

Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel	Box	Folder
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A Jewish View of Jesus, 1917.

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American Jewish Archives 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 (513) 487-3000 AmericanJewishArchives.org Jan. 26, 1917

I. Introduction: The motive which prompts these comparative studies of religions is not intolerance nor love of polemics, hor disputations. (Margaret - 200 1) It is an honest seeking after the truth. Rabbis have said

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, and the prophet of Nazareth is quoted as saying "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". Our object is discover the things which bear the seal of God - truth. Our aim is to extend the spiritual domains of man's freedom by destroying the confining walls of error.

2) And other motive which prompts these ledtures is the wish to define clearly our attitude to the great religions about us. Men are approaching one another more closely today, in social and spiritual intercourse. This intercourse brings about a free exchange of views XXXXXX concerning the vital things of life. And religion, being of the most vital, is frequently the subject of such exchanges of opinions. It behooves the Jewish layman to be well posted and informed.

3) And the third motive is this: that we are firmly convinced that he who knows hut one religion knows none. Religion is man's attempt to interpret the great mysteries of life and to bring himself into relation with them. Interpretations vary and he who knows his interpretation only and consciously ignores the many others is stultifying his mental and spiritual growth. No one can be a scientist who deliberately refuses to take cognizance of other people's theories or discoveries. No one can be a philosopher who knows but his own little philosophical system. So with religion. All religions have a nucleus, a kernal of truth, the seeking after God and truth. The ways may differ, their methods may vary, but we should know them.

II. Introduction B: There was a time when a study such as ours - "The

Jewish view of Jesus" would not have been discussed in a Jewish pulpit. There are still today sections of Jewry where such a discussion would not be countenanced. And it isn't mere bisotry and narrow-mindedness which accounts for this attitude on the part of many of our people. Let us face the facts. Jesus was, in the eyes of Jewry and of the world, the founder of Christianity and Christianity meant for the Jew the agency which oppressed and persecuted him for 16 centuries. Christianity spelt for the Jew not the message of "love your enemies", "forgive them for they know not what they do", and similar noble teachings of the gentle prophet of Nazareth, but hatred and intolerance, exiles and mob riots. Every festival commemorating the alleged birth and resurrection of the founder of Christianity was the signal for anti-Jewish demonstrations. then Is it any wonder that the name Jesus became anathema? Times have changed. Men have learnt Mox that devotion to one faith does not entail hatred of another. We have also learnt that the errors and sins of Christianity cannot rightly be laid at the door of its founder who least of all men would countenance them. The Jew today can without compunction and without passion study the life and teachings of Jesus as he would study the life and teachings of any other teacher of his people, of any other Jew.

III. In our study of the Jewish view of Jesus we shall divide the subject into two parts. 1) The Jewish view of the life of Jesus which view we share in common with all advanced students of history and higher the Biblical critics, which view is scientific view and 2) The Jewish view of the teachings of Jesus which is more subjective and interpretive.

IV. The Jewish view of the life of Jesus.

A. Difficulty of subject: It is necessary for us, in the first place, to think in terms of the East. Quote p.56 f Delitzch. Every fact is distorted, swathed in myth, exaggerated and miracle@ized.

B. Scarcity and unreliability of documents. 1) Not one historian mentions his name. Josephus does not. One passage in Josephus which is spurious and interpolative. 2) Talmud does not preserve historical data of life and death of Jesus. About 20 references which are indistinct echoes of N. T. traditions. Most references are from 3 and 4 centuries and from Babylonian sources. 3) Paul who is earliest of N.T. writers never knew Jesus and knew lttle of his life. 4) Modern criticism has established the fact that the four gospels are not the works of the men whose mame they bear. They are not the statements of eye-witnesses. They are collections of fragments which received their present shape, at the earliest, during the opening years of the 2 century. At least two generations intervened between those who wrote down the events and those who could have been eye-witnesses to them. 5) Ignorance which gospels betray with regards to institutions and parties during national (?) life of Jewish people gives one the impression that they are the products of the latter half of the 2 century. 6) So that for a century and over the story of Jesus passed orally from mouth to mouth gaining in supernaturalism and legendary character as it went. Embellished, overlaid with the miraculous, many accounts floated about in primitive church until these four were canonized. 7) They were written by men who were not historians but whose aim was principally to prove that Jesus was the Messiah and Saviour of the World.

V. With so little authoritative evidence at our disposal, we must proceed carefully, picking the grains of truth from the chaff of legend. What can we say with any degree of certainty concerning the birth life, crucifizion and the alleged resurrection and divinity of Jesus.
VI. Birth. Miaculous concerning - 1) Jesus and Mary never make mention of it. 2) Paul does not. Galatians and Romans - "made of the seed of

David according to the flesh". 3) Mark earliest of 4 gospels and biographer, does not. MENXIXN 4) John (c.120) does not but speaks of him as son of Joseph. 5) Early church fathers, Clement of Rome, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Ignatius of Antioch (end 1 cent.) did nor know it. 6) Up to the middle of XN 2 century not a single Christian writer with the exception of Matthew and Luke make mention of it. But here two discoveries of old manuscripts have proven that these references are interpolation In 1892 Sinaitic mss. which is the Syriac translation of Matthew and which is 200 years older than the Greek, was discovered and Matthew 1:16 reads in it "Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat Jesus". The Greek, a later product, reads "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ". 7) What gave rise to the idea of virgin birth of Jesus? When Jesus came to be regarded as the Messiah, his followers, espcially those who lived 100 years after him, came to find predictions &R in the O.T. &R concerning his coming. The tendency to allegorize the Scriptures was rampant. Texts were distorted and taken out of their contexts to serve their immediate purpose. Aim to find in life of Jesus fulfillment of O.T. prophesies. There is a prophecy in Isaiah 7.14,16. Ahaz King of Judah is hard pressed by Aram and Israel. Isaiah prophecies that Aram and Israel will soon be laid waste and in sign of that he says that a woman who was then with child WIII shall be able to name her son Emmanuel - God is with us, since within a very few months deliverance will come. Now Isaiah would not give a sign that will come to pass 700 years later: now the NKX Hebrew of Rebrew see (5 of mss) Isaiah's prophecy is

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The NEW N.T. author depended on Greek translation which had the for translated as virgin. Now is not virgin but woman. is Hebrew for virgin. A Catholic scholar as early as 1778 pointed this out

at risk of his life. Since O.T said a virgin will give birth and to since this passage refers XX Messiah or Jesus, hence Jesus had to be born of a virgin. 8) This is not the only distortion of text. Had I the time I would show XXX where the story of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem originated, where his journey to Egypt, of which all but Matthew are ignorant, originated but suffice it to say that honest critical research forbids us to accept the story of the immaculate birth of Jesus. This is exclusive of the scientific, physiological absurdity of it.

VII. Born in Galilee about 4 B.C., son of humble parents, car-112 - 11 6 4 8 penter by trade. Reared in a Jewish environment. Educated in the lore of iste. his people, filled with & love for his people. Acquainted with KME old prophetic spirit. Reared among poor folks, fishermen. Deeply spiritual man. Became imbued with the ideas and aspirations common in his day. The hope for a Messiah which people were looking for. The Day of the Lord. Jesus hears John the Baptist preach in 29 A.D. The impression is overpowering. Unshorn hair, leather girdle. Announcing coming of Day of the Lord and urging repentance. Jesus is baptized. Identified himself with prophetic movement. When John is arrested Jesus takes up the work. Goes through Galilee preaching the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven and urging men to prepare themselves for it by repenting. (People XXXXXX identified this Kingdom with the re-establishment of the Throne of David and the subjection of all heathen nations to the yoke of Israel.) Heals the sick, gathers disciples around him. Crowds follow him. In these groups of immediate disciples Jesus annunciates his prinsiples of faith and conduct - Sermon on the Mount. Goes to Jerusalem to preach coming of Kingdom of Heaven. Is made to ride into city on two asses. Zech. 9.9 (Kubrew - see p. 6 of mss) Riding upon an ass that is to say

an ass's colt. (Matt. 22)

Enters the Temple and is disgusted with money changers and slaughter. "My house shall be called a house of prayer". Attacked sacrificial system and like Jeremian of old predicted destruction of the Temple. Antagonized Pharisees and Sadducees. Arrested at Gethsemane.

VIII. Trial of Jesus. Illegal according to gospels. Sanhedrin. 1) Court could not convene at night. 2) Could not condemn a person on the same day that his case was taken up. 3) Could not sit in a day before Sabbath or festival. 4) (crossed out) see mss.) 5) In case of blasphemy could not convict unless the utternade was a plain blasphemy 6) Did not have power over life and death. 7) Jews did not use crucifixion as form of execution. There isn't even a word for it in Hebrew. It was abhorrant to them. Four methods of death - by sword, by throttling, by lapidation and by burning.

Jesus was put to death by Pilate in true Roman fashion. The ruling priestly class which was intimate with Pilate denounced him to Pilate as a possible dangerous rebel and he had him executed. In the idea of X Messiah Pilate saw danger.

IX. Resurrection. 2 XX 1) Resurrection story not found in original mss. of Mark. Sinaitic mss XX and two earlier mss. do not have it. (Quote Schmidt, p. 393) 2) Physical science de death. Such a thing would stultify science.

X. Teaching - Jewish. Sermon on the Mount. Jesus a loyal Jew.

 Was not opposed to law. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, of the prophets. I am come not to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled". Matt. 5.1. Matt. 23.3: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do".
 His mission to Jews - "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the

house of Israel". "Go INK not into the way of the Gentiles, and MXXX KNE any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 3) Did not claim that he was Messiah or divine. 1. "Why callest thou me KaX good, there is none good save KaX one, that is God". 2. Taught men to pray to God. 3. Knew of only one way of remission of sins i. e. by penitence and prayer. 4. Forbade disciples to call him Messiah. 5. If he thought he was Messiah it was in human sense. 6. Never claimed to be the physical son of God.

XI. Shortcomings of Jesus. 1) Was unmarried. 2) Without property. Hated wealth. Could not be our guide in complete sense. 3) No practical selp for life. 4) Too musch **XXXXXXXX** engrossed in coming catastrophe to think of social duties, relations, etc.

XII. Was great man, Jew among Jews, one of the galaxy of great spirits of Israel who brought men nearer to God.

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ANNOUNCING

A series of Lectures on "Judaism and Other Faiths," at the Eoff Street Temple, beginning

FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26th, 1917, at 7:45 o'clock.

- Jan. 26 The Jewish View of Jesus.
- Feb. 2 Can Christianity Support Judaism? Judaism and Christianity compared.
- Feb. 9 Judaism and Christian Science. Are they Compatible?

Feb. 16 Judaism and Ethical Culture.

You and your friends are cordially welcome.

Rabbi A. H. SILVER.



"JESUS" 1917 Jan 2050 I. Incharductions: _ The spirit which prompts these comparative studies q religions is not intolerante non polenneal, nor disputations. Oft is an honest seeking after truth. Rabbis have said, 7'27 7 50 10011 SIDN - and the hophet & tagareth is proted as saying: "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" Our object is to discover the things which hear the seal of god - Truth. and airs is to extend the spiritual domains 5 manisfreedom by destroying the confining walls of Error. (2) another motion which prompts there between is the most to define aloge on attracts to the deal religions about define clearly our attitude to the great religions about us. Then are approaching one another more derely to day brenig about a free exchange gviles concerning the i had theings of life. and religions hering of the most vital is prequently the subject of such aichanges of punions. It behoves the Jewish layman to be wall posted + informed. (3) and the third motive is this: - that we are frinky convinced that he who knows but one religion knows none, Religion is mais attempt to interpret the great my teries & life and to king henself into relation with them Juterpretaking vary and he who kums his inter only and concernely requores the many others is stulkipping his mental and spinitual fronth. to me can be a scientist who deliberably refuses to the take coprizance, others peoples' theories a discoveries; no me can be a philosopher who thems but his min' lettle phil system. So with religion. all actigues have a nucleus, a kernel g truth - The seeking after for and Truth - Then way may differ, their methods may vary but we should know them.

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