed divine inspiration; this enabled him

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis Rabba, ch. 40, 6 "whatever is written concerning Abraham applies to his descendants;" said approach guides Nahmanides' commentary to Gen. 12:6, 32:4.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis* (N.Y.: Schocken, 1966), ch. 2 and D.S. Russell *Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), ch. 4, 4 citing Gunkel's work on Urzeit und Endzeit, with reference to the symbolic.

to interpret the prophetic words projectionally (IQ pesher Habakkuk 1:5). His interpretative approach was similar to that of Daniel; both employed a "pesher," that designates dream interpretation.<sup>3</sup> This mantic approach to Scriptures comes to unveil the intentionality of prophetic words that originally were received in a dream. The pesher projected the biblical figures and events upon the present condition of conflict and war. Such projectional anticipation also produced an apocalypse for the Dead Sea community that describes the final confrontation of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness. This writing<sup>4</sup> is designated as the "War Scroll." This work before the rise of Christianity held the promise for Qumran of imminent victory that would lead to the return of the exiled priestly community to a restored purified Temple in Jerusalem, as in the days of the priestly Maccabees.<sup>5</sup>

Akin to the Qumranic pesher interpretation was the early Christian understanding of scriptures that apparently pursued the hermeneutical way of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Paul and the early Church Fathers resorted to a typological reading of biblical persons and events that come to define the new redemptive history of the Church beginning with Jesus. Paul (Gal 4:21-31) points out that the son of the slave-woman, Hagar, and the son of the free-woman, Sarah, are but allegories of the two *diathekai* (covenants). Ishmael actually represents the contemporary Israel, who is enslaved to the Law in the earthly Jerusalem. On the other hand, Isaac is the child of promise, who represents the contemporary Church of the new covenant. For Paul, the two sons of Abraham are currently in religious conflict, although they enjoy a common bond through the "father of all nations." At the same time, Paul's typological understanding reflects also how the Christian community perceived itself in God's economy of salvation.

### **Early Church and Mishnaic Judaism on the Conflict**

During the first two centuries, Tannaitic or Mishnaic Judaism saw the conflict of the two brothers, Esau and Jacob, to represent Rome and Israel respectively. This is attested to in the synagogal Targum (especially Codex Neofiti), Rabbinic homilies and exegesis (Halakhic and Aggadic Midrashim), as well as the visionary writings (such as apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra). Esau represents Edom in the Scriptures, with Magdiel (powerful fortress) designating Rome (Gen 36:43). However, the conflict between the brothers, the children of Jacob by the two sisters, namely Joseph and Judah, suggests the Church and the Jews. Note in particular the reference to money paid for the sale of the righteous Joseph, as it is linked by the Gospels to Judas' betrayal of Jesus (Mk 14:11, Lk 22:5 [money] with reference to Amos 2:6 and Gen 37:28, while Matt 26:15 recalls Zech 11:12). Clearly, the rabbinic typology before the Christianization of Rome distinguished the external rivalry with pagan Rome as a conflict between Caesarea and Jerusalem. However, their internal conflict between the biblically oriented siblings recalled the tension between Pharisaic and Jamnian Jewry facing the Jewish Christians, who followed the "son" of Joseph.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See my seminal article, "Pesher and Dream Interpretation" in *Revue de Qumran* 4, 1963, and refer to M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Part 4: Mantological Exegesis. He fails to refer to my original article.

<sup>4</sup> See Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Contra B. Gaertner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1965). J. Neusner accepts this thesis as fact in *Judaism* 21 (1972) p. 318, which is clearly refuted by the War Scroll; see Yadin's Temple Scroll I, p. 144 n. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Consult R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Eerdmans, 1975). He applies my study of pesher to Jesus' interpretation, which guided his followers in their hermeneutics of scriptural fulfillment.

<sup>7</sup> See D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hendrickson, 1998), ch. 1 on Joseph as typos.

Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (ch 134) presents the marriage of Jacob to the two sisters, Leah and Rachel, as the prefiguration of Israel of the synagogue, the elder, and Israel of the Church, the younger. Rachel means the lamb in Hebrew and Jesus is christologically called Israel, i.e. Ish-ra'ah-el (the man who saw God).<sup>8</sup> The scriptural account of Jacob's fate foretells the fate of Jesus. Both were hated and persecuted by their brothers. In Justin's view, therefore, Esau represents the Jewish people and Jacob the shepherd of many spotted sheep (Gen 31); he prefigures Jesus as the shepherd of the many from various nations. The conflict between the brothers, Jacob and Esau, as well as that between Joseph and Judah typifies the relationship between Christianity and Judaism respectively.

Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, Book 4, 21) offers the prefiguration of the conflict between Jacob and Esau in terms of the Church and the Synagogue. Jacob and Rachel are symbolic of Jesus and the Church. For Irenaeus of Asia Minor and Justin of Samaria perceived the conflict from their experiential perspective, as the gentile Church emerged distinct from normative Judaism as well as from Jewish Christianity. This occurred during the Hadrianic times, when Bar Kochba was declared the warrior-Messiah by Rabbi Akiva. Only then were Jewish Christians persecuted, as the recent discovery of Bar Kochba letter testifies.<sup>9</sup> They refused to join the Jewish forces in war against Rome, as they acknowledged only Jesus to be their Messiah. After the devastating defeat of Bar Kochba in 136 C.E., Jewish Christians could not return to Jerusalem, as all circumcised individuals were denied entry upon penalty of death.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the gentile Church emerged as the dominant Christian body and Justin appealed with Apologies to Hadrian, in defense of Christianity as a separate licit religion.

### **The Conflict of Rome and Israel**

Rabbi Akiva taught<sup>11</sup> that the conflict between Rome and Israel is captured in the biblical distinction, "the voice of Jacob and the sword of Esau" (Gen 27:22). He was describing how thousands of his disciples, who studied Torah in his academy, were now facing the sword of Hadrian, the Roman emperor. Rabbi Akiva also applied Balaam's prophecy (Num 24:18) as a messianic designation of Simeon bar Koseba, whom he described as the "son of the star" (Bar Kochba). "A star will step forth from Jacob... and Edom will become (his) possession." However, his noted disciple Rabbi Shimeon bar Yochai, who escaped the terrible war, declared that bar Kochba was a false Messiah (Bar Kozeba). He further maintained that Hadrian's war against the Jews was motivated by anti-Judaic sentiment. Antisemitic enmity was now governing Roman relations with Israel, as Rabbi Shimeon<sup>12</sup> worded it: "It is a halakhah that Esau hates Jacob." He was reflecting on the current Hadrianic religious persecution (*shemad*) of the Jews, which was described as the "time of *shemad*." Jerusalem became a pagan city, which was renamed Aelia Capitolina. The Temple Mount was plowed under and anti-Torah decrees were issued against the Jews, neither to enter Judea nor to observe Torah. Judea became Palestine and Jews now became the mourners of Jerusalem. The Mishnah issued rabbinic instruction for mourning

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<sup>8</sup> Philo explains said name "Israel," which Justin incorporates in his allegorical approach, that suggests his christological typology. See Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments*, 43-46.

<sup>9</sup> See Y. Yadin, *Bar Kochba* (N.Y.: Random House, 1971), p. 137. The Galileans are the early Jewish-Christians. See J.L. Teicher, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 4 (1953).

<sup>10</sup> See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4, 6.

<sup>11</sup> See Midrash Hagadol to Gen 27:22. "R. Akiva preached that Jacob's voice was crying because of what Esau's hand did to him at Betar, killing 80,000 inhabitants." Compare Bab. Gittin 67b.

<sup>12</sup> See RaSHY's commentary to Gen 33:4. The Massorah places dots over the Hebrew word "he kissed him" (*WYSHQHW*), which signifies an erasure of Q to be replaced by K. This means in Hebrew that "he bit him" (*WYSHKHW*)." Esau's intention was malicious.

and remembrance of the days of catastrophe (Mishnah Ta'anith 4:5, 6 see Tosefta there and the two Talmuds.) Rabbi Shimeon relates<sup>13</sup> how the Galilean patriarchate took drastic steps to change its policy towards Rome. It assumed a passive posture, as it adopted binding resolutions of no armed struggle and no aggressive resettlement. In contrast to Rabbi Akiva and his warrior messiah, they left the messianic option in God's hands. A non-militaristic attitude guided the rabbis, who await the universal transformation by the coming of God's Kingdom that promotes lovingkindness, justice and peace. A dual messianic teaching appeared in their writings that depict the roles of warrior, the Son of Joseph, as distinct from the peaceful Messiah as the son of David. That Rome as a world power will be defeated by a messianic transformation is the promise of Obadiah, at the end of his oracle concerning Edom, i.e. Rome, in rabbinic visionary understanding. Its expression is found in the Alenu prayer<sup>14</sup> that was recited after the public Torah reading and on New Year's Day. "Therefore we anticipate you, the Lord our God, to behold soon your majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth and the idols will be exterminated, in order to perfect the world (Tikkun Olam) through the Kingdom of God, when all mankind will declare your name to turn to you all the evil ones of the earth." Thus the appendix to Mishnah Sotah, chapter 9, relates the eschatological teaching of R. Nehemiah, a disciple of Rabbi Akiva, that the Roman Empire will be converted to Christianity (Bab. Talmud Sanhedrin 97a). A century later, indeed, Rome became Christian in the days of Constantine. A curious rabbinic historiographical account<sup>15</sup> maintains Esau's descendants' connection between Rome and Christianity. An Idumean commercial colony was first established by Tsepho, the son of Eliphaz (Gen 36:11) on the hills of Rome, and the Idumeans, who were converted to Judaism by the Hasmonean King Hyrcanus a century before the birth of Jesus, eventually embraced Christianity.

The conflict with Rome was not political (originally Rome was allied to the new Hasmonean state), but ideological. Rome was promoting imperial worship and idolatrous mythopoetic celebrations. This policy was strongly opposed by Rabbinic Judaism, and it is recorded halakhically in Mishnah Avodah Zarah (foreign worship). After the destruction of the Temple, the Yavneh academy was not concerned with Jewish-Christianity as the main threat to its existence, as is so widely claimed by current scholarship.<sup>16</sup> Its main concern was the Roman threat to its existence, and only during the Bar Kochba revolt were Jewish Christians persecuted. Similarly the early Church itself was threatened by idolatrous Rome, and the Book of Revelation bears witness to this in its visionary account of the Beast (ch 13), whose number 666 holds the clue to the name of the emperor. It is Nero, whose name in Hebrew letters NRWN QYSR represents 666 numerologically. In those years, both Jewish and Christian writers kept their reference to imperial Rome in a coded form of typology or numerology.

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<sup>13</sup> See Bab. Kethubot 111a, Midrash Canticles Zuta and Yalkut Canticles to 2:7. These resolutions are called the "three oaths," that Galilean Jewry adopted in their dealing with Rome: not to promote aggressively a Messianic solution, 2) not to force a resettlement and 3) not to raise arms against the occupiers, with the condition that this policy will lift the severe decrees against the Jewish existence.

<sup>14</sup> Refer to the study of J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Period of the Tannaim*, Hebrew edition (Jerusalem: Magues Press), p. 172 ff and Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971) p. 241.

<sup>15</sup> See Ibn Ezra, RaSHY and David Kimhi to Obadiah and refer to Abarvanel's commentary to Obadiah and Zechariah, ch. 12, 13, as well as to his treatise "Mashmia' Yeshu'ah," prophecy 7.

<sup>16</sup> See W.D. Davies, *Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1966). See my response in "Yavneh's Liturgy and Early Christianity" in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 18:2, Spring 1981, in addition to the cited arguments of Douglas Hare and Philip Sigal.

## Proper Understanding of the Mishnaic View

Mishnaic Judaism must be judged in its organic background alongside various religious literary developments but never in isolation by its halakhic compilation only.<sup>17</sup> The Mishnaic text of the first two centuries C.E. is determined stratificationally by three distinct periods. The first period related to the Pharisaic houses of Shammai and Hillel prior to the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. The second period is determined by the Yavneh academy and its consolidating activities that led to a unified stand under Rabbi Akiva against Rome during the Bar Kochba revolt (132-136 C.E.). The last period covers the Galilean academies under the patriarchs Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel II and his son Judah, the editor of the official Mishnah. These three historical periods also mark the rise of Christianity. The first, from Jesus to the death for the apostles in the sixties, ushers in the second, the evangelical period, when Jewish Christianity was active in Jerusalem before 132 C.E. Finally, the emergence of the gentile Church as a dominant force after Hadrian led to the conversion of the Roman Empire a century after the publication of the Mishnah, the third period.

It is difficult to see how one can reach the conclusion that during the Mishnaic period, Rome symbolized little beside herself and Esau was a concrete figure (see J. Neusner, "From Enemy to Sibling: Rome and Israel," B.Z. Bokser lecture at Queens College, 1986). Prof. Neusner<sup>18</sup> mistakenly assumes that Mishnaic Judaism was void of Messianic teaching and missionary activities. In his view, Rome was but a pagan kingdom that is benign towards Israel in its land. He therefore seeks to rewrite the historical account of Judaism in the matrix of Christianity, especially when it confronts a Christianized Rome. His approach is to isolate Mishnah and Tosefta from the Jerusalem Talmud and the Midrashim (Genesis and Leviticus Rabba) as well as from all other witnesses of the Jewish expression of that period, such as early liturgy, Targum, visionary and mystical writings.

To argue one's case, a scholar cannot simply check the Concordance of Kassowsky to the Mishnah and Tosefta for the references to Edom, Esau and Rome. Since there is little mention, then Neusner concludes that Rome is not a topic of interest. The Mishnah is clearly aware of the antithetical reality of Rome's challenge. The Mishnah devotes an entire tractate on Idolatry, precisely to define halakhically the religious practice of pagan Rome. The Mishnah does not see Rome as a part of the undifferentiated other, outside the world of Israel, as Neusner claims by the Mishnaic notion of sanctity and piety. However, pollution affecting foreign lands is but a rabbinic enactment to boycott produce imported from outside the land of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Land itself cannot be polluted or become unholy, as Mishnah Avodah Zarah 3:4 argues. If polluted land became the realm of death, as Neusner understands, it would be forbidden then for Jews to settle in Rome and all the lands it occupies. Yet, the Tannaitic Midrash teaches that Zechariah's prophecy (9:7) refers to Roman transformation from paganism, when synagogues and Torah academies will be built

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<sup>17</sup> Neusner's methodology is highly questionable, see the classical examination of the Mishnaic text by J. N. Epstein, who argues correctly for a stratifical development of the Mishnaic work; Mishnah relates organically to all other writings of the Tannaic period. Any rabbinic scholar is aware of said approach to the Mishnaic composition, which requires a study in depth and not surface reading in view of atomized analysis by Neusner.

<sup>18</sup> His topic was expanded in a trilogy on *The Encounter of Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine* (University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> See L. Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (Meridian Books, 1962). His study of "the significance of the Halachah for Jewish History" demonstrates how Halakhah serves the political issuance of boycott.

there.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Rome does not become the Fourth Beast only in the fourth century due to its conversion, as Neusner seems to ascertain. Rather, there is a shift in the rabbinic view from the early period when Rome was pagan as a rival of Israel to a sibling rival upon Rome's conversion to the biblically oriented tradition. The rabbis anticipated said event as a critical part of their redemptive history, that will eventually lead to the return to Zion and the restoration of their Temple.

### **Christian Rome and the Symbol of Conflict**

The rise of Christian Europe that shared the Bible with Israel added a new dimension to the ongoing conflict between the twin brothers, Esau and Jacob. From the time of the Book of Revelation and Justin in the early second century to the time of Jerome in the fourth century, Rome was identified as the fourth Beast of Daniel's vision.<sup>21</sup> However, Jerome was now aware that in his days Rome was rebuilding churches that they destroyed. The emperor has showered Christians with benefactions and privileges, whereas in the past they were persecuted and put to death. The process of Christianization of the world power only sharpened the Christian awareness of its spiritual victory through evangelization and proselytization. This historical development pointed to fulfillment of the commissioning aim of Jesus, in the end of the Gospel according to Matthew (28:19). The same goal is stressed in the opening chapter of Acts (1:8), as a "heilsgeschichtlich" sequel to the Gospel of Luke about Jesus' ministry.

Eusebius, living during the age of Constantine, promoted precisely such a christological understanding of fulfillment in history. He demonstrates that not only the recent events produce a victory for the persecuted Church but also dealt a just punishment to the stubborn Israel. He offered the projectional disclosure of Scriptural semeia, but he also related the events that were accompanied by heavenly or epiphanic signs. The Church Fathers continued to pursue the hermeneutical tradition of allegorical interpretation and pesheric typology, as in the former years.

A case in point is the symbolic understanding of Levitical laws concerning the dietary practice of Judaism. For the Church Fathers, they came to disclose a higher divine intention, since their concrete application was not valid for the Church. They applied a theriomorphic symbolic meaning to these laws, that served to express eschatological reality of an apocalyptic historiosophy. Jesus himself referred to Israel as sheep and to the gentiles as dogs (Matt 15:24, 26). From the days of Daniel, Jewish and Christian apocalypses used these symbols. Therefore, it is not surprising that the characteristics of clean and unclean animals prefigure the marks of religious movement in relation to the Church.

Irenaeus of the second century (Adversus Haereses, Book 8:4) presents the allegorical meaning of these characteristics. Those animals with double hoof that ruminate are clean; they represent the Christians who are steadfast in their faith and meditate on the teachings. Those with divided hoof but do not ruminate are like the pigs, representing the heretics of the Church. For they are steadfast in their faith but do not meditate on the normative teachings. Finally, those animals that ruminate but do not have a split hoof, like the camels, are the Jews; for they have no true faith although they meditate on the Scriptures, day and night.

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<sup>20</sup> See Yalqut Shimeoni Zechariah 9:7.

<sup>21</sup> See J. Braverman on Jerome's commentary to Daniel (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph 7) 1979.



At the same time, during the latter years of the Mishnaic period, the rabbis<sup>22</sup> relate the above animals with reference to the four kingdoms. The clean animals, like the sheep, are the Jews. Those that ruminate only represent the three kingdoms. The camel is Babylonia; the badger is Media and the hare is Greece, whereas Rome is the pig that does not ruminate although exhibits clean feet. This theriomorphic representation is also due to the appearance of the boar on the flag of the Roman legion under Hadrian. However, in the rabbinic view it also reflects their use of word association in Hebrew. Rumination is gerah in Hebrew, which suggests also the root gerar that means "to string along." Thus animals that only ruminate appear as three kingdoms in succession. Not so with Rome as the pig, it stands by itself and prefigures the last Kingdom, that will also enjoy clean feet.

With the rise of Christian Rome in the fourth century a shift occurred in rabbinic works in viewing Rome. The rabbis did associate the symbol of the swine with Rome as a pagan empire, but now transferred it to Latin Christianity. Christianity shared this Biblical symbol to represent heretics that threatened its missionary work in the past. However, after Rome was converted, patristic writings of the fourth century do not link Rome with the symbol of the swine in the works of Ephrem the Syrian, Aphraates, John Chrysostom and Theodoret. Yet the rabbis transferred the symbol to Latin Christianity that enjoys clean feet. The religion of Rome was now rooted in the Biblical faith of the patriarchs, but gentile Christianity did not accept the covenantal demands of Old Testament law. Philo of the first century has advanced the allegorical interpretation of Scriptures, in his preaching at the Alexandrian great synagogue. His writings were preserved by the Church, as the Christian teachers and preachers were greatly influenced by his approach. However, Philo has pointed out<sup>23</sup> that for Judaism, the literal meaning is binding. The Latin Church was opposed to halakhic Judaism, as reflected in the ecclesiastical work of Didaskalia, and indeed the Church Fathers condemned the Judaizing tendencies in the community. Thus in Rabbinic view, although Christianity now is non-idolatrous it remains antithetical to normative Judaism, which is captured by the symbol of the non-kosher animal with clean feet.

### **The Symbol of Conflict and the Eschatological Hope**

The hermeneutical approach that was shared by the Church and the Synagogue in their use of apocalyptic symbolism hinged on the way each related to the other in the present historical reality but within the greater scheme of God's promise and fulfilment. For the synagogue, these categories depended on the fate of Israel, as it struggled to survive and grow during the successive world powers, and especially now when it faces the final kingdom of the imperial Rome that also became the imperial Church. The latter convergence produced continuity for the fourth world power in apocalyptic vision. Yet, the Church itself was instrumental to convert the pagan world to a biblically oriented faith. Thus, the symbol of the pig for the fourth power was seen by the rabbis to suggest also the transformation. The Hebrew word for pig is hazir, which also expressed the notion of restoration, hazar. The rabbis teach:<sup>24</sup> "In the future, the pig will be restored to its clean status." In their view, the Church will restore the pagan people of the Roman Empire to biblically oriented faith, as the Kingdom of God will be established universally in the end of time. However in the present history, the Church continued to

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<sup>22</sup> The theriomorphic symbolism allows for the Rabbinic understanding that Abraham received such a vision at the beginning of his mission, at the Covenant of Pieces (Gen 15). See Gen Rabba 44.

<sup>23</sup> See Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 89-93 (in *Three Jewish Philosophers*, Atheneum, 1969, p. 41).

<sup>24</sup> See M. Kasher's *Torah Shlemah* (Jerusalem, 1978) to Lev. 11:7, par. 34 and its note.

maintain anti-Judaic polemics of the imperial Rome.<sup>25</sup> An ambivalent view of Christianity emerged among the rabbis, the idealistic-futuristic and the realistic-political perspectives. From the fourth century until the late Middle Ages, it found expression in new apocalyptic writings and biblical commentaries of the rabbis. The fullest expression is found at the end of Maimonides' uncensored code of Mishneh Torah (Melakhim, ch. 11). There he relates how Israel will enjoy Messianic restoration in the future, through the historical transformation of the world that was initiated by the spread of Christianity and Islam.<sup>26</sup> However, Maimonides maintains in his Responsa (no. 58), that a distinction between the latter theistic faiths exists. Christianity shares with Judaism a common revealed truth of the Hebrew Bible, but Islam rejects the Bible as a false witness to its prophetic teaching. Thus, he writes "there is no obstacle to Judaism to share the Torah study with Christians," even before the messianic end, "since the whole world is presently with Messianic and Torah teachings."

Christianity viewed Israel within its christological or messianic frame of history, that is bracketed by two advents. They saw the Scriptural heritage of the Jews as testimony to their New Testament teachings. The Church from the beginning was challenged by Jewish praxis and tradition, while facing a greater threat from Gnostic heresies in the Roman world. Once the Church overcame the major opposition by pagan Rome, it also defeated the heretical tendencies in the Church. However, Judaism remained alive, and Israel was relegated to the role of a witness to the veracity and victory of the Church. Over the centuries this approach led to a bitter and antagonistic relationship with Israel, as the Jews faced disputations, accusations, forced baptism and even death.

After the Holocaust, the Church recognized the wrong that was committed against the Jews over the centuries, with forced conversions and theological antisemitism. The Church realizes now that Judaism should be understood according to the way the rabbis and their coreligionists experience their faith and define themselves. Judaism can now present "its beauty and authentic expression" to the Christian world, and its leaders know that they will be heard respectfully. In light of this development, Judaism can evolve alongside Christianity until the final advent of the Messiah, when the reality of God's presence will be acknowledged by all on earth. Thus, the symbolism of conflict drawn from the biblical types serves as archetypal imagery to produce a primary understanding of their respective roles. Both draw their inspiration from being in God's presence, and not from a position of dominance or subservience. Both are in the service to do God's will. Then all people will follow His ways, which are the ways of wholesomeness, lovingkindness and righteousness that will usher in the final advent of the Messiah, whose coming is determined by God only.

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<sup>25</sup> See E. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>26</sup> See I. Twersky *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 452. Maimonides echoes the view of Yehudah Halevi, as well.