Colby College

From the SelectedWorks of David M. Freidenreich

January 2011

Food and Table Fellowship

Contact Author

Start Your Own SelectedWorks

Notify Me of New Work

Available at: http://works.bepress.com/david_freidenreich/52

The Jewish Annotated New Testament, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

> ten to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice that all other legislators seem to have neglected. (*Ag. Ap.* 2.175)

The New Testament preserves several important accounts of first-century synagogue liturgy as well:

> When he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written. (Lk 4.16–17)

> But they [Paul and his companions] went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message. (Acts 13.14–15)

Thus, there can be little doubt that by the first century CE, Torah reading had become the core of Jewish synagogue worship. Several related liturgical features, although not as well attested, accompanied the Torah reading. For example, both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts refer to readings from the Prophets (*haftarot*) and sermons that followed the scriptural reading.

This liturgy was unique to the ancient world, as no such form of worship featuring the recitation and study of a sacred text by an entire community on a regular basis was in evidence at this time; we know only of certain mystery cults in the Hellenistic-Roman world that produced sacred texts, which were read on occasion to initiates. The self-laudatory tone of the Jewish sources may indeed reflect their authors' desire to trumpet this unique form of worship that set the Jewish community apart from its neighbors.

THE SYNAGOGUE IN LATE ANTIQUITY (THIRD TO SEVENTH CENTURIES)

In the centuries leading up to the end of Late Antiquity, Jewish society underwent many transformations, and there is no more illustrative an example of these far-reaching changes than the ancient synagogue. While continuing to function as a communal center, the synagogue of Late Antiquity began to acquire a significantly enhanced measure of sanctity—through its orientation to Jerusalem, its religiously infused artistic representations, its expanded liturgy, and the permanent presence of a Torah shrine, although each community utilized these components differently. Two complementary factors were at work here: the religious dimension stimulated in part by the non-Jewish social and religious milieux (especially the rise of Christianity in the fourth century and thereafter); and the communal dimension, which remained the central factor in determining how the synagogue, as a local institution par excellence, looked and functioned. The tastes and proclivities of each and every community determined the physical, functional, cultural, and religious aspects of the local synagogue.

The synagogue of Late Antiquity's primary historical significance was that it constituted the core institution for Jews everywhere. Despite its geographical, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, this communal institution and the ongoing expansion of its religious component provided a common framework for all Jewish communities. In a sense, the function fulfilled by the central and unique Jerusalem Temple in the pre-70 era was now carried out, mutatis mutandis, by the locally based, yet universally present, synagogue. It was indeed a "diminished sanctuary" (Ezek 11.16; *b. Meg.* 29a), one that served Jewish communal and religious needs throughout Late Antiquity and beyond.

FOOD AND TABLE FELLOWSHIP

David M. Freidenreich

Food and table fellowship figure prominently in the New Testament. Many of Jesus' parables draw on food imagery, such as salt, yeast, mustard seeds, and banquets, and he speaks of bread and wine as his body and blood. Jesus miraculously feeds large crowds, and he draws criticism for dining with sinners as well as for the fact that his followers do not fast. Leaders within the Jesus movements use table fellowship to unite believers and promote a sense of collective distinctiveness. Familiarity with Jewish dining practices deepens our understanding of the New Testament and, by extension, the nascent Christian community.

FOOD RESTRICTIONS WITHIN THE JESUS MOVEMENTS

The Torah prohibits its followers from consuming various types of meat (Lev 11, Deut 14); the Jewish practice of abstaining from pork was well known, and often maligned, in the Second Temple period (e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.2). The *Letter of Aristeas*, a Jewish text probably writ-

ten during the second century BCE, and the first-century Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo both explain that the Torah's dietary norms offer lessons in moral virtue whose observance sets Jews apart from their immoral Gentile neighbors (*Ep. Arist.* 139–69; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 4.101).

Jesus and his disciples adhered to these food restrictions. Although Mark reports that Jesus "declared all foods clean" (7.19), it is clear from the context of this passage and its parallels (Mt 15.1–20; Lk 11.37–44) that this phrase constitutes an historically inaccurate gloss. In these passages, Jesus does not reject the dietary laws of the Torah but rather the more stringent Pharisaic requirement that food be consumed in a ritually pure fashion. Jesus contests other food practices associated with Jewish sectarians as well, such as the refusal to eat with non-sectarians and the frequent observance of fasting (Mt 9.10–1; Mk 2.15–20; Lk 5.29–35); but these stances in no way indicate ambivalence toward dietary laws found in the Torah.

Unlike Jesus, Paul declares that "nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (Rom 14.14). In other words, believers in Christ need not adhere to Jewish dietary laws, but those who regard these laws as binding should continue to obey them. To promote "peace and . . . mutual upbuilding," Paul encourages those who eat all foods to accommodate those who abstain (14.19). A later letter pseudonymously ascribed to Paul, in contrast, condemns abstinence from foods (1 Tim 4.3–4). Early Christian writers (e.g., the *Letter of Barnabas* [ca. 130], ch 10) polemicize against the Jews and those who would follow Jewish practice for their literal adherence to the Torah's dietary laws, insisting that these statements are purely allegorical.

In a letter called the "Apostolic Decree" (Acts 15.23–29), James the brother of Jesus, who is the leader of the Jerusalem Church, enjoins Gentile members to "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled." The last of these terms refers to meat from animals slaughtered in a manner that does not allow their blood to drain out. James also forbids *porneia*, sexual impropriety. The Apostolic Decree exempts Gentile Christ-believers from most Jewish dietary laws but requires them to observe two fundamental Jewish food taboos. Jews of the Second Temple period regarded consumption of food offered to idols as tantamount to idolatrous worship itself, and some embraced martyrdom rather than engage in such behavior (2 Macc 6–7; 1 Macc 1.62–63; cf. 4 Macc). Various passages in the Torah and Prophets compare consumption of blood to murder and declare that all people, or all in the covenant community, must abstain from such activity (Gen 9.3–6; Lev 17.10–12; Ezek 33.25–26). Early Christian authorities uniformly interpret the decree literally.

A faction within the community of Corinth saw nothing wrong with eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8). Paul, in contrast, declares that "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (10.21). Paul does, however, allow Christ-believers to eat food purchased in the marketplace or served in the homes of non-believers so long as they do not know that this food had been offered to idols (10.25–29; cf. 5.9–10). In the Greco-Roman world, much of the meat available in the market came from sacrifices in local temples, and adherents of traditional Hellenistic religions regularly served sacrificial food at home. Paul's permissive stance regarding meat whose provenance is unknown finds parallels within early rabbinic literature, which does not subject such meat to the stringent prohibitions associated with idolatry either (*t. Hul.* 2.20).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Paul's letters and Acts of the Apostles make clear that the commemoration of the final meal that Jesus shared with his followers, the Last Supper or Lord's Supper, constitutes the central ritual of the community. Because of its significance, Paul warns, those who participate must do so not to satisfy physical hunger but to unite in remembrance of Jesus' death. Paul reports that Jesus himself instituted this ritual during his last meal with the disciples (1 Cor 11.17–34). Matthew, Mark, and Luke associate the Last Supper with the Passover meal, in which Jews gathered in Jerusalem to consume the meat of their sacrificial lambs. (The seder is a later development after the destruction of the Temple, when the paschal lamb was no longer offered.) John, in contrast, portrays Jesus himself as the sacrificial lamb and dates the crucifixion to the time the Paschal lambs are sacrificed in the Temple, an event that precedes the Passover meal (19.14,31,36). Historically, John's dating has much to commend it. If the accounts of Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities and then before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate (Mt 26.57–27.26; Mk 14.53–15.15; Lk 22.54–23.25), are an accurate reflection of the events, it is highly unlikely that they would have taken place once Passover had begun. The Temple authorities would more likely have put off any trials until after the festival, or at least until the first day had passed.

Paul treats bread and wine, staples in Mediterranean antiquity, as the primary elements—the "body" and "blood," respectively—of the Lord's Supper. In their later

accounts, Mark and Matthew also associate these elements with Jesus' body and blood. "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life," Jesus declares in John 6.54. This statement both reinforces the significance of the Lord's Supper and alludes to the biblical motif of ingesting God's words (e.g., Ezek 3.1–3; Prov 24.13–14); John declares explicitly that Jesus is the Word incarnate (Jn 1.14).

Unlike the present-day celebration of the Lord's Supper (also known as the Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Mass, or the Divine Liturgy), the practice in the New Testament period was to serve a full meal, a Christian version of the Greco-Roman banquet. Communal worship, moreover, apparently occurred in the course of this banquet (see 1 Cor 11.17–34). Within the Greco-Roman world, the banquet (commonly but imprecisely called the symposium, which is a "drinking meal") constituted an especially important means of strengthening bonds within social groups. It is no surprise, therefore, that Paul employs exclusion from table fellowship as a means of disciplining sinful members (1 Cor 5.11). Paul and other leaders of the Jesus movements treat commensality, the act of eating together, as a proxy for their debates over the status of Gentiles as members of the Christ-believing community: if non-Jewish converts are included at the table, they are full-fledged members.

TABLE FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES

Paul insists that membership in the church is open to Jews and Gentiles without distinction. For that reason, he sharply rebukes Peter (called Cephas) for withdrawing from commensality with Gentiles "for fear of the circumcision faction" (Gal 2.11–14). Paul may tolerate continued observance of other Jewish food practices (Rom 14), but he insists that all Christ-believers, Jewish and Gentile, can and ought to eat together as equals. Others within the church, whom Paul calls "the circumcision faction," affirm the ongoing relevance of the Jew/Gentile distinction and consequently object to commensality between Jews and Gentiles, even among those who believe in Christ. This objection conforms to norms found in numerous Jewish works from the Second Temple period: Jews ought not share meals with Gentiles or eat food prepared by them (Dan 1.8–12; Jdt 10–12; Tob 1.10.11; Add Esth C.26; *Jub.* 22.16).

Jesus himself reportedly adhered to these traditional norms. He eats with those among the Jewish populace who are socially derogated, the "tax collectors and sinners," comparing his behavior to a physician's focus on the sick (Mt 9.10–13; Mk 2.15–18; Lk 5.29–32). Jesus does not, however, eat with Gentiles nor, as a general rule, does he minister to them (see Mt 15.21–28; Mk 7.24–30 for a telling exception). Those around him take for granted that Jesus, a Jew, would not eat the food of Samaritans (Jn 4.9,33). Jesus envisions a time when faithful Gentiles will eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 8.11; cf. Lk 13.29), but the fact that no early Christian figure invoked Jesus' own practice in support of commensality with Gentiles indicates that they had no tradition of his engaging in such behavior.

Acts, which portrays "the breaking of bread" as a paradigmatic activity of Christ-believers (2.42), uses commensality as a motif to describe the process through which the community opened to Gentile participation. Peter, criticized by "circumcised believers" for his decision to "go to uncircumcised men and eat with them," justifies his willingness to convert the centurion Cornelius and his Gentile household on the basis of a vision he experienced (Acts 10–11). (The content of the vision suggests that Peter ought not distinguish between permitted and prohibited meat, but the message Peter takes from it is that he ought not distinguish between Jews and Gentiles.) When the apostles meet to consider whether Gentile Christ-believers must adhere to the Torah in order to join the community, Peter reminds them that God bestowed the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his associates even though they were not Jewish. The apostles rely on this precedent in ruling that Gentiles, so long as they adhere to the conditions listed in the Apostolic Decree, may become full-fledged members of the Christ-believing community (15.1–29).

Acts presents the Jerusalem council as a turning point in the history of the early Christ-believing community because it eases the way for Gentiles to join its ranks. The following chapters recount Paul's outreach efforts toward Gentiles, work that regularly involves shared meals (16.15,34). One incident is especially symbolic of the growing estrangement of Christ-believers from the Jewish community: when the Jews of Corinth spurn Paul's message, he leaves the synagogue and accepts the hospitality of a neighboring Gentile (18.6–7). On a ship lost at sea, Paul takes bread from the ship's provisions, gives thanks, and breaks bread with his fellow 276 passengers (27.33–37). Paul's actions allude to those of Jesus, who fed the multitudes in the same manner (Lk 9.16); unlike Jesus, however, Paul breaks bread with—and spreads the gospel to—Gentiles.

As the movement of Jesus' followers developed into a more institutional form of Christianity, it became necessary to define the identity and proper behavior of true Christians. Polemic against Jewish dietary practices played an important role in this process of self-definition.

The New Testament, however, reflects the degree to which Jesus and his immediate followers conformed to Jewish dietary practices. It highlights, moreover, efforts on the part of the first leaders of the new movement to accommodate both Jewish and Gentile followers within a single community.

IOUDAIOS

Joshua D. Garroway

Ioudaios (f. *Ioudaia*, pl. *Ioudaioi*) is the Greek word for "Jew" or "Judean." Translators usually prefer to render it in English as "Jew" when *Ioudaios* designates anyone adhering to Judaism, specifically the laws, customs, rituals, or beliefs associated with the God of Israel. "Judean" is used when the term refers in a strictly political or geographical sense to one living in or originating from the region of Judea. However, the translation of *Ioudaios* is contentious.

When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in the late fourth century BCE, one of the many lands he obtained was a small province, centered upon Jerusalem, called *Yehud* in Aramaic (Ezra 5.1; 5.8; 7.14). This name stemmed from the kingdom of Judah (Heb *Yehudah*)—the Southern Kingdom under the descendants of King David, who had ruled that land—after the separation from the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the late tenth century BCE, for more than three centuries before its occupation, first by the Babylonians (597–586 BCE), then by the Persians (539 BCE). Greek-speakers such as Clearchus of Soli (ca. 300 BCE) soon began referring to this region as *Ioudaia*, "Judea," and its inhabitants as *Ioudaioi*, "Judeans." This correspondence between the name of a region and its resident "people" (Gk *ethnos*) was common in Greek: Athenians lived in Athens, Egyptians in Egypt, and so, Judeans in Judea. Such ethno-geographic labels were maintained even when one resided abroad. People in Alexandria, for example, who were descended from *Ioudaioi* and lived according to their laws and customs, would be known as *Ioudaioi* even if their families had lived in Alexandria for generations. *Ioudaios* was rarely, if ever, a preferred self-designation. Among themselves *Ioudaioi* favored the older terms, known from the Tanakh: Israel, Israelites (*huioi Israel*, "sons of Israel" in LXX), or Hebrews (*Hebraioi*).

As with any term of identity, dispute and/or confusion at times emerged in antiquity over who properly should be called a *Ioudaios*. The problems began in the second century BCE, when an important development complicated the definition of the term *Ioudaios*. When the Hasmonean kings expanded Judean hegemony by conquering regions to the north and south of Judea—e.g., Samaria, Galilee, and Idumea—they imposed their laws on the native populations. As a result, many who previously had no ethnic or geographic connection to Judea became *Ioudaioi*, inasmuch as they resided on lands controlled by Judea and obeyed its laws. Yet, opinions varied regarding the extent to which one actually became a *Ioudaios* through such incorporation.

The Idumeans to the south provide a good example. They were conquered in 125 BCE by the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus, who allowed them to stay on their land provided they adopted the laws of the *Ioudaioi*. According to the first-century CE historian Josephus (*Ant.* 13.257–58), those who did so became *Ioudaioi*. In contrast, a contemporary historian named Ptolemy (Ammonius, *De Adfinium Vocabulorum Differentia*, no. 243) stated that even though the Idumeans came to be called *Ioudaioi* once they submitted to the new way of life, they were nevertheless different from *Ioudaioi* because originally they constituted a separate ethnic group. This is one reason why Herod the Great, a descendant of Idumeans, faced objections to the legitimacy of his kingship over the *Ioudaioi*. Josephus (*Ant.* 14.403) reports that one of Herod's early rivals disputed his right to rule because, being an Idumean, he was only a *hemiioudaios*, a half- or partial-*Ioudaios*. Political incorporation of outsiders during the reign of the Hasmoneans thus broadened and complicated the parameters of the term *Ioudaios*.

A second important development was the emergence of conversion. While a process of conversion may be suggested by the Hebrew *mityahadim* in Esther 8.17 (fourth- or third-century BCE), it had become a well-attested practice by the first century BCE. The beliefs and way of life of the *Ioudaios* appeared attractive to many Gentiles. Some expressed their affection through benefactions to communities of *Ioudaioi*; others adopted certain of their rituals or beliefs; still others became proselytes, which meant confessing allegiance to the God of Israel, supporting God's Temple in Jerusalem, participating in a local synagogue, and living in accordance with the ancestral laws and customs of the *Ioudaioi*. Yet, it remains unclear to what extent proselytes became full-fledged *Ioudaioi* as a result of their conversion. The later rabbinic