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# Jewish and Historical Foundations for Post-Holocaust Messianic Soteriology

## Introduction

Soteriology, literally “the study of salvation” deals within the corpus of Christian systematic theology with the work of the triune God in bringing creation, and especially humans, to enjoy the divine purpose for existence. More specifically, “objective” soteriology speaks of the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ in relation to human salvation. In addition, “subjective” soteriology (the work of the Spirit in the application of Christ’s salvation) deals with the process whereby individuals are brought to God’s saving goals. Topics generally covered include election, calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, conversion, justification, sanctification and glorification.<sup>1</sup> According to another definition Soteriology includes the purpose or plan of God in reference to the salvation of man; the person and work of the Redeemer; the application of the redemption of Christ to the people of God, in their regeneration, justification, and sanctification; and the means of grace.<sup>2</sup>

If somebody calls himself a “Messianic Jews,” a “Hebrew Christian” or something similar to that it immediately means certain responsibility of identification with the Jewish people. If we talk about “messianic” theology we automatically presuppose that this theology is related to the Jewish people.

Theology has been always done in cultural, historic and religious context that to certain degree determines the expression of the idea found in the Bible. Additionally, almost nobody among European theologians today would deny that God is working in history and culture. Therefore Messianic Theology in general and the Messianic Soteriology in particular, while being based on the Bible, cannot be developed without considering the modern Jewish context we are living in. It cannot be done just in a traditional “Christian” or even “biblical” way without considering the Jewish worldview. Especially it is true in regard of Soteriology that has to be necessary communicated with those who do not believe in Yeshua even more urgent than with those who believe in Him.

Most of the Jewish believers and theologians in Europe (and in other countries) represent to larger or smaller degree a Christian denomination/s they came out from or sympathise to. Therefore, the messianic theological discussion concerning soteriology will automatically represent more or less the discussion between different Christian views. Among Christian theologians such discussions are having place since almost the beginning of Christianity and described in many books and journals. The study of backgrounds for soteriology from particularly modern Jewish history and religious/philosophical ideas has been usually not included in Christian theological discussions. These backgrounds, however, play a very significant role in formulating of our relevant **Messianic Jewish** theology and in communication of our theological ideas to our Jewish people.<sup>3</sup> Therefore this study is

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 108.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge and Edward N. Gross, *Systematic Theology*, Abridged ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 1997), 1:32.

<sup>3</sup> Overall, our message must have authentic Jewish context. It must have continuity with Jewish culture. It must affirm and confirm God’s special covenant with Israel, have meaning for the Jewish community, communicate a clear vision of the calling of the nation of Israel, have currency and compassion. It must challenge our people. It must also amaze and astound and give our people a vision for their prophetic destiny. Rachel Wolf, “What Is Our Message?,” in *Borough Park Symposium* (New York: 2007), 13.

attempting to bridge the gap to some extent in giving some Jewish backgrounds that could be foundational in making biblically based and cultural-historically relevant Messianic Soteriology in post-Holocaust Europe

In doing that, we will leave the discussion of the messianship of Jesus and its apologetic out of this study due to the different emphasis of this paper and the abundance of the existing messianic apologetic resources.

### **Reaction to the Holocaust**

In Jewish mind the Holocaust as nothing else divided the history of the Jewish people in two phases – pre-Holocaust and post-Holocaust. This tragic event changed forever the Jewish philosophy and worldview. The major tendencies in understanding of the Holocaust among the Jewish thinkers were (1) “God is dead” (e.g. Rabbi Richard Rubinstein)<sup>4</sup> and (2) creation of the state of Israel.

With the humiliation and tragedies comes the sense of abandonment, a diminished hope in the power of God to act on our behalf. For many the Holocaust killed this hope entirely. In formulating the Messianic Soteriology we need to deal with the tragedy and disappointment of the Jewish people, while showing that Yeshua brings hope even to those who are lost and to those who are upset with God.

### **Establishing of the state of Israel**

Establishing of the state of Israel is probably the most important even in the Jewish post-Holocaust history. The longing of the Jewish people to have their country became reality. Millions of the Jewish people immigrated there since 1948. After the state of Israel was created it immediately became the focal point of the Jewish identity. Whatever country the Jewish people live they mostly consider Israel to be “their” country and the place of “refuge” in case it is needed. Security and wellbeing of Israel is essential desire of the Jewish people worldwide. It is seen for example in the prayer for Israel in the Jewish liturgy and praying toward Jerusalem in case of religious Jews and in the careful following Israel in news by secular Jews.

Israel is also the center of all the attention to the Jewish people. Israel and the Jews are bound together. Even anti-Semitism turned to be intermingled with “anti-Israelism.” Every significant event in Israel has its implications and consequences for the Jews worldwide and determines to certain degree wellbeing of the Jews in Diaspora.

Therefore in articulating our Messianic Soteriology we need to include modern Israel as an evidence of God’s faithful dealing with the Jewish people and a step in the preparation for the Messiah’s arrival.

### **Anti-Semitism**

The rising Anti-Semitic and Anti-Israeli tendencies and sentiments even in the “western” countries and particularly in Europe over the last decades have highlighted the Jewish people’s isolation and strengthen their “victim-feeling” developed over their entire history.

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Feld, in exploring the faith consequences of the Holocaust, says: “We are past waiting for intervention from outside, for a glorious end-time that will transform existence, Our disappointment will no longer bear such a leap of faith, If the God we wanted so much did not appear when our need was so desperate, what use would that God be to us now? ... The Messiah was buried at Auschwitz.” Edward Feld, *The Spirit of Renewal: Finding Faith after the Holocaust* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1994), 138, 139.

The Jewish people feel very strongly that there is no certainty that what happened in Nazi Germany will not be repeated. As result, Jewish survival achieved a deep, new significance. Jews concluded that survival had become God's command for the Jewish people, and they must make every effort to ensure it.

Thus Messianic Soteriology has to include survival of the Jewish people.

### **Assimilation**

Jews insisted on being and remaining Jewish, and repeated a familiar statement more frequently: "I was born a Jew, and I will die a Jew." This attitude resulted in Jewish people opposing anything that even seemed to threaten their survival and identity. In recent times, unfortunately, the Jews' worst enemy has been their own apathy about their spiritual heritage.<sup>5</sup> Assimilation, attempts to be like everybody else, in Europe is often the reaction to anti-Semitism and the danger of being Jewish in some European contexts.<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, concerned Jews intensified the attack on assimilation and the factors contributing to it. In the light of history, a Jewish person simply cannot consider as an option anything which even remotely contributes to the breakdown of Judaism.

In this context Messianic Soteriology should clearly mention the important role of the Jewish people in the divine plan of salvation of the world.

### **Relationship between Jews and the Church**

Another realm of history out of which Jewish antagonism to Yeshua the Messiah arises is historical relationship between the church and the synagogue.

Unfortunately, much of the persecutions of the Jewish people have taken place in Jesus' name. Strong anti-Jewish sentiment has persisted in "Christian" circles even till now.<sup>7</sup>

It is not surprising that the Jewish response was to assume that Christians are enemies of the Jews who as result have strongly distant themselves from Christianity.<sup>8</sup> Thus much of Jewish theology portrays the Jews as God's people and takes no account of the Church at all.

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<sup>5</sup> The integration of the Jews in the modern nation state and culture that was achieved despite persistent opposition led to a profound restructuring of Jewish life, both organizationally and culturally. The Jews were no longer under the obligatory rule of the rabbis and the Torah as they were in medieval times. In acquiring the political identity and culture of the "non-Jewish," secular society in which they lived, the Jews tended to lose much of their own distinctive culture, e.g., knowledge of Hebrew and the sacred texts of the tradition. Moreover, for many, the nation of Israel's covenantal relationship to God as a Chosen People—presently in exile but piously awaiting God's messiah and restoration to the Promised Land—was no longer self-evident and unambiguous. Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Judaism, Philosophy and Theology of, in Modern Times in Europe," in *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2:736.

<sup>6</sup> The problem is not just in the quality of Jewish life but the actual decrease in numbers of Jews across the world. The problem is the assimilation – the process by which Jews lose their distinctive Jewish identity through intermarriage with Gentiles and their neglect of their religious observance. Statistics show that out of official 14 million Jews worldwide, less than one-fourth attend synagogue once a week, and forty percent are relatively disengaged from Jewish life. Patrice Fischer, "The Problem of Assimilation in America," in *The Enduring Paradox: Exploratory Essays in Messianic Judaism*, ed. John Fischer (Baltimore, MD: Lederer/Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2000), 125.

<sup>7</sup> Although the situation has changed after the Holocaust and Christianity in some European countries (e.g. Germany, Austria) became more sensitive toward the Jewish people, the presence of anti-Jewish sentiment is still evident there.

<sup>8</sup> Such Jewish attitude goes even to extremes. E.g., since Hitler came from a "Christian" country, which he then used as the instrument for his purposes, his program is viewed by Jews in connection with Christianities relations to Judaism.

Although we can see growing interest to Jewish Jesus among some Jewish scholars,<sup>9</sup> the best common Jewish attitude toward Jesus is that Jesus can be good for Gentiles but not for the Jewish people.<sup>10</sup> This idea reaches its pinnacle in Two-Covenant Theology emphasizing that Jews are automatically already with the Father through the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>11</sup> Messianic Soteriology is to respond by elevating Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the “King of the Jews.”

## European Political Background

### Liberalism

Liberalism with liberty and equal rights as the core values has been always attractive to the Jewish people in Europe and the rest of the “western” world, who historically suffered much of oppression and discrimination as the Jews.<sup>12</sup> The fundamental elements of contemporary European society have liberal roots and most of the Jews in Europe feel good about it.

### Democracy

Similarly to Liberalism Jewish people have been historically welcoming democracy as the means for their proper and equal place in the society.<sup>13</sup> Democracy is granting the Jewish people the rights that they were missing for the most time of being in the dispersion. Nevertheless, while enjoying positive political outcomes and acknowledging the biblical values such as equality and freedom, most of the conservative Jewish religious leaders recognise incompatibility of democratic political system with the Bible.

### Totalitarianism

Many of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe (particularly so-called “Russian Jews”) have experienced and grew up in the totalitarian political system of the Soviet Union and other countries of the “Soviet Block.”<sup>14</sup> Most of them did not like that system and suffered of the Anti-Semitism that was an essential component of that system’s ideology and practice. At the same time, from their childhood they have deeply imbedded this worldview and can, with some exceptions, barely think differently. By the Russian Jews it is also supported by the

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<sup>9</sup> We can also see growing of the Jewish interest in Jesus. One example comes from academic circles. Important Jewish scholars such as David Flusser and Pinchas Lapide have spoken and written very positively about Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> The Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Ben-Maimon, or “Maimonides”, 1135-1204) and his followers concluded that Jesus and Mohammed had brought many Gentiles to a true though imperfect faith in the God of Israel.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) developed this into Two-Covenant Theology, which says that Christians are saved and come to the Father (John 14:6) through Jesus and his New Covenant, but Jews do not need him or it because they are already with the Farther through the Mosaic Covenant. Some Christian theologians, e.g. Reinhold Niebuhr and Rosemary Reuther, in an attempt to honor Jewish sensibilities, especially since the Holocaust, have bought into Two-Covenant Theology and use it as an excuse not to evangelize Jews. David Stern, "The People of God, the Promises of God and the Land of Israel," in *The Enduring Paradox: Exploratory Essays in Messianic Judaism*, ed. John Fischer (Baltimore, MD: Lederer/Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2000), 80.

<sup>12</sup> Liberalistic tendencies were always welcomed by the Jewish people, who often were becoming leaders of liberalistic movements.

<sup>13</sup> Democracy is a political form of government in which governing power is derived from the people. The term comes from the Greek: δημοκρατία – (*dēmokratía*) "rule of the people." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_-\\_cite\\_note-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_-_cite_note-1) Although there is no specific, universally accepted definition of 'democracy', equality and freedom have been identified as important characteristics of democracy since ancient times. These principles are reflected in all citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to power.

<sup>14</sup> One of the first to use the term "Totalitarianism" in the English language was the Austrian writer Franz Borkenau in his 1938 book *The Communist International*, in which he commented that it more united the Soviet and German dictatorships than divided them. Although there also some other words that are sometimes used for the meant political systems, the political scientists Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski were primarily responsible for expanding the usage of the term in university social science and professional research, reformulating it as a paradigm for the communist Soviet Union as well as fascist regimes.

“Russian” tendency of longing for a “good Tsar.” Therefore, this category of the Jewish people is more open for a theocratic model of the society.

### **Socialism/Communism**

Due to the same reasons as for liberalism and democracy, namely longing for equal and free place in the society, socialism (together with its “higher” form – communism) has been also attractive to the Jewish people, promising an access to the fruits of common labour for the economically segregated Jews.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to see many Jewish names among leaders and pioneers of developing and implementing of these theories. It is also an interesting evidence of the Jewish longing for a community lifestyle, having its roots in the Bible and in the creation of the Jewish nation as one people.

Considering Jewish response to the European political systems after the Holocaust, Messianic Soteriology should include description of the Messiah’s rule: the good and just Ruler in the community of equal rights and justice.

### **European Religious and Confessional Pluralism**

Jewish religious and philosophical thought became very pluralistic in the last two centuries and especially after the Holocaust. The slow but impressive reconstruction of European Jewry in the wake of the Shoah has given rise to a renewal of Jewish religious thought that made Judaism subject to constant debate, discussion, critical review, interpretation, commentary, in which divergent views are respected and encouraged.<sup>16</sup> This conception of Judaism as a dynamic, plurality of voices that harmonize only in their commitment to making sense of the spiritual vocation of Israel in the modern world well summarizes the legacy of modern religious Jewish thought.<sup>17</sup> In the European context the main type of Judaism is Reform<sup>18</sup> and the pluralism of opinions is stronger than somewhere else.

To present a soteriology that claims to be relevant for everybody is a big challenge. The common ground is very important for this task. Therefore, Messianic Soteriology has to emphasize that exactly Yeshua the Messiah makes the sense of the spiritual vocation of Israel.

### **Instability of the World**

Energy and food shortages, environmental pollution, political corruption, increased crime, moral decay, international terrorism, world tensions, tensions in the Middle east, increased Arab terrorism, the threat against Israel’s national existence, Zionism equated with racism, rising Anti-Semitism, etc. have been alarming the Jewish people worldwide in the time after

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<sup>15</sup> Socialism is an economic and political theory advocating public or common ownership and cooperative management of the means of production and allocation of resources.

<sup>16</sup> The Lithuanian born Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995) in France was one of the most important scholars to emphasize it.

<sup>17</sup> Mendes-Flohr, 2:755.

<sup>18</sup> Usually, there are three major types of Judaism mentioned: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. But even each of these three groups can be divided in a number of different religious and philosophical streams. Reform Judaism, called Liberal or Progressive Judaism in many countries, defines Judaism as a religion rather than as a race or culture, rejects most of the ritual and ceremonial laws of the Torah while observing moral laws, and emphasizes the ethical call of the Prophets. Reform Judaism has developed an egalitarian prayer service in the vernacular (along with Hebrew in many cases) and emphasizes personal connection to Jewish tradition. Although sometimes it is called as “Orthodox,” “Conservative” or something similar by those belonging to these congregations, it is not changing the fact that according to their worldview they follow the Reform Judaism.

the Holocaust. However, at the same time, possibly due also to these turbulences, many Jewish people have expressed a growing spiritual hunger, a searching for God.<sup>19</sup> Messianic Soteriology can respond to these needs by stating that through the Messiah God can be found, granting safety and spiritual fullness.

### **Postmodern world**

We live in a postmodern world and postmodernism<sup>20</sup> is fuelled by: authenticity, acceptance, love, emotional health, pragmatism (whatever works), novelty (new is better than true), feeling/experiencing is believing, the journey is better than destination.<sup>21</sup> Such views of history do not have purpose, or possible end result.

In these circumstances Messianic Soteriology need to present the Bible as the prophetic Word of God that shows purpose in the movement of history (particularly in regard of the Jewish people) with an end result which God has definitely in mind.

### **Jewish Theological Views**

The preeminent task assumed by modern Jewish religious thought has been to re-articulate and even radically re-evaluate the theological presuppositions of Judaism in the light of the modern, secular experience.

For the majority of contemporary Jewish theologians the central theme is the defence of traditional theism. This is the doctrine of God as both transcendent and immanent in the universe, involved in all its processes, but also beyond the universe.<sup>22</sup>

Many Jewish theologians have followed Kant and Protestant theologians in declaring that the truth of God's existence cannot be determined by rational proofs, as in medieval theology, but that it is to be accepted through mystical intuition, tradition, or the existentialist "leap of faith." However, some important Jewish scholars elevated obeying God's will revealed in the Torah, while treating religious ecstasy with suspicion.<sup>23</sup>

Some of the prominent Jewish theologians opposed to liberal views in emphasizing man's evil nature and his need for forgiveness and mercy of God.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. Velvel Greene, a Jewish scientist, reflected this tendency: "The Jewish nature and soul needs to know God; it must be told about God. Our souls are looking for God and trying to know God, and no one has told them." John Fischer, "Why Messianic Judaism?," in *The Enduring Paradox: Exploratory Essays in Messianic Judaism*, ed. John Fischer (Baltimore, MD: Lederer/Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2000), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Postmodernism is a movement away from the viewpoint of modernism. More specifically it is a tendency in contemporary culture characterized by the problematization of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative or meta-narrative. It involves the belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place.

<sup>21</sup> Wolf, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Theism involves the rejection of the following doctrines as untrue: deism – God is only wholly immanent; polytheism – there are many gods; dualism – there are two gods, one good, the other evil; atheism – there is no God; and agnosticism – man by his nature cannot know whether or not there is a God.

<sup>23</sup> J. B. Soloveitchik, a Jewish theologian that was a mentor of more than a generation of Orthodox rabbis, was responsible for defending the sober, painstaking, unemotional approach typical of halakhic Judaism. The halakhic man sees his greatest good and highest privilege in obeying God's will as it is revealed in Jewish law. Religious ecstasy is viewed with a degree of suspicion and as supererogatory.

<sup>24</sup> A. J. Heschel, one of the prominent Jewish theologians with a worldwide influence is opposed to that liberal theology which avows that man is capable of raising himself spiritually by his own unaided efforts. He roundly declares that an overoptimistic view of man's potentialities is thoroughly unbiblical. The nature of man's heart is evil from his youth. Even the saintliest of men is tainted by sin and God alone gives man the power to survive in the struggle. Heschel also stresses the sense of wonder as an essential ingredient in religious life.

Heir to the biblical image of knowledge, modern Jewish thought seeks to come to terms with modern conceptions of truth and meaning.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, of course, it is basically similar to modern religious thought in general.<sup>26</sup> However, it has a certain specific; namely, modern Jewish thought was often guided by an apologetic motive.<sup>27</sup>

Modern Jewish thought in Europe was thus charged with the task not only of explaining Judaism to non-Jews and to Jews estranged from the sources of their tradition, but also with re-thinking some of the fundamental concepts of the tradition that bear on the nature of the Jews as a people: covenant, election, exile (diaspora), the messiah, and the promise of national redemption—in general, the meaning of Jewish community, history, and destiny. These questions gained a unique urgency in the mid-twentieth century with the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>28</sup> Thus Messianic Soteriology is destined to respond in appropriate degree on these questions, while keeping the Jewish apologetic motive.

### **Continuous Presence of the Messianic Expectations**

The messianic expectations, while in different forms and expressions, always remain present in the Jewish thought. It is true not just for the Rabbinic but for also the general Jewish mindset. The drastic nature of our times has caused some Jewish people to hope for a supernatural solution. One Rabbi expressed it in this way: “History is rushing to a close. God must intervene as He did in the time of Moses. This is the time when Messiah will come. He might even come tomorrow.”<sup>29</sup> Those participating regularly or occasionally in Synagogue prayers or using Siddur are encountered with the prayers including waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel and the Jewish people. For those secular Jews, who are not familiar with the Jewish liturgy and prayers, the messianic idea is taking a form of expectation of release from suffering and of personal “experience of God” (whatever they understand by this word). Messianic hopes and longings have become intervened with a desire for a more personal experience of God and a search for answers to the questions life possess.<sup>30</sup> Evidently, Messianic Soteriology is to emphasize that Yeshua is the expected Messiah, who answers to the mentioned needs, though in His way and in His time.

### **Salvation in Jewish Religious Thought**

#### **General Snapshots of Rabbinic Views**

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<sup>25</sup> Asserting the epistemological preeminence of reason and autonomous judgment and the dignity of a this-worldly happiness, the modern image of knowledge is said to be inherently antagonistic to the biblical image of knowledge, grounded as it is in the concepts of revealed truth, sacred scriptures, and an eschatological vision of human destiny. Mendes-Flohr, 2:735.

<sup>26</sup> There are, however, specifics of the Jewish experience in modern Europe that determine the agenda and peculiar inflections of modern Jewish thought. It should, therefore, be recalled that Jews first encountered the modern world during the protracted struggle in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe to attain political emancipation. This struggle was not merely a legal process but engaged Europe in an intense and wide-ranging debate assessing Judaism’s eligibility to participate in the modern world. In the course of this two century-long debate Jews became, to say the least, exceedingly sensitive to the prevailing conceptions of Judaism in European culture.

<sup>27</sup> Judaism’s defensive posture was also prompted by the rise of modern, political and racial anti-Semitism that, to the dismay of many, was not confined to the mob but gained vocal support from more than a few intellectuals.

<sup>28</sup> Mendes-Flohr, 2:736.

<sup>29</sup> Fischer, "Why Messianic Judaism?," 2.

<sup>30</sup> One Rabbi described this phenomenon: “We are leaving in an age where people want to touch, to approach and to feel God.”Ibid.

Due to the abundance of available studies of Jewish religious take of salvation in Talmud and other Rabbinic sources (sort of “Rabbinic soteriology”) and the space limitations of this study we are going to take some basic snapshots that emphasize the major highlights of the “soteriology” of the religious Jews.

According to the common Jewish view God’s gracious love is the only means for salvation, or participation in the world to come,<sup>31</sup> while no certainty or assurance of a settled and secure relationship with God can usually be found in Jewish religious sources.<sup>32</sup>

“Salvation” is commonly understood in Jewish thought as primarily the “national” one and not as the “individual.” To some Jewish attributes of the “salvation” belong:

- Re-gathering of the Jewish people in Israel
- repentance and renewal of the Jewish people as the whole
- Messiah’s reign in the midst of the Jewish people
- Jewish people living righteously according to the Torah
- Peace for the Jewish people and for the entire world
- Gentiles worship the God of Israel and the Messiah

It is important to mention here that “Salvation” in the Jewish thought is not “find-heaven-avoid-hell”-message. The same is the case with the modern western culture.

### **Liturgy as the “Folk’s Doctrine”**

Liturgy determines the worldview and mindset of those who pray, being, therefore, very important for consideration. Even many non-clergy Jewish people have some encounter with the Jewish prayers that could be considered to some extent as Jewish “folk’s doctrine.”<sup>33</sup>

Now we are going to take some basic snapshots from main Jewish prayers as the “folk’s doctrine” sources.

Mourner’s *Kaddish*, the prayer that is essential for a Jewish man, expresses hope in and longing for the future redemption and even hope in resurrection of the dead.<sup>34</sup>

*Lekhah Dodi*, a popular Hebrew-language Jewish liturgical song recited Friday at dusk, usually at sundown, in synagogue to welcome *Shabbat* prior to the *Maariv* (evening services), connects hope with coming of the Messiah and the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup>

*Amidah*, the main Jewish prayer, includes much of Jewish soteriological view, emphasizing God’s grace and promise of the Messiah, God’s return to Zion, resurrection of the dead, and restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, the Temple, peace, abundance and true worship.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Orthodox scholar Lapide: “It is evident to all Masters of the Talmud that salvation, or participation in the coming world, as it is called in Hebrew, can be attained only through God’s gracious love.” Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul, Rabbi and Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 39.

<sup>32</sup> A weeping Yohanan ben Zakkai could say on his deathbed: “Moreover, two roads lie before me, the road to Gan Eden (Paradise) and the road to Gehinnom (Hell), and I do not know on which road I am to be taken – shall I not weep?” (Berachot 28b).

<sup>33</sup> Somebody can say that many Jews participating in the prayers without understanding what meant there. Although it is true in many cases the major elements are still communicated in one way or another through Rabbis or other Jewish sources.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. “May He establish His kingdom during your lifetime and during your days and during the lifetimes of all the House of Israel, speedily and very soon! ... May there be abundant peace from heaven for us and for all His people Israel. ... May He who makes peace in His high places grant peace for us and for all Israel.”

<sup>35</sup> Cf. “Shake yourself free, rise from the dust. Dress in your garments of splendour, my people. By the hand of Jesse’s son, of Bethlehem, Redemption draws near to my soul. ... Rouse yourselves! Rouse yourselves! Your light is coming, rise up and shine. Awaken! ... All my afflicted people will find shelter within you and the city shall be rebuilt on her hill. ... Your despoilers will become spoiled, Far away shall be any who would devour you, Your God will rejoice in you, as a groom rejoices in a bride. ... To your left and your right you will burst forth, And God will revere you by the hand of a child of Perez, We will rejoice and sing happily.”

These are just some examples of the concepts that are going throughout the entire Jewish liturgy.<sup>37</sup>

All the mentioned concepts from the Rabbinic and liturgical soteriological thought, though not being absolutely exclusive, represent the major highlights of the Jewish religious take of soteriology today. It is an imperative to deal with them in making contemporary Messianic Soteriology in post-Holocaust Europe.

## Conclusion

This study has included analysis of some contemporary Jewish historical, political, theological, and religious backgrounds that seem to be foundational in making biblically based and cultural-historically relevant Messianic Soteriology in post-Holocaust Europe. It also gives some general suggestions of applying these backgrounds in the theological task we are challenged with. The summary of these suggestions resulting from this study is that for the articulating Messianic Soteriology we will need: (1) to deal with the tragedy and disappointment of the Jewish people, while showing that Yeshua brings hope even to those who are lost and to those who are upset with God; (2) to include modern Israel as an evidence of God's faithfulness towards the Jewish people and a step in the preparation for the Messiah's arrival; (3) to include survival of the Jewish people; (4) to clearly mention the important role of the Jewish people in the divine plan of salvation of the world; (5) to elevate Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the "King of the Jews;" (6) to include description of the Messiah's rule: the good and just Ruler in the community of equal rights and justice; (7) to emphasize that exactly Yeshua the Messiah makes the sense of the spiritual vocation of Israel; (8) to state that through the Messiah God can be found, granting safety and spiritual fullness; (9) to present the Bible as the prophetic Word of God that shows purpose in the movement of history (particularly in regard of the Jewish people) with an end result which God has definitely in mind; (10) to respond in appropriate degree on questions of covenant, election, exile, the meaning of Jewish community, history, and destiny, while keeping the Jewish apologetic motive; (11) to emphasize that Yeshua is the expected Messiah, who meets Jewish expectations, though in His way and in His time; (12) to emphasize that God's gracious love is the only means for salvation; (13) to mention "national" aspect of salvation, while considering its Jewish attributes; (14) to express longing for the future redemption and for the

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. In part called "Patriarchs" – "Who (God) ... brings a Redeemer to their children's children, for His name's sake, with love."

In part called "God's might" – "the Resuscitator of the dead are You, able to save." "He ... resuscitates the dead with abundant mercy." "O King who causes death and restores life and makes salvation sprout." "And You are faithful to resuscitate the dead."

In part called "Holiness of God's name" – "from Your place, our King, You will appear and reign over us, for we await You."

In part called "Holiness of the day" – "The people that sanctifies Shabbat – they will all be satisfied and delighted from your goodness." "Our God ... satisfy us from your goodness and gladden us with Your salvation, and purify our hearts to serve You sincerely. ... Grant us Your holy Sabbath as a heritage."

In part called "Temple Services" – "may our eyes behold Your return to Zion in compassion. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who restores His presence to Zion."

In Conclusion – "May it be Your will ... that the Holy Temple be rebuild, speedily in our days. Grant us our share in Your Torah, and may we serve You there with reverence ... Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to HaShem ..."

<sup>37</sup> Among others the necessity of the divine grace and mercy is continuously emphasised. E.g. in *Shacharit* – "Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before you, but because of you abundant mercies." *Minchah* – "Our Father, our King, be gracious to us and answer us, for we have no good works of our own; deal with us in graciousness and loving kindness, and save us." *Maariv* – Ps 51, which clearly express our need to rely on God, not on ourselves, because we are sinners.

resurrection of the dead; (15) to deal with the God's return to Zion, resurrection of the dead, and restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, the Temple, peace, abundance and true worship. The study was not aiming to give the end product of Messianic Soteriology but to hopefully lay some essential foundation for the further process.