



(Not So) Hidden Anti-Gospels: Suppressed Talmudic and Medieval Polemics against Jesus

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A. The Nativity Narrative

1. Matthew 1

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel (Isaiah 7, 14)," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

2. Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 104b

<p>[Is Jesus] son of Stada? [He is] son of Pandera!</p> <p>Rav Hisda said, "The husband was Stada and the lover was Pandera."</p> <p>But was not the husband Pappos son of Yehuda and the mother Stada?</p> <p>No, his mother was Miriam the hairdresser and was called Stada.</p> <p>As they say in Pumbedita about her: "She was unfaithful to her husband [סטת דא מבעלה]."</p>	<p>בן סטדא? בן פנדירא הוא! - אמר רב חסדא: בעל - סטדא, בועל - פנדירא. - בעל פפוס בן יהודה הוא! - אלא, אמו סטדא. - אמו מרים מגדלא שער נשיא הוא! - אלא, כדאמרי בפומבדיתא סטת דא מבעלה</p>
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B. Jesus as a disciple of the Sages

1. Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ **After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.** ⁴⁷ **Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

2. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 107b

It should always be [the] left [hand] to push [away], and [the] right [to] bring near. Not like Elisha who pushed Gehazi [away] with both hands, and not like Joshua ben Perachiah who pushed Yeshu, [one of] his students, with both hands...

When King Yannai [=Alexander Janneus, a Hasmonean king who ruled from 103 to 76 BCE] was executing the Rabbis, Simeon ben Shetach was hidden by his sister [and] Rabbi Joshua ben Perachiah¹ went [and] fled to Alexandria of Egypt.. When peace was made, Simeon ben Shetach sent him [the following letter]: "From me, Jerusalem the holy city, to you, Alexandria of Egypt, my sister. My husband dwells amongst you, and I am sitting lonely". [Joshua ben Perachiah] said "I learn from [the letter] that there is peace!"

When [Joshua b. Perehiah returned from Egypt], he and Yeshu] arrived at an inn. [The innkeeper] stood before him with exemplary honor and accorded him great honors. [Joshua] sat and was praising them, [saying]: "How beautiful this inn is!" Yeshu said to him, "My master, her eyes are narrow." [The Aramaic words for "inn" and "innkeeper" were the same] [Joshua] said to him "Wicked one, is this how you conduct yourself?!" He brought out four hundred *shofarot* and excommunicated him.

תנו רבנן: לעולם תהא שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת. לא כאלישע שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידים, +ולא כיהושע בן פרחיא שדחפו לישו הנוצרי בשתי ידיו...

כי הוה שלמא שלח ליה שמעון בן שטח: מיני ירושלים עיר הקדש ליכי אלכסנדריה של מצרים: אחותי, בעלי שרוי בתוכך ואנכי יושבת שוממה. קם אתא ואתרמי ליה ההוא אושפיזא, עבדו ליה יקרא טובא. אמר: כמה יפה אכסניא זו. אמר ליה: רבי, עיניה טרוטות. אמר ליה: רשע! בכך אתה עוסק? אפיק ארבע מאה שיפורי ושמתייה. אתא לקמיה כמה זימנין, אמר ליה: קבלן! - לא הוה קא משגח ביה. יומא חד הוה קא קרי קריאת שמע, אתא לקמיה. סבר לקבולי, אחוי ליה בידיה. הוא סבר: מידחא דחי לי. אזל זקף לבינתא והשתחוה לה. אמר ליה: הדר בך! - אמר ליה: כך מקובלני ממך: כל החוטא ומחטיא את הרבים אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה.

¹ Joshua b. Perachiah, a sage from late 2nd c. BC (hence there is an anachronism in this narrative); according to Mishnah Avot 1.6, he and his colleague Nittai of Arbela were the second of the five pairs [Zugot] of scholars who received and transmitted Jewish tradition.

Every day, [Yeshu] would come before him, but [Joshua] did not accept him.

One day [Joshua] was reciting the *Shema*, [Yeshu] came before him. He intended to welcome him [this time], so he signaled [Yeshu] with his hands [to wait]. [Yeshu] thought he was rejecting him. [Yeshu] went and erected brickwork and worshipped it [as an idol]. [Joshua] said to him "Repent!" [Yeshu] said to him "This I learned from you: Anyone who sins and causes the masses to sin is not given the opportunity to repent!"

C. The sources of Jesus' powers

1. Mark 8:22-26

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

2. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin107b

And the master said: Jesus was a sorcerer who turned the people [away from God and towards idolatry].	ואמר מר: ישו כישף והסית והדיח את ישראל.
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3. Toledot Yeshu [6th c.?)

[Yeshu] withdrew himself to the Temple precincts. Now the express letters of God's ineffable name were written upon the *Foundation Stone* within the Holy of Holies, and anyone who learnt them could do by them whatsoever he wished. Moreover, the nation of Israel used to fear lest perhaps the wicked of Israel should learn them, and thereby destroy the world. So it was that they made two bronze dogs and had them tied at the entrance to the Temple Sanctuary, and anyone who learnt the express letters of the Divine name and then went out of the Sanctuary, when he saw the dogs, would anon forget from his heart that which he had learnt...

Jesus entered the Temple Sanctuary and learnt the letters and made a stipulation over them that he shall not feel hurt at the rending of his flesh, and so wrote them down upon parchment. Then did he rend his thigh, and prepared the parchment for insertion, and replaced the torn skin. When he departed, he forgot them. Yet, when he reached the house, he ripped open his thigh and took out thence the parchment and learnt once again the letters. He then gathered together some young men of Israel, to wit, three-hundred and ten and said unto them: "Ye call me a bastard, but I am the Messiah, and it was concerning me that Isaiah did prophesy and say, 'Behold! A young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel' (Isa. 7:14). Moreover, it was said about me, 'You are my son. This day have I begotten thee' (Ps. 2:7). That is, without my father and mother lying together carnally. Yet, do ye seek your own self-aggrandizement."

They answered him: "If you are the Messiah, show us a sign!" He then replied: "What sign is it that you seek from me?" They brought unto him a lame man who had never yet stood upon his feet whom, when Jesus had seen, spoke over him the express letters and forthwith did he begin to walk...He did resurrect those who had been dead by the express letters of God's Divine name, and the people of Israel were on his account in a state of consternation.

D. The Trial and the Crucifixion

1. Matthew 26

57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. **58** But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. **60** But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally, two came forward **61** and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" **63** But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

64 "You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the

right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”²

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. 66 What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

2. John 18 & 19

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas [the High Priest] into Pilate’s headquarters: and it was early...

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation do you bring against this man?

30 They answered and said unto him: If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying what death he should die.

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Are you the King of the Jews?

34 Jesus answered him, Are you saying this on your own, or did others say it of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me: what have you done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight to keep me from being delivered to the Jews: but my kingdom not of this world.

37 Pilate said unto him, Are you a king then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this cause, I came into the world, so that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

38 Pilate said unto him, What is truth? And when he had said

² See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.

this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, I find in him no fault at all.

39 But you have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: is it your desire that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

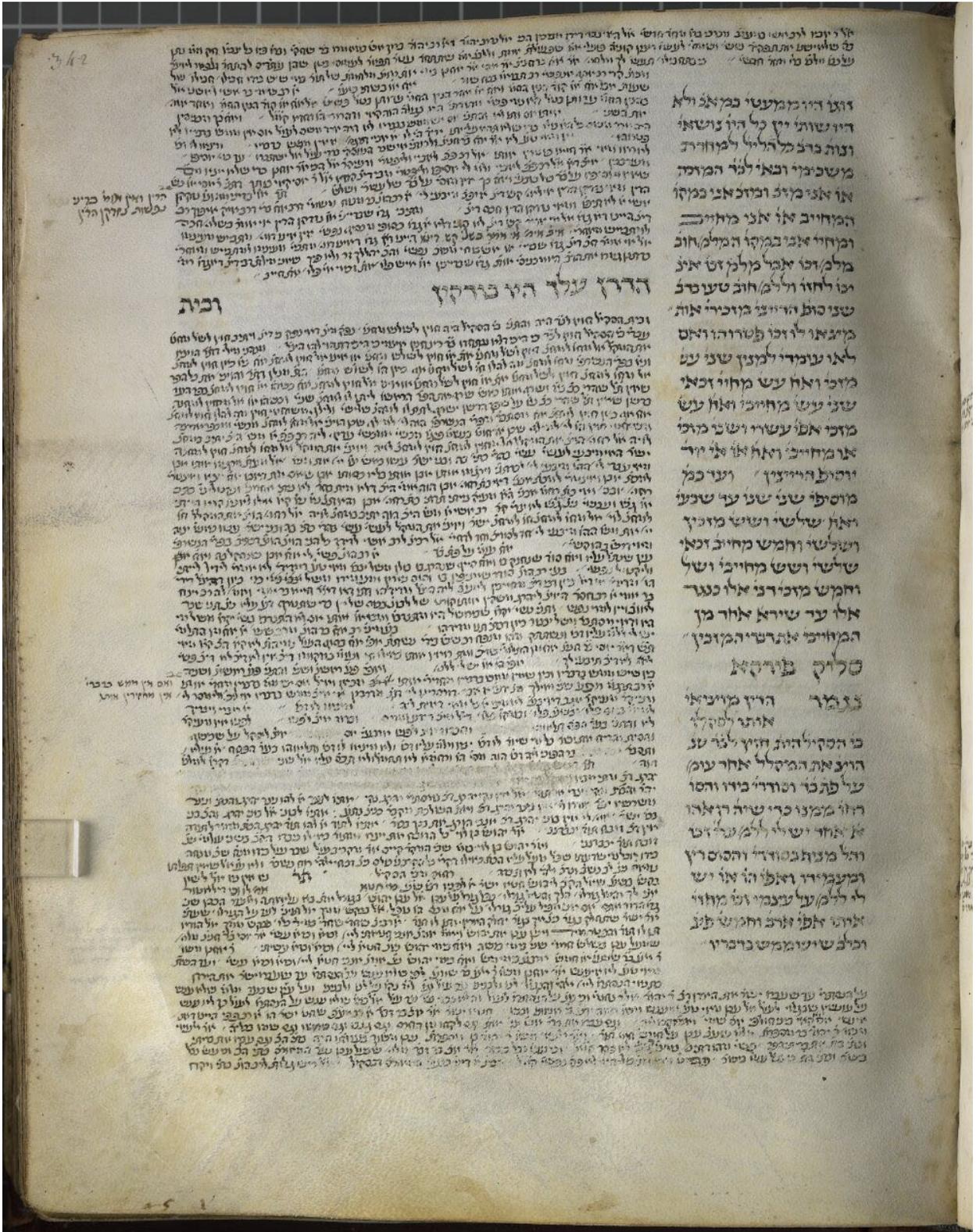
40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

3. Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 43a

(The Mishna asserts) a crier goes out before (a man condemned to execution). Before him (i.e., when he is being led to execution), yes; but from the outset (i.e., before his conviction), no. But isn't it taught that on Passover Eve, they hanged Yeshu (after he was killed by stoning)? And a crier went out before him (for) forty days, (proclaiming): "Yeshu is to be stoned because he practiced sorcery, incited (idolatry), and lead the Jewish people astray. Anyone who knows (a reason to) acquit him should come (forward) and reveal it on his behalf!" And they did not find (a reason) to acquit him, and they hanged him on Passover Eve.

Ulla said, "And (how can) you understand this? (Was) Yeshu worthy of a search to acquit him? He was an inciter, and the Merciful One states, 'Neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him.' But, Yeshu was different, as he was close with the government."

4. A censored page from the Munich 95 manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, which was written in France in 1342.



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הדרן עלה הדרן
בפניו ואלו כתיב

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ובית

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E. The Resurrection

1. ⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

2. Luke 24

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. **5** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" **8** Then they remembered his words.

3. Toledot Yeshu

At eventide, they came to take him down, on account of that Scripture which saith: "You should not allow his corpse to

remain on the tree" (Deut. 21:23). So did they bury him, and his following began to weep again at his tomb while saying: "You have become liable to the death penalty, because you have slain the Messiah!" But those of Israel retorted by saying: "You, yourselves, have become liable to the death penalty, because ye have believed in a false prophet!" His following then said to themselves: "Come and let us take him out of his tomb." They opened the tomb, but did not find him there, and so did they go unto Helena the queen. They said unto her: "Consider, your Majesty, the Queen, how many signs he hath wrought, and how that now he hath gone up into heaven." At this declaration, she did send unto the Sages, and inquired of them: "Where is it that ye have buried Jesus?" They answered: "Near unto the waters of Siloam." She then returned answer unto them: "If ye do not bring him unto me, I shan't leave off from harassing a single one of you." They sought him, but could not find him. They then said unto her: "Give us time." She gave them time, and meanwhile, the people of Israel had all taken upon themselves a fast of affliction until the appointed time had expired, yet still they did not find him, by reason of which they began to flee from before the queen. Rabbi Tanḥum did also flee unto the field, and there found a certain gardener eating. He said unto him: "You wicked man! All of Israel has undertaken fasting and they art in sorrow, but you sit here eating!" He then replied: "My lord, on what occasion hast this sorrow come over the nation?" Rabbi Tanḥum then told him the account of the matter. He furthermore said: "If they shall find him, Israel shall find some relief." The man answered: "I have stolen him and buried him in my own garden, so as not to give an opportunity for the wicked to steal him away." Rabbi Tanḥum, at hearing this, returned unto the city and exclaimed: "This day is a day of good tidings!" So those of Israel went and took him out of his tomb, and did tie a rope around his leg, and began to drag him along the city lanes of Jerusalem, until they brought him unto the queen. Forthwith did she praise the Sages and became angry with the following of Jesus, banishing certain of them – three to a mountainous place, three to Greece, and thirteen of their number to Rome, while the rest were scattered among the nations.

F. Jesus' followers separating from the Jews

1. Acts 21

¹⁹ Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰ When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. ²¹ They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. ²² What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, ²³ so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. ²⁴ Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. ²⁵ As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."

2. Toledot Yeshu

Now after Jesus had been slain some thirty years, the Sages then said: "Come and let us remove them from the commonwealth of Israel. For on account of our many transgressions, they have stood up and opposed us, thereby fulfilling what has been said, 'They have made me jealous over that which is not a God, even made me angry over their vanities. Yet shall I make them envious over those who are not a people, yea over a foolish nation shall I anger them' (Deut. 32: 21). They stood up and called unto one from the Rabbinic Court in Tiberius, whose name was Elijah. They said to him: "Come and separate from amongst us these wicked persons, and you shall find great reprieve from the God of Israel. Meanwhile, we shall also pray for you that there shall not be imputed to you thereby any sin from the

Lord." So what did this wise man do? He stood up and made a declaration throughout the entire border of Israel, saying: "I am an apostle of Jesus. All those who believe in him, let him come to me, and I shall inform him about what must be done."

At this invitation, the entire wicked following of Jesus were gathered together. They answered the man: "Are thou an apostle of Jesus? Show us a sign." He replied: "What sign is it that you demand of me? I shall simply do what Jesus has done." They brought a lame man to him, and he called out over him the Ineffable Name and he immediately stood up. They then answered the man: "In truth, you are his apostle." He said to them: "Jesus does have something to give unto you." He said: "Know you what is written in the Law: 'Your new moons and feasts have I hated' (Isa. 1:14). Seeing that the Most Holy, blessed be He, already hates those days, rather, come now and let us cease from all our labor on the first day of the week, for it was on this day that the Most Holy, blessed be He, enlightened His world. And let us make for ourselves new festival days, such as the day in which Jesus was born, and the day in which he was appointed by God's holy spirit, and the day in which he died, as well as that day in which he rose up into heaven. And know that our Father in heaven catches hold of iniquity and know that Israel at some future time will be brought to give an account before the Most Holy, blessed be He, over what they have done. Moreover, indeed, he could have easily delivered himself from them, but rather said, 'It was better for me to be killed than to behave in a presumptuous manner. And, as for you, if ye shall meet with an Israelite and he smite thee on thy left cheek, turn unto him the right cheek also; And if he shall sorely abuse you with blasphemous words, do not answer him a word.'"

At this great deliberation, he separated them from among the Jews, and they are those who are called to this very day Nazoraeans. Then Israel found some reprieve in those days. Now that man who did perform this act, may God forgive him over what he had done.

G. The Disputation in Paris in 1240

DONIN: The Talmud contains blasphemies against Jesus. For example, the Talmud says that Jesus is in hell, and his punishment is to be immersed in boiling excrement [b Gitt., 56b]. (*Turning to the Queen and speaking in French.*) This is in order to make us Christians stink.

YEHIEL: For the last fifteen years, since you were separated from us, you have sought to ensnare us, but you will not succeed. This Jesus, mentioned here by the Talmud, is another Jesus, not the one whom Christians worship. This was a certain Jesus who mocked the words of the Sages, and believed only in the written Scripture, like you. You can tell this, because he is not called 'Jesus of Nazareth', but simply 'Jesus'.

DONIN: Very well, I will now read out a passage [b Sanh., 43a] which does say 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Churchmen, give your attention to this, and see how this people, which lives amongst you, despises your deity. The Talmud says, 'When Jesus went forth to be stoned, a herald went out before him for forty days, crying, "Jesus the Nazarene goes forth to be stoned because he practised sorcery and enticed to idolatry, and perverted others of Israel. Anyone who knows anything in his favour, let him come and speak in his favour."'

YEHIEL: (*Answer unknown.*)⁶

DONIN: Here is another passage in which both Jesus and Mary are blasphemed [b Sanh., 67a]. The passage says that someone called

Ben Stada, otherwise known as Ben Pandira, was hanged in Lydda on the eve of Passover. His mother's name was Miriam, 'the hairdresser'; her husband's name was Pappos ben Judah, and her lover's name was Pandira. So Mary is called an adulteress by the Talmud.

(The judges cry out in anger at this.)

YEHIEL: Do not be angry until you have heard my reply. Mary was our flesh and bone, and we have nothing to say against her, for the Talmud does not even mention her. The 'Miriam' mentioned in the passage quoted by Donin cannot be the same person as Mary, for the locality mentioned is Lydda, not Jerusalem, where Jesus' death took place, and where his Sepulchre is still to be seen. Moreover, Jesus is not even mentioned by name in this passage, but 'Ben Stada' or 'Ben Pandira'. Also, Mary's husband was called Joseph, and this Miriam's husband was called Pappos ben Judah. Also, Mary the Hairdresser is mentioned elsewhere in the Talmud as living in the days of Rav Pappa and Abaye, who lived 700 years after Jesus.

... in the Talmud about

DONIN: There is another blasphemous passage in the Talmud about Jesus. This tells [b Sanh., 107] that Jesus was a pupil of Rabbi Joshua ben Perachia, who fled to Alexandria, accompanied by Jesus, to escape the persecution of King Jannai. Later, on his return from Alexandria, he stayed with Jesus at an inn. Here Jesus offended his teacher by paying too much attention to the inn-keeper's wife. Jesus wished to be forgiven, but Rabbi Joshua was too slow to forgive him, and Jesus in despair went away and put up a brick and worshipped it. The moral given is that a teacher should not be too hard on his pupils.

YEHIEL: It is easy to see that this Jesus cannot be the same Jesus that Christians worship. For Joshua ben Perachia lived more than 200 years before the Jesus of Christianity, who in my opinion is not mentioned anywhere in the Talmud. Wherever Jesus is mentioned in the Talmud, it is the Jesus who was the pupil of Joshua ben Perachia who is meant. It is quite possible that the Christian deity was also called Jesus, and there were thus two Jesuses, and possibly even two Jesuses from the same town, Nazareth.

(The priests cry out in disbelief)

YEHIEL: Not every Louis born in France is the King of France. Is it so uncommon that two men should be born in one city, both with the same name, and they should both die the same death?

QUEEN BLANCHE: Tell me the truth on your faith, was there really another Jesus?

YEHIEL: May I live and return to my house, the Talmud was not referring to the Christian Jesus when it spoke of one who is punished in hell in boiling excrement.

H. Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings and their Wars, 11.7-9

Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Mashiach and was executed by the court was also alluded to in Daniel's prophecies, as *ibid.* 11:14 states: "The vulgar among your people shall exalt themselves in an attempt to fulfill the vision, but they shall stumble."

Can there be a greater stumbling block than Christianity? All the prophets spoke of Mashiach as the redeemer of Israel and their savior who would gather their dispersed and strengthen their observance of the mitzvot. In contrast, Christianity caused the Jews to be slain by the sword, their remnants to be scattered and humbled, the Torah to be altered, and the majority of the world to err and serve a god other than the Lord.

Nevertheless, the intent of the Creator of the world is not within the power of man to comprehend, for His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts, our thoughts. Ultimately, all the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth and that Ishmaelite who arose after him will only serve to prepare the way for Mashiach's coming and the improvement of the entire world, motivating the nations to serve God together as Tzeplaniah 3:9 states: 'I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.'

How will this come about? The entire world has already become filled with the mention of the Messiah, Torah, and mitzvot. These matters have been spread to the furthestmost islands to many stubborn-hearted nations. They discuss these matters and the mitzvot of the Torah, saying: 'These mitzvot were true, but were already negated in the present age and are not applicable for all time.'

Others say: 'Implied in the mitzvot are hidden concepts that cannot be understood simply. The Mashiach has already come and revealed those hidden truths.'

I. Excerpts from Rabbi Stephen Wise's sermon on Sunday, January 16, 1924

Shall we not say that this Jew is soul of our soul and the soul of His teaching is Jewish and nothing but Jewish? This teaching of Jesus the Jew is a phase of the spirit which led the Jew Godward...

Now is the time to throw overboard the doctrine that the teachings of Jesus are alien to those of the elders...

I do not need to be a Christian in order to recognize the place of Jesus in the great Jewish tradition. Israel gave Jesus the man and the Jew to humankind. For the most part, Christendom has denied him in deed, though affirming him in name. Is not the hour come, for us, his fellow Jews, to place Jesus where he belongs – this radiant Jewish teacher in Palestine of the first century?

J. Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity

CJCUC December 3, 2015

***To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven:
Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians***

After nearly two millennia of mutual hostility and alienation, we Orthodox Rabbis who lead communities, institutions and seminaries in Israel, the United States and Europe recognize the historic opportunity now before us. We seek to do the will of our Father in Heaven by accepting the hand offered to us by our Christian brothers and sisters. Jews and Christians must work together as partners to address the moral challenges of our era.

1. The Shoah ended 70 years ago. It was the warped climax to centuries of disrespect, oppression and rejection of Jews and the consequent enmity that developed between Jews and Christians. In retrospect it is clear that the failure to break through this contempt and engage in constructive dialogue for the good of humankind weakened resistance to evil forces of anti-Semitism that engulfed the world in murder and genocide.

2. We recognize that since the Second Vatican Council the official teachings of the Catholic Church about Judaism have changed fundamentally and irrevocably. The promulgation of Nostra Aetate fifty years ago started the process of reconciliation between our two communities. Nostra Aetate and the later official Church documents it inspired unequivocally reject any form of anti-Semitism, affirm the eternal Covenant between G-d and the Jewish people, reject deicide and stress the unique relationship between Christians and Jews, who were called “our elder brothers” by Pope John Paul II and “our fathers in faith” by Pope Benedict XVI. On this basis, Catholics and other Christian officials started an honest dialogue with Jews that has grown during the last five decades. We appreciate the Church’s affirmation of Israel’s unique place in sacred history and the ultimate world redemption. Today Jews have experienced sincere love and respect from many Christians that have been expressed in many dialogue initiatives, meetings and conferences around the world.
3. **As did Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi, we acknowledge that the emergence of Christianity in human history is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations. In separating Judaism and Christianity, G-d willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies.** Rabbi Jacob Emden wrote that “Jesus brought a double goodness to the world. On the one hand he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically... and not one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah. On the other hand he removed idols from the nations and obligated them in the seven commandments of Noah so that they would not behave like animals of the field, and instilled them firmly with moral traits.....Christians are congregations that work for the sake of heaven who are destined to endure, whose intent is for the sake of heaven and whose reward will not be denied.” Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch taught us that Christians “have accepted the Jewish Bible of the Old Testament as a book of Divine revelation. They profess their belief in the G-d of Heaven and Earth as proclaimed in the Bible and they acknowledge the sovereignty of Divine Providence.” Now that the Catholic Church has acknowledged the eternal Covenant between G-d and Israel, we Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be

exploited for missionary purposes. As stated by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Bilateral Commission with the Holy See under the leadership of Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, "We are no longer enemies, but unequivocal partners in articulating the essential moral values for the survival and welfare of humanity". Neither of us can achieve G-d's mission in this world alone.

4. Both Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty, so that all humanity will call on His name and abominations will be removed from the earth. We understand the hesitation of both sides to affirm this truth and we call on our communities to overcome these fears in order to establish a relationship of trust and respect. Rabbi Hirsch also taught that the Talmud puts Christians "with regard to the duties between man and man on exactly the same level as Jews. They have a claim to the benefit of all the duties not only of justice but also of active human brotherly love." In the past relations between Christians and Jews were often seen through the adversarial relationship of Esau and Jacob, yet Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berliner (Netziv) already understood at the end of the 19th century that Jews and Christians are destined by G-d to be loving partners: "In the future when the children of Esau are moved by pure spirit to recognize the people of Israel and their virtues, then we will also be moved to recognize that Esau is our brother."
5. We Jews and Christians have more in common than what divides us: the ethical monotheism of Abraham; the relationship with the One Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who loves and cares for all of us; Jewish Sacred Scriptures; a belief in a binding tradition; and the values of life, family, compassionate righteousness, justice, inalienable freedom, universal love and ultimate world peace. Rabbi Moses Rivkis (Be'er Hagoleh) confirms this and wrote that "the Sages made reference only to the idolator of their day who did not believe in the creation of the world, the Exodus, G-d's miraculous deeds and the divinely given law. In contrast, the people among whom we are scattered believe in all these essentials of religion."
6. Our partnership in no way minimizes the ongoing differences between the two communities and two religions. We believe that G-d employs many messengers to reveal His truth, while we affirm the fundamental ethical obligations that all people have before G-d that Judaism has always taught through the universal Noahide covenant.

7. In imitating G-d, Jews and Christians must offer models of service, unconditional love and holiness. We are all created in G-d's Holy Image, and Jews and Christians will remain dedicated to the Covenant by playing an active role together in redeeming the world.