



Under the Law of God: mimesis and mimetic discipleship among Jewish-affinity Christians

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Messianic Judaism, a network of congregations that incorporate Jewish ritual into evangelical worship, is one branch of a fast-growing trend among Christians globally towards 'Jewish affinity'. Drawing on a multi-site comparison in North America, this article examines one of Messianic Judaism's most significant internal debates: should non-ethnically Jewish 'gentile believers' (GBs) obey biblical laws? It argues that GBs do not simply imitate Jews badly, as outsiders and their own leaders often believe. Rather, their actions are best characterized as mimesis in two complementary forms: mimesis of Jews and 'mimetic discipleship' of Jesus-the-Jew. Taken together, these forms offer a heuristic tool sufficiently capacious to explain both individuals' propensity for Jewish practice and the socially specific ways it is constructed. I conclude that Jewish affinity reflects a key problem in contemporary Christianity, namely what happens when people in one religion (Christianity) come to believe that their God incarnated in the body of a man they now associate with another religion (Judaism)?

Throughout evangelical Christianity, there's a quest to discover what they're calling Jewish roots. It's sweeping the country. And a lot of churches that are just regular churches have taken on some components of Messianic Judaism. It's a pretty big thing.

Ron

Ron is a trim, articulate man in his mid-sixties who leads weekly bible studies at Beth Tikvah, a Messianic Jewish congregation in the suburbs of a mid-sized city in the southwestern United States. Today, the discussion in his Saturday morning class has become heated. Ron is trying to direct the students towards examples of sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible. But the class wants to talk about shellfish. Can you eat it? What about oysters? Is 'Asian' meat better than halal? Sometimes such conversations end when someone actually storms out, as happened not long ago when Ron answered the question, 'Should we keep the Jewish laws or not?' by saying it was okay to eat ham sandwiches. What makes the emotional pitch of such exchanges remarkable is that few, if any, of the participants are Jewish. Ron grew up in Mississippi, attending a Pentecostal church. Like many of his students, he had never actually met a Jewish person. In 2007, after more than thirty years in non-denominational charismatic churches, Ron and his wife encountered Messianic Judaism and embraced the Beth Tikvah congregation.

Messianic Judaism developed in the United States in the 1970s as a loose network of ministries and congregations that incorporate aspects of Jewish belief and practice into Christian worship. Depending on the estimate, such congregations draw anywhere from

30,000 to two million worshippers each week in the United States.¹ Although scholars have consistently downplayed it, people with no Jewish heritage (gentile believers or GBs) account for at least 70 per cent of those in the pews.² Indeed, Messianic Judaism in North America owes most of its success to the rapid growth of 'Jewish affinity', a trend especially among evangelicals and Pentecostals/charismatics towards adapting Jewish ritual and liturgy (Sandmel 2010).³ Today it touches the lives of millions of Christians, notably through on-line media, and scholars have begun to track related movements globally (Parfitt & Semi 2002), including in Brazil (Lehmann 2013), Europe (Gonzalez 2014), and the Pacific Islands (Handman 2011; Newland & Brown 2015).⁴ These studies note the central role of scriptural literalism, Zionist millennial theologies, local power struggles, and the spread through evangelical missionaries of a quest to identify 'Lost Tribes' of Israel (e.g. Dundon 2015). US Messianic Jews are sometimes directly implicated in introducing or championing such ideas, as Courtney Handman notes of Papua New Guinea (2011: 671) and Philippe Gonzalez has shown in Switzerland and Cyprus (2014: 126-8).

Based on a multi-sited ethnography (2012-13) of five congregations in three cities, my study concentrates on one aspect of this global trend, namely organized congregations in North America that self-define as Messianic Jewish. It is also the first study to focus expressly on gentile involvement.⁵ The five sites that form the basis of analysis are typical of the movement in that they are urban or suburban, small compared to many evangelical churches (i.e. 50-100 attendees), often charismatic/Pentecostal in worship style and affiliation (Table 1, Appendix), and prefer 'ethnically' Jewish male leaders. Four of the five congregations affiliate with a Messianic Jewish denomination or an evangelical ministry aimed at Jews.⁶ They all attract a shifting population of mainly adult believers, nearly all of whom were 'born again' prior to involvement.

This article explores one of the most significant internal debates shared across all five sites: who should follow the Law. In Messianic terms, the Law is shorthand for rules that govern religious practices derived from the commandments in the Hebrew Bible, such as Shabbat or kashrut, as well as the ritualistic observance of Jewish festivals and rites. Adherents by no means agree upon precisely what constitutes 'the Law', though the association between Jewishness and ordered laws in general holds great importance for Jewish-affinity Christians. Alison Dundon, for example, has recently shown how Gogodala people in Papua New Guinea stake a claim to being genetic 'Israelites' based on their belief that they are inherently more law-abiding than their neighbours (2015: 328).

In North America, GBs retain a complicated relationship with the Law and its attendant practices. Ron, for example, was drawn to Beth Tikvah because of its more traditional Jewish liturgy. He wears a *kippah* (skull cap) and keeps kosher. Yet he also condemns Judaism for being as 'legalistic' as the strict Pentecostalism in which he was raised. Such Christians are strongly attracted to the legalism that also repels them, in effect exaggerating the ambivalence that scholars have noted among other evangelical or charismatic Protestants who engage in rituals while also discursively condemning them (Albrecht 1999). Further, GBs are drawn to these rituals, though the ethnically Jewish Messianic leadership is often discouraging and may disparage them as 'immature' and 'wannabe Jews' (e.g. Gannon, Richardson & Stokes 1998). Most North American Jews reject all Messianics as fraudulent (Balmer 2004: 448) and view their actions as antithetical to Judaism (Kaplan 2005: 9). Scholars suggest that Christian forms of Jewish affinity might even be considered a form of inverted anti-Semitism (Sutcliffe & Karp 2011: 1).

Given these criticisms from within and without, what compels GBs' behaviour? I suggest that their actions are best understood through the theoretical framework of mimesis, a concept in anthropology that is helpfully parsed by Christian theologians. At a basic level, mimesis derives from Aristotelian thought and refers to imitation or representation (Spairosu 1984: i, xvi). I take my cue from René Girard and Michael Taussig, each of whom pioneered anthropological approaches that contextualized mimesis within the social realm. Girard's central contention was that mimetic desire never originates in the self or the object desired, but is located in a third party (the model or mediator), and is thus inherently intersubjective: people seek to acquire and appropriate what another has (2008a [1997]: 246). Taussig more clearly accented postcolonial power relations, arguing that representation is not merely a shadow of the real: it shares in and takes power from that which it represents because the act of imitating acquires its own density and substance (1993: 176). Girard and Taussig also emphasize another point that is crucial here. To imitate mimetically is to become both self and other, or subject and object, simultaneously. And yet, as Taussig emphasizes, the very process of representation entails recognition of the other's existence, which reiterates alterity.

I contend that the possibility of becoming radically enmeshed in another being, even a divine being, while ultimately reinforcing difference, is a – even *the* – central problematic for gentile adherents to Messianic Judaism. Specifically, I argue that two interrelated forms of mimesis are at work: the first is mimesis of Jews; the second is what I call 'mimetic discipleship' of Jesus-the-Jew. Both are active forms of imitation or representation. However, based on the biblical idea of discipleship, the latter implies learning and following, rather than the complete transmutation of one being into another, since Jesus is both human and divine (and therefore never fully knowable to believers). From an anthropological standpoint, recognizing both forms clarifies how mimesis of Jews derives from a set of historically constituted power relations that are also driven by the theological motivations especially evident in mimetic discipleship. It is the convergence of both that so convincingly authenticates Jewish practices as spiritually viable for the Christians who adopt them.

To understand further how Messianic Judaism is lived out, we must attend to one more set of factors related to a constant tension between the egocentric and sociocentric. The issue lies in how believers view the Law as a practical extension of their experience of being born-again, which should reorient each individual away from human sociality to focus squarely on his or her relationship with God. However, Messianics also view the Law as necessarily built upon the sociality of shared institutions. Indeed, it is the Ur-institution, a covenant that has bound God's people to each other since it was handed down at Sinai. My goal, then, is to show how mimesis of Jews and mimetic discipleship are co-constituted and how, taken together, they offer a heuristic tool sufficiently capacious to comprise a basis for understanding individual born-again believers' propensity for Jewish affinity and the socially specific ways that it is constructed and constrained. In short, I examine what happens once GBs start following the Law, as they see it. What weight do they as individuals accord to the problems raised by the tensions noted above? How do subsequent debates suffuse the congregations of which they are a part?

I begin by examining how GBs view the Law as an antidote to the failings of Jewish synagogues and 'Sunday' churches. I then explore the relationship between mimesis and mimetic discipleship, followed by a section on obligation to God and society. I

conclude by discussing what mimesis tells us about Jewish affinity, and how it exemplifies important trends within contemporary Christianity.

Following the Law biblically

Sharyla and Joe, a middle-aged African American couple, live in the suburbs of a large southern city. The couple met and married in a Baptist church and then embarked on a years-long spiritual journey during which they attended a number of churches. In 2004, Joe saw a newspaper advertisement for a new Messianic congregation called Beth Melech Israel. Over the next eight years, Sharyla and Joe became dedicated members and ritual experts. They abstain from pork, light weekly Shabbat candles, and celebrate Passover Seders. Joe wears a *kippah* and *tzitzit* (fringes) during worship. They encourage others too, such as when they convinced Joe's brother to buy a *mezuzah* (a parchment affixed to the doorpost of Jewish homes) and then drove two hours to bless it in a Hebrew prayer ceremony they adapted from an on-line guide.

Sharyla and Joe are not the kind of members the Messianic Jewish leadership usually promotes publicly (Eaton 2001: 117-19). They are non-Jews, people of colour, and adhere to the Law as they see fit. Leaders view the movement as by and for ethnic Jews like themselves, based on its origins in nineteenth-century fraternal societies for Jewish converts to Protestantism. In the 1960s, many 'Hebrew Christian' converts were filled with the spirit of charismatic revival (Ariel 2000: 224-5, 229) and galvanized by the surge in pre-millennial dispensationalism (Winer 1990: 46-7), a century-old theology that captured the evangelical imagination after the 1967 war in Israel by arguing that Jews *as Jews* retained a key role in the Messiah's Second Coming. For Hebrew Christians, it powerfully incorporated older Jewish ideas about chosenness and Zionism, and merged them with newer ideas emerging in the so-called 'white ethnic revival' of the same period. As cultural theorist Werner Sollors (1996) has shown, the revival caused Americans to reify a biological (racialized) foundation for socially encoded categories of ethnicity, including Jewishness (Imhoff & Kaell in press). Also important, for more than a century both conservative and liberal Christians had nurtured an interest in the 'historical Jesus', which sought clues in biblical archaeology and history about how God lived as a Jewish man (Hallote 2006; McAlister 2001: 43-83).⁷ These trends dovetailed in the mid-1970s, kindling for Hebrew Christians new pride in their Jewish origins and an assuredness that they were in fact still Jewish, now viewed as a biological lineage. Many withdrew from their former churches to form their own congregations, which developed distinctive versions of Jewish rituals, klezmer-inflected Christian music, and 'Davidic' dances (Israeli folk dance) that remain popular today.

The movement was controversial among Protestant Christians, in no small part because of the Law. Previously, Jewish converts had been expected to join recognized churches and were often explicitly discouraged from marrying each other or retaining any traces of Judaism, based on long-standing fears of 'Judaizing' and 'legalism' (Harris-Shapiro 1999: 21-8; Winer 1990: 10). The first term derives from Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:14), where he says Christ obviates the need for Jewish law. Legalism is closely related, used against any view that foregrounds obedience to law as a principle of salvation. Symptoms include repetitive rituals and the assumed degradation of spiritual sincerity (Keane 2002; Robbins 2007: 15). Accusations of legalism have been wielded by Protestants against Catholics and by all Christians against Jews. Not surprisingly, Christian critics accused the nascent Messianic movement of precisely these heresies (Rausch 1983: 37). Messianic Jews countered that what looked like a resurgence of Law

was actually the reinstatement of *cultural* practices from Jesus' time, which retained importance for ethnic Jews (Ariel 2000: 232; Rausch 1983: 48). This argument assuaged most initial concerns but offered little justification for why gentiles would follow suit.

The issue became more pressing in the 1990s as Messianic congregations swelled with gentile members. Individuals' initial motivations for joining the movement are not the focus of this article; however, elsewhere I describe them as 'born-again seekers' (Kaell 2015). Like Sharyla and Joe, nearly all come to the movement as single individuals or older couples. Their often-fluid movement between churches broadly reflects the 'denominational switching' that scholars of modern US religion associate with factors such as rising individualism, increased access to information, suburbanization, and ease of travel (Wuthnow 1990: 88-9). Regardless of what brings them, the Messianic leaders in this study have welcomed GBs as a necessary demographic and financial base, but also worry that unfulfilled Jews (potential converts) will be dissuaded by a roomful of gentiles mimicking Jewish rituals. More unsettling for some of them, imitation has seemed a slippery slope towards GBs unwittingly usurping the role of 'ethnic' Jews in prophetic history. The intensity of leaders' concern colours debates about gentile conversion to Judaism, which is banned by the two Messianic denominations on the basis that gentiles can never become Jews, since it is an inherited bloodline with a unique destiny as God's chosen people.⁸

Most GBs abide by this view of conversion yet reject the idea that the Law is limited to ethnic Jews. Gabriela, a knowledgeable GB in her mid-thirties with whom I spoke at length on the subject, expressed a three-fold justification for following the Law that was typical of the responses I heard most often during fieldwork. First, pointing to Matthew 5:17, she averred that Jesus did not seek to abolish laws that *ordered* society according to God's wishes. Like many GBs, she views 'ordering laws', like *kashrut*, as the purview of all believers and distinguishes them from laws, like circumcision, that express God's covenant with *ethnic* Israel. Second, Gabriela argued that Paul's warning about Judaizing was merely a caution against misconstruing the Law as salvific: 'He meant it would be a good thing to keep *kashrut* and to keep the laws of Moses if you're a *mature* believer who understands the path to salvation', she clarified. Third, and most importantly, following the Law offers a mimetic closeness with Jesus, who built his ministry on discipleship. 'This is how Yeshua worshipped. This is how He told us . . . to continue', she said, 'and you can read that in John [2:6]', where it says, 'Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did'.⁹

In fact, the actual practices that comprise the Law for any given believer are continually in flux as GBs make new connections between biblical texts. For example, Gabriela only recently decided that *kashrut* applies to gentiles. She is self-conscious about how an outsider might construe it. 'I don't want to give the impression that I pick and choose', she told me. 'I want to make sure that I don't give that impression at all. I pray about this deeply'. Like most born-again Christians, she tries to discern God's intentions by hearing God's voice in prayer and becoming attuned to intuitive feelings that she calls 'inner alarm bells' (see Luhrmann 2012). I emphasize this decision-making process because previous studies have often focused on the end result: precisely which rituals GBs practise and how, in order to measure them against mainstream Judaism, usually to determine who should or should not be included as a Jew (e.g. Cohn-Sherbok 2001; Hordes 1996; Neulander 1996; cf. Kunin 2001). In fact, GBs never seek to imitate non-Messianic Jewish orthodoxy perfectly, which they dismiss as 'superficial' and 'rabbinic' (a variant of legalism). Instead, their goal is to follow the Law *biblically*

by using evangelical and Pentecostal interpretative techniques that rely on personal scripture reading and emotional inflections (Gabriela's 'alarm bells'). This method is meant to avoid what they see as two extremes of man-made interpretation: the legalism of Jewish synagogues and the ahistoricism of 'Sunday churches'. According to Messianics, the former fail because they are 'rabbinic' in how they append human interpretation to the word of God; the latter fail because they have interpreted the text such that they ignore how God's commandments were given in perpetuity, and, worse, have incorporated 'pagan' or 'Greek' aspects unknown to Jesus on earth.

Following the Law biblically, Messianics seek to merge past-orientated primitivism and future-orientated millennialism – what John Dulin, in a recent study of a California congregation, calls a 'multidirectional cross-chronotope alignment' (2015: 626). This idea is expressed in a common Messianic metaphor that likens the Law to a tree. It is the root of Christian faith and thus recaptures aspects of the apostolic age through a set of ritualized practices. But the Law is also the tree's shadow, an interrelated set of signs that extend outwards to colour the things of the world differently; in biblical times, these signs presaged the First Coming, and today they point toward the Second. Indeed, a fair number of GBs believe the spread of the Law signals Jesus' imminent return, when he will again celebrate the Jewish rituals and feasts. The Law allows believers to recognize or familiarize themselves with what is to come, while also continually retracing a line between legalism and biblicism that reaffirms what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Mimesis and discipleship

Mimesis occurs on two levels in Messianic Judaism. On one hand, to obey the Law is to act like *Jews*. On the other, it is to act like *Jesus*, who was a Jew (Feher 1998: 48). Although Messianics rarely articulate a strong distinction between the two, I parse both aspects separately, beginning with the first. One of Taussig's central points is that mimesis is effective for those who imitate because of its sensuous quality. Rane Willerslev, based on Taussig, clarifies this idea in his work on Siberian hunters who become elk to attract their prey. This becoming, where an elk spirit enters a human body for a time, entails a process of dressing like elk and mimicking their gait and calls. Willerslev notes that, while mimicking the bodily behaviour of another is merely a way to imagine that one shares his experiences and thoughts, it is also by no means *fictive*. By engaging the senses, the experience becomes decisively corporeal and thus really real to the mimic, incorporated into his own experience as a lived practice (Willerslev 2007: 106). Messianics also become like Jews in highly corporeal ways, which include dressing, speaking, eating, dancing, and listening. GBs describe emotional, even physical, responses to such acts that draw them to Jewish ritualization (cf. Dulin 2015: 621). One interviewee described 'zoning out in total bliss' when listening to klezmer music; another 'felt shivers' when she mouthed Hebrew words. During worship, people sometimes break down in tears when they hear the shofar blast.

In fact, Taussig, based on Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2007 [1944]), explicitly describes the sensuality associated with the Christian imitation of Jews. He argues that minority populations, namely Jews and Blacks, have bodies that are matter out of place, situated beyond white, European conceptions of normality and thus outside the body politic. As a result, their physical bodies (the nose, the skin) seem to exude a certain power – hence the fascination and will to imitate (Taussig 1993: 66). For GBs, Jewish bodies are also matter out of place that excites fascination, but,

unlike Horkheimer and Adorno's secularized social vision, this complex of ideas rests on biblical interpretations that see contemporary Jews as proof that God fulfils his promises. A prime example concerns persecution and prosperity. Evangelicals have only recently begun to address the Holocaust, and generally still exonerate 'true' Christians (i.e. evangelicals) from culpability (Ariel 2013: 153-70). However, the fact of Jewish survival, sometimes amplified by Jewish Messianics' own tales of persecution at the hands of their non-believing brethren, produces in many GBs a kind of enthralled awe at Jewish resilience. It is compounded by their perception of US Jews as a 'model minority' that has fulfilled the American dream despite adversity. From a social scientific perspective, these factors provide a historically rooted basis for US evangelicals' fascination, and identification, with the Jews (for a Brazilian comparison, see Altglas 2014: 102). From an evangelical perspective, these successes show that God has preserved this people for their prophetic destiny. Thus the power of Jews is not Jewish power *per se*; it is the power of God channelled through them. In Messianic cosmology, Jews could thus be viewed as 'out of time' as well, not in the sense of being apart from a secular body politic, but because pre-millennialist theology situates them, unlike other humans, at the *very heart* of the unfolding divine plan. When GBs act like Jews, they engage at a deep sensory level with those whom they understand to be the physical descendants of Israelites, who are thus an earthly incarnation of divine intentionality (Dulin 2015: 609; Kaell 2015).

Previous studies of pre-millennialist theology emphasize how adherents love the Jews and consider themselves Jewish allies, notably as strong supporters of Israel (Spector 2009; Weber 2004). It is indeed remarkable when measured against other iterations of Christianity, historically and today. However, such professions of love must be qualified. The least vexed object of love is what might be called signifier Jews. As noted, Jews who suffered persecution (e.g. Holocaust victims) or achieved great things (e.g. Nobel Prize winners) are understood to exemplify God's constancy and blessings. Another such group is Israeli Jews, who are understood to fulfil at least part of God's millennial plan by dint of living in the Holy Land. By contrast, American Jews can be problematic. GBs assume they have read the Hebrew Bible yet remain bewilderingly (even stubbornly) unmoved. In particular, GBs believe that reading the Old Testament clearly reveals the truth of the New. The silver bullet is Isaiah 53, which they view as irrefutably predicting Jesus' coming.¹⁰ Sometimes my interlocutors concluded that Jews must skip this passage altogether or even rip it out so their children will not accidentally stumble upon the truth.

Even more disconcerting, however, are non-religious American Jews, 'chosen people' who seem impervious to *any* aspect of God's plan.¹¹ Although few GBs know many (or any) mainstream Jews, based on my interviews most define 'cultural' or 'secular' Jews as individuals who *know* which laws they should follow but refuse to obey. Their existence actually creates a role for GBs since Messianics teach that gentiles can 'provoke Jews to jealousy' (Rom. 11:14) and thereby open their hearts to the gospel (Silberling 2000: 179). Eva, a co-congregant of Joe and Sharyla, learned about 'cultural Jews' from the television show *Sex and the city*. While the idea upset her, she also emphasized in her interview, 'When [GBs] are doing those things that are biblical, being the best disciples of the Lord, *it's those things that they know it is right [sic]* . . . and they become jealous'. Whether or not they know Jews personally (Eva does not), by adhering to the Law biblically, GBs believe they may nevertheless set at least some non-religious Jews on the path towards fulfilling their cosmological obligations.

This raises an interesting point about alterity. Anthropologist Circe Sturm describes non-Native Americans who identify as Cherokee, often after spiritual seeking. She notes that for these ‘racial shifters’, whiteness is replete with undesirable characteristics, such as selfishness and individualism, a kind of spiritual malady for which Indianness is the cure (Sturm 2010: 57). By contrast, born-again Christians never want to become (unsaved) Jews. Returning to the mimesis in Willerslev’s work, he argues that Siberian hunters take on the animal’s perspective by *intentionally acting as imperfect copies*. Doing so, they become elk without ever fully negating their humanness, which would open the frightening possibility of being lost for ever in the other (Willerslev 2007: 95). Of course, I do not mean to suggest that GBs look upon Jews as animals. However, they do view them as dangerously unsaved, leaving open the possibility that in mimesis one might lose the ability to see the world, including the Bible, through born-again eyes. Thus GBs seek to be imperfect copies of Jews, in the sense that following the Law biblically necessarily distinguishes their actions from those of contemporary Jews, ‘rabbinic’ and ‘secular’. By this logic, as Eva implies, GBs seek to imitate Jews imperfectly in order to make Jews more perfectly Jewish – that is, helping them recognize the Law that was given to them and, ultimately, Jesus as Messiah. Self becomes other in order to enfold other into self.

By contrast, in mimesis of Jesus the Other is already a perfect, more-than-human Being. Messianics recognize this inherent imbalance by describing it as discipleship – ‘the art of imitating one’s Master’ that makes it incumbent upon his followers to ‘do all things as he did’ (First Fruits of Zion 2013). Mimetic discipleship is thus biblically resonant and also implies something other than the complete transmutation of one being into another since believers can never experience the divine part of Jesus’ person. Yet for GBs the mystical power of the Trinity, where Jesus *was also fully human*, creates the possibility of moving beyond metaphorical or ethical discipleship, such as asking what Jesus would do. Perhaps more than any of their evangelical co-religionists, GBs insist upon the centrality of God’s incarnation in a particular kind of human, a first-century Jew who followed particular laws. Mimetic discipleship seems to offer the possibility of enmeshing believers in the corporeal, human side of Jesus’ experience to produce a closer union with God.

The actual actions that mimetic discipleship entails overlap with those that Messianics associate with biblical Israelites, since they assume Jesus followed the same Law and traditions. Thus wearing a *kippah*, eating kosher, or pronouncing Hebrew *brachot* (blessings) are mimesis of biblical Jews and Jesus. Other practices are less clear and may provoke debate. For example, one day at Beth Ha-Moshiach I sat next to a man exuberantly blowing a two-foot shofar. Since the 1990s, shofars (often ‘jumbo’ sized) have spread among Jewish-affinity Christians; they are easily incorporated into their emotive worship as a male instrument of joy and, for Pentecostals, are also associated with healing miracles and angelic intervention (e.g. Barbarossa 2015; Gonzalez 2014: 89). After the service, the man and I sat together for *oneg* (fellowship and lunch) and discussed whether Jesus blew a shofar. While he acknowledged that no biblical passage says so, he still viewed it as what I am calling mimetic. He noted, first, that Jesus certainly would have *heard* shofars since biblical Jews blew them. Second, the healing miracles and feeling of joy it produces are coherent with Jesus’ *goals* during his earthly ministry. Overhearing us, a more senior member of the congregation interrupted to say rather sharply that Beth Ha-Moshiach does not encourage shofar blowing. Later, she pulled me aside to clarify that my companion was not a regular member and there was no

scriptural proof that Jesus used a shofar. The congregation was trying to avoid . . . – and she left the sentence hanging, illustrating what she meant by rolling her eyes and swaying with her hands aloft in a typical charismatic gesture.

While particular practices are often debated, GBs generally agree that another component of striving to become like Jesus concerns how one reads the Bible. They often clarify that Jesus read ‘Jewishly’, which they contrast with how American Christians are taught to read. Reading Jewishly is a communal endeavour where one argues about the precise meanings of Hebrew words and ideas; Sharyla describes it as: ‘It sounds like you’re having an argument about it but it’s really you’re just trying to get to the meat of the situation’. This does not mean that rabbinic interpretations are valued, since Jesus’ authority supersedes all. Rather, reading Jewishly is viewed as a more methodical version of the reading and teaching that GBs already know. Most GBs emphasize that Messianics read the whole Bible and do so more deeply than other Protestants. While in fact many biblical texts are routinely left out and others are over-emphasized (e.g. Daniel or Isaiah), most Messianic leaders do preach text-based sermons that differ from many neo-evangelical or charismatic churches. One GB is typical when he describes the latter as ‘motivational speeches’. He continues:

[The pastor] will read one line from the Scripture and then for the next forty-five minutes [he] talks. Rabbi Mike [at Melech Israel] doesn’t do that. He goes with the Word and says, ‘*This is what it says here. This is what it says here.*’ So basically, he’s teaching you what the Bible said, not his interpretation of one line of the Bible . . . you’re learning the Scriptures as opposed to being motivated to be good and live right.

GBs view these reading and teaching techniques as embodying the difference between Americans and the people among whom God incarnated. Says Sharyla: ‘The Jewish – they weren’t Western. They were Eastern! [Jesus was] a Hebrew – He’s the God of the Hebrews first’. Dividing the world into west and east signals the cultural and geographical distance between the United States and the lands Jesus knew. It is GBs’ rejoinder to the classic American image of Jesus, inherited from Europe, as a white man who dressed and acted in familiar ways. The churches from whence they came are committed bible readers but not careful ones, according to GBs, because they are hampered by this vision of Jesus, which causes them to mistake their own cultural proclivities for God’s Law. And when they ignore Jesus’ historical context, they end up misunderstanding God’s desires.

Girard’s later work on Christianity takes up similar questions about desire with regard to mimesis. He writes that ‘bad’ mimesis is the human-human kind, where people seek to acquire and appropriate what another has. By contrast, ‘good’ mimesis is the simulation of an ideal Other, as when people imitate a god during ritual. Writing primarily as a theologian, Girard identifies Christianity as the apex of this second form of mimesis, which he views as radically self-denying in the sense that it is the ultimate, even only, way to renounce the corrupt cycle of human desire: one obliterates the human subject through the non-dividual love of *imitatio Christi* (Girard 2008b [1999]: 265-6). Based on Girard, theologian James Alison further develops this ‘theology of desire’ by discussing how a Holy Spirit indwells in human beings and articulates desire in ways that even those humans cannot comprehend (Rom. 8:22-7). Alison’s interest lies in prayer. Based on Girard, he suggests that many prayers are ‘bad’ mimesis – when humans want what others have and ask God to provide it, thereby wrongly assuming they are agents of their own desire. ‘Good’ mimetic prayer, according to Alison, should

empty the ego/self and thus stretch the boundaries of one's imagination beyond human sociality to catch a glimpse of the will of God (2009: 5, 15).

Although Alison and Girard write from the perspective of Catholicism, their ideas usefully illuminate how Messianic GBs describe coming to truly 'know' God by letting go of their own desires and cultural preferences ('Jesus was *Eastern!*' Sharyla insists). The attempt to empty the self, as Alison puts it, is also central to how GBs conceive of love. Contemporary US evangelical and Pentecostal churches are steeped in the language of love (Luhrmann 2012: 101) and Messianics are highly concerned with how to live out their love for Jesus. They view this love, in large part, as the ability to sublimate their own will to God's – becoming 'desired in', as Alison writes. They sometimes analogize in human-love terms. 'When you fall in love, you want to know everything', one woman told me: 'When I fell in love with [my husband], I wanted to know what [his] favourite colour was, favourite music was, favourite food, and favourite sports. You want to know so you can love them too'. Part of becoming desired-in objects of God's grace is coming to love what God loves by denying certain human desires: for example, when GBs give up foods like bacon or end beloved Christmas traditions. To be a disciple is also to love so intensely that it becomes an everyday reality. 'It truly is all encompassing', says Lorraine, a 62-year-old congregant at Melech Israel. 'It's what I have searched for my entire life, for a way of worshipping Yeshua on a daily basis . . . I don't want it to be easy, I want it to take up all of myself'. While GBs would not contradict Alison's point about prayer as a powerful mimetic act, they are after a set of regulated, more all-encompassing habits through which they can sublimate self into other. The Law is attractive because it creates obligations, providing a disciplined structure for translating love into action.

Obligation to God and community

In 2013, debates about the Law erupted at Beth Tikvah, the Assemblies of God-affiliated congregation in the southwestern United States where Ron teaches his Saturday morning classes. Average attendance at Beth Tikvah is about a hundred people. While the size of the congregation has not changed, the new pastor, Rabbi Silvio, has sought to increase the proportion of ethnic Jews, which he estimates has risen from about 10 to 25 per cent since his appointment in 2008. He partly credits his attempts to introduce more Jewish-like rituals, including reinstituting a Torah service.¹²

Torah services, if they are held, differ by congregation. Relatively few Messianic communities own Torah scrolls, which are expensive and difficult for them to obtain, but if they do, they tend to buy 'retired' scrolls that were desecrated and should have been buried according to Jewish custom. One congregation in this study purchased a Torah that was ruined when a bar mitzvah boy had a nosebleed as he struggled through his *parshah* (weekly Torah reading). Most others purchase 'Holocaust scrolls' that were salvaged or stolen from synagogues during the Second World War and later sold by Israeli dealers. Silvio's congregation has one such scroll. It is kept in a protective blue velvet cover and housed in a glass-front cabinet on the *bima* (stage) in the congregation's current worship space, a large suite in an industrial complex. Behind it stands the evangelical-style worship team that performs during services. The area is decorated with banners bearing Israelite themes, such as the Lion of David and the Messianic symbol (a seven-branched menorah, combined with a Star of David and ichthys). There is also a large screen on which to project song lyrics and transliterations of Hebrew words.

The fifteen-minute weekly Torah service at Beth Tikvah is preceded by an hour of charismatic worship, with Christian contemporary music and intercessory prayer, and is followed by Rabbi Silvio's sermon. Some weeks include a 'Ha Motzi and Kiddush' when the congregation shares cups of wine and loaves of challah in an act of communion (the Christian ritual of ingesting bread and wine). The Torah service begins when the pastoral staff removes the scroll from its ark and marches it through the room. Although more subdued than some Messianic congregations, the atmosphere nevertheless retains strong traces of charismatic Christianity's exuberant worship style. People clap and sway to the band's upbeat music and men with shofars periodically trumpet them. A group of female Davidic dancers in colourful skirts perform at the back of the sanctuary, basing their steps on Israeli folk dance. Others wave banners as the Torah goes by. There are tissue boxes in each row of chairs for participants overcome with emotion. Some congregants cover themselves with *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and murmur in tongues, while others pray with hands aloft. As the Torah is processed through the room, congregants approach it and, following Jewish custom, touch their prayer shawls or books to it and kiss them. The Torah is then unrolled on the *bima*, the music subsides, and Rabbi Silvio reads from it, as well as related sections from the *haftarah* (passages from the Prophets) and New Testament. Like most Messianic rabbis, he is unable to read the Hebrew directly from the scroll but reads each verse from a printed sheet, after which a congregant reads English translations.

Just before Silvio's arrival, the previous pastor eliminated the Torah service because it generated controversy and even acrimonious splits. Silvio recounts,

They stopped doing it because it became almost like idolatry for some people. Touching and kissing and – I had some [people] come up to me and very sweetly speak about it [after I reintroduced it]. An older lady came to me and she was having emotionally a difficult time with the Torah service because it felt like idolatry to her . . . What I wanted her to understand was that there's nothing more Jewish than the elevation of God's Word and His Torah, and walking around and showing it honour. So I explained that to her, that it's part of our wanting to have an authentically Jewish experience.

From Silvio's perspective, reintroducing the ritual may draw ethnic Jews (his main goal) while also appealing to gentiles. 'Gentiles coming into Messianic congregations,' he says, 'it's what they want . . . [to] participate in something that's not like pretend, not a *demonstration*, but something that's authentically Jewish'. For Silvio, the Torah service moves the congregation beyond mere demonstration, such as when a Torah sits unused on the stage, and offers an opportunity to live Jewishly through a mimetic act. Because Messianics justify their actions biblically, Silvio directs me to Numbers 10:35: 'So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said, "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered"'. He chooses this verse to underscore how the Torah service embodies two forms of mimetic ritualization. The congregants are like contemporary Jews, who perform similar but more subdued rituals in their synagogues, and also like ancient Israelites because the ecstatic Messianic performance of this ritual 'engage[s] the senses in activating the imagination so as to "make present"' the triumphant joy recounted in the Bible (Meyer 2012: 28).

Notwithstanding Silvio's justifications, many congregants remained concerned. However sweetly the issue of idolatry was broached, it was a serious charge that implied Silvio had introduced a rabbinic innovation to raise an object – the scroll – above the Living Word. Some congregants left as a result; others stayed but, more than three years later, still find the service 'very uncomfortable'. Even those who were convinced

often differed from Silvio in their reasons for accepting the ritual. About half the GBs interviewed saw it as a tangible demonstration of how Messianics elevate the whole Word (Old and New Testaments), in contrast with other charismatic churches. Many other congregants appreciated how it visibly marks out Jewishness, by which they mean the Torah-love that many GBs view as quasi-inherent to ethnic Jews. According to one interviewee, 'The response of the Jewish people [at Beth Tikvah] to the Torah is very interesting. You notice it. There's . . . a great reverence for the Torah that's natural for them'. A smaller but still significant number viewed it as a chance for gentiles to claim a rightful place among believers. 'Sometimes I feel like they march it too fast', another congregant told me; 'I want to be able to give a kiss to the Torah, to show the respect [*sic*] and thank God for it. The Torah belongs to us, too. It's not just because you're Jewish. It has everything that Christ wanted us to learn'. His desire for a more elaborated sensory experience likely reflects charismatic expectations. In contrast to the short Torah service, the weekly charismatic worship takes more than an hour, during which time believers engage in lengthy emotional outpourings and extended bodily exercises.

Critics of the Torah service do not reject the ritualization of love and emotion *per se*, as evident from their continued participation in the charismatic parts of Beth Tikvah's service. Rather, they are chary of a communally mandated, formalized service that therefore seems *obligatory*. The shared practices of charismatic worship, such as raising one's hands or sinking to the ground in tongues, occur *close* to the same time but not *at* the same time, since the Holy Spirit is understood to move each believer independently. Sherri, a congregant who was raised Catholic, described thinking as the scroll passed her, 'Okay, I accepted the Lord personally into my heart and I was set free of a lot of this [prescribed ritual acts], and this is trying to put me under bondage again'. Congregants raised in more liturgical forms of Christianity usually evince the most concern about obligation and 'bondage'. However, Ron says much the same thing of the strict Pentecostalism he knew as a child in Mississippi where 'This is sin. That is sin. This is sin. That's a sin'.

While prescribed rituals may generate problems, at another level most Messianics want to be yoked to obligations. Karen, a congregant at Beth Yeshua, puts it thus: 'I want a relationship with Yeshua . . . [how God] wants me to be living my life out under His protocol, not my whims and wishes'. Such statements redound to my contention that GBs view 'good' mimesis much like Girard and Alison, as emptying the self to make room for God's desires, one component of which is the actualization of love by following His Law. The search for 'a protocol', as Karen puts it, may bring GBs into conflict with their former charismatic or evangelical churches. Their critique lies in how they feel stymied by ritualistically thin services that require one to speak extempore to God, framed by ill-defined expectations couched in the language of love. *How* does one love and glorify God? What does that look like in concrete terms? Thus for most GBs, there is a kind of freedom that comes with practical obligations under the Law, such as keeping kosher, refraining from work on Saturdays, or following biblical directives, as they see it, for worshipping and celebrating holidays. Karen analogizes that it is like a child whose parent sets clear boundaries: such children are secure, well adjusted, and confident. 'Understanding what God expects', she says, 'because that was one of the issues I had growing up. I always felt like, "I need to do something for God. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. [Here] all that uncertainty went away because I *know* what He wants me to do'.

Karen notes that the Law can create security at a broader level too, as it has the potential to heal the fractures dividing Protestantism into what can seem like an endless series of schisms and splits. Her point echoes what Courtney Handman (2011) found among Guhu-Samane charismatics in Papua New Guinea, for whom the claim to shared descent from Israelites appeals because it offers the possibility of becoming ethnically united Christians instead of a people riven by Protestant sectarianism. American GBs are not seeking ethnic unity, but at least some, like Karen, do believe that obedience to God's instructions about everyday life can bring Protestants into correct alignment with the Bible's dominant imagery of a united Israel under the Law. Schisms are just one symptom, they say, of what happens when Christians erroneously ignore the Hebrew Bible: disunity and insecurity among God's people and in the heart of each believer.

Jewish affinity among American Christians

The ethnic Jewish Messianic leadership often disparages gentile adherents of the Law as 'wannabes' and 'immature' believers. American Jews condemn all Messianics for appropriating their religion and culture in the service of evangelism. And, indeed, one should not deny the violence done to Jews when Messianics act like them, since power is very much at stake in mimesis (Taussig 1993: 177). Although Messianics see themselves as a minority, they are in fact a subset of US evangelicalism and thus, from an American Jewish perspective, a dominant majority imitating a minority. In this sense, Jewish concerns overlap with the better-known Native American condemnations of Euro-Americans 'playing Indian' or being 'plastic shamans' (Deloria 1998; Green 1988; Sturm 2010: 91-116). Without ignoring these spiritual politics, we must nevertheless recognize that debates about Messianic Judaism in media (and scholarship) have so far mainly included only two parties: Jews and Messianic leaders. As result, we know little about gentiles in the pews, and thus lose the opportunity to understand better the burgeoning Jewish-affinity movement within Christianity. This article takes one approach to the topic by focusing on the Law. Specifically, it explores the tensions produced when GBs adopt certain aspects of Jewish belief or customs, asking what weight individuals accord them and what is the resulting impact on their congregations.

Although I follow believers in referring to 'the Law' as a singular entity, it is actually an ongoing, negotiated set of practices. My argument is, first, that mimesis offers a helpful heuristic tool for understanding the Messianic way of doing Law. Mimetic imitation occurs on two levels simultaneously, each of which reinforces the other and contributes to authenticating Jewish practices for born-again Christians. The first is being like Jews – both contemporary and biblical. At this level, mimesis is most obviously entangled in historically constituted relations of power and ethno-religious difference. As noted, most GBs have little or no contact with 'unbelieving' Jews. The Jews they seek to imitate are thus a constructed ideal (Newland & Brown 2015: 254) based on the Bible and American cultural assumptions, filtered mainly through Messianic Jewish leaders and evangelical media. I have highlighted a few important factors. First, the convergence in the 1970s of dispensational theology, biblical literalism, and the 'white ethnic revival' reified the idea of Jewishness (even among 'Hebrew Christian' converts) as an inherited bloodline and, moreover, one with inherent worth as a genetic link to biblical Israelites and Jesus. Another important factor is the popular American impression of Jews as innately able to attain (financial) success and survive 'miraculously' over time, which for evangelicals is proof of God's blessings. Last, GBs are deeply influenced by the rise

of pre-millennialist Christian media that laud Israel and Israeli Jews as signs of the unfolding divine plan. Each factor contributes to making Jewish bodies seem different from others. As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno noted of mid-century Europe, such displaced bodies exude a kind of power (or in this case, channel God's power) that drives the will to imitate.

To this, I add the mimetic discipleship of Jesus-the-Jew. This form of mimesis speaks to a larger theological paradigm that anthropologists of Christianity have drawn loosely from Kant, namely the 'problem of presence' (Engelke 2007) that results when a god has previously incarnated but has been physically absent ever since. This central problematic of a once-present/now-absent god has led to centuries of clashes about iconoclasm and biblicism. It has found ritual basis in communion, during which Christians disembodied Jesus in order to imbibe and embody him anew as bread and wine. Jewish-affinity Christians, however, respond to this problem differently: they strongly focus on the Messiah's incarnation into what they view as a racially and religiously distinct human body. To be like Jesus – to 'follow the Master', as Messianics often put it – has taken a particular cast since the nineteenth century as Western Christians, including fundamentalist pre-millennialists, invented biblical archaeology and produced countless literary, cinematic, and material re-creations of Jesus' life on earth (e.g. Long 2003; McAlister 2001: 43-83). This impetus to produce literal re-creations of first-century Judaism contributes significantly to Jewish-affinity forms of mimetic discipleship. For Messianics, to act like Jesus is to make him present in especially potent, sensory ways. It also points towards a future when he will return to earth in the flesh. However, the fact that Jesus is both fully human and divine raises an important issue: while alterity is reified in all mimetic acts, mimetic discipleship clearly foregrounds a distance between subject and object, since humans can be like the divine Other only in a limited sense.

To clarify how Christians in Messianic congregations live out these interrelated forms of mimesis, I add another set of factors that pertain especially to the Law, namely the tension between the egocentric and the sociocentric. Anthropologists of Christianity have begun to revise earlier work that accented Protestant individualism at the expense of sociality (Handman 2011: 656; Robbins 2009), and Jewish-affinity Christians are an especially fruitful example of both factors at work. They are drawn to what is by their definition social: a covenant shared between people and with God. Yet doing Law *biblically* deepens and extends the experience of being born-again. It is thus highly individualistic and even idiosyncratic, based on personal learning and intuitive feeling. The resulting balancing can split congregations like Beth Tikvah and send congregants seeking new communities. The issue matters so deeply to Messianics because it bears upon salvation itself. They view it as imperative to distinguish properly between societally based tradition and that which is godly and salvific: to confuse the two jeopardizes one's eternal future and defines the legalism they see embodied in evangelical ahistoricism and Jewish rabbinicism. They address ahistoricism by reading the Bible 'Jewishly', as my interlocutors often put it, focusing more than most Christians, and certainly than most charismatics, on debate and close reading. They address rabbinicism by incorporating ecstatic charismatic worship into Jewish-like forms. Whether or not the resulting rituals look the same to an outsider, Christian mimesis *always* seeks to imitate Jews imperfectly in order to follow God's will more perfectly. Their goal is to fulfil their desire for affective experiences of intimacy and love, while also discovering clear biblical paradigms that order human life.

Jewish affinity suggests a key problem in contemporary Christianity. What happens when people in one religion (Christianity) believe that their God incarnated in the body of a man whom they now associate with another religion (Judaism)? The issue is contemporary in the sense that, until the nineteenth century, replacement theology offered a generally satisfactory response: Judaism was not a religion on par with Christianity, and because Jews had abrogated their covenant with God, biblical references to them and to Israel were reinvested with new meaning in regard to the church. Undoubtedly, recent generations of Christian theologians and historians who have promoted the acceptance of Judaism as a religion and the recognition of Jesus' historical roots did not have in mind millions of Christians adapting and adopting Jewish rituals. Yet Jewish-affinity Christians are doing just that. They are building on trends in Jewish-Christian relations, adapting and redirecting them to the core of their faith lives.

NOTES

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¹ Messianic Judaism is so diffuse, and understudied, that current estimates are conjecture. They vary widely based on whether they come from inside or outside the movement and are limited to 'official' members (which may exclude GBs). In this case, 30,000 is from Juster & Hocken (2004: 10) and 1.5 to 2 million is from Joel Chernoff (2013), General Secretary of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA). Messianic Judaism's considerable on-line impact also has yet to be analysed.

² Previous estimates of GBs usually cite 40-50 per cent (e.g. Ariel 2013: 233; Dulin 2013: 44; Feher 1998: 47-50; Juster & Hocken 2004: 10). In my five-site comparison, I found at least 70 to 80 per cent (not counting a growing number of adherents included as Jews who lately discovered what they believe to be a Jewish 'lineage', as discussed in Imhoff & Kaell in press). The discrepancy between my study and others likely stems from how previous work relied on leaders' own estimates or were ethnographies of flagship congregations with comparatively high Jewish populations (e.g. Harris-Shapiro 1999; Rausch 1983; Reason 2005; Winer 1990). Although John Dulin also studied such a congregation, likely the same one as Feher (1998), his more recent article (2015) is a welcome intervention that focuses on GB involvement.

³ 'Jewish affinity' is from a recent Pew Research Center study (2013: chap. 7). By 'success' I mean aggregate growth. I emphasize the point because Messianic leaders portray this growth as a result of individuals raised as Jews ('secular' or otherwise) seeking spiritual alternatives or raising blended Jewish-Christian families. In my experience, people in this category comprise a trifling number of adherents in most congregations, and on-line.

⁴ The trends grouped here include (mainly Protestant) Christians who come to view themselves as 'genetically' Jewish, sometimes as the Lost Tribes of Israel. Another aspect among (mainly Catholic) Christians is 'crypto-Judaism' – the reclamation of descent from Iberian Jews converted in the Inquisitions (Hordes 1996; Kunin 2001; Neulander 1996). More broadly, since the early 1960s, US Catholics and mainline Protestants have promoted certain Jewish rituals, notably the Seder. All forms of affinity have burgeoned since the 1990s, and while such trends no doubt reinforce each other, not least because GBs may have been raised Catholic or mainline Protestant, I focus on evangelical/charismatic expressions more immediately relevant to Messianic Judaism.

⁵ Research comprised twelve months (2012-13) of participant observation by the author and two research assistants at five sites in three mid-sized North American cities, which I have left unnamed owing to the small number of congregations. I have also used pseudonyms for each of the churches and for all respondents. Besides regular attendance at worship and other activities, we conducted fifty-six long-form conversational interviews with GBs and congregational leaders. See Table 2 (Appendix) for basic information about the individuals featured in this article. I also did periodical reviews of Christian media, the full run of the Messianic magazine *Kesher*, and a set of six interviews with denominational leaders in 2010.

⁶ The two denominations are the United Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) and the much larger Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), with which two of my field sites affiliated. Two others affiliated

with evangelistic organizations, Ariel Ministries and Jewish Voice Ministries, and the smallest was unaffiliated. Congregations aim to be self-supporting, but in my experience most remain dependent on other churches or ministries aimed at Jewish evangelism. That their funding relies on their success at attracting Jews undoubtedly factors into leaders' inflated estimates of Jewish adherents (see notes 2 and 3). Congregations prefer ethnically Jewish leaders: in this sample, Rabbis Mike and David were raised Jewish. Silvio and Solomon believe they discovered their Jewish lineage as adults. Eric is gentile. See Table 1 (Appendix).

⁷ John Dulin's recent study positions dispensational millennialism as the basis for Messianic Jewish claims to authenticity (2015: 607). While this conclusion undoubtedly reflects the congregation he studied, my contention is that this theology cannot be understood apart from how it interacts with other cultural factors, noted above. Further, in my sample set, dispensationalism was present in each site but central in only three. Of these, one was strongly Pentecostal and its brand of millennialism differed greatly from Dulin's 'intellectual' and 'empirical' UMJC congregation.

⁸ (Non-Messianic) Jews accept conversion. A minority in the UMJC favours conversion for a few 'mature' gentiles, partly because they view it as a chance to legitimize all Messianic believers as followers of the Law. Often this minority overlaps with Postmissionary Messianic Judaism (PMJ), a small branch of the movement that is moving towards Orthodox Judaism (for more, see Nichol 2015; Power 2011: 82-4; Reason 2005; UMJC 2015).

⁹ Messianics translate religious terminology into Hebrew (e.g. Yeshua/Jesus, Brit Hadashah/New Testament, or Ruach HaKodesh/Holy Spirit). For clarity of prose, I have kept familiar words in English unless quoting directly.

¹⁰ Many evangelical Christians understand Isaiah 53 as revelation prophesying the attributes of Jesus. The New International Version Bible reads in part: '[H]e was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities/the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed'.

¹¹ Tensions also speak to how US evangelicals and (especially non-religious) Jews often clash on domestic politics, especially so-called 'morality issues' such as same-sex marriage. Jews have also led legal battles to ban prayers in schools and courts, a policy most evangelicals abhor. A sense of the political and class differences between Jews and Jewish-affinity Christians can be gleaned from Pew Research Center (2013: chap. 7).

¹² As I believe is typical, in this study only two congregations were actually proximate to Jews. When they are situated in Jewish areas, leaders tend to more closely regulate GB behaviour regarding Jewish ritualization. They also engage in outreach to Jews and, although GBs are not generally involved, all congregants are encouraged to invite Jews for services on holidays. A few GBs also 'pass' as Jews and attend local synagogues or Jewish classes during the week.

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Appendix

Table 1. Field sites (demography based on pastors' estimates)

Name	Pastor ^a	Place	Date founded	Weekly Attendance ^b	% GBs: Jews ^c	% Non-white	% Foreign-born	Charismatic/Pentecostal
Beth Melech Israel	Rabbi Mike	Southeast	2002	160	65:35	70	45	Yes but not formally
Beth Tikvah	Rabbi Silvio	Southwest	2002	115	75:25	60	25	Yes
Beth Yeshua	Rabbi Eric	Southwest	2006	100	60:40	25	10	Yes but not formally
Beit Ha-Moshiach	Pastor David	Northeast	2001	100	75:25	25	50	No
Kehilat Yeshua	Pastor Solomon	Northeast	2010	20	85:15	60	60	Yes

^a Leaders have varying levels of formal ordination and each one chooses the title 'rabbi' or 'pastor'. I follow each leader's preference.

^b Members constitute about half this number. Few congregations insist on formal membership.

^c My research assistant at Beth Yeshua estimated 70:30 was more accurate. Pastors include approximately 10 per cent of black and Latino attendees as 'ethnic' Jews. Messianic congregations are more than 60 per cent female, which is typical of US Christianity.

Table 2. Congregant profiles

Name	Congregation	Location	Age	Ethnicity	Family	Employment
Ron	Beth Tikvah	Southwest	66	White	Married, 2 adult children	Retired
Sharyla	Beth Melech Israel	South	49	African American	Married, 2 teenagers	Hair dresser
Joe	Beth Melech Israel	South	50	As above	As above	Small business owner
Gabriela	Ha-Moshiach	Northeast	35	Portuguese descent	Single, no children	Financial analyst
Karen	Beth Yeshua	Southwest	47	White	Married, 3 teenagers	Home maker
Eva	Beth Melech Israel	South	51	African American	Married, 3 adult children	Administrator (secretary)
Sherri	Beth Tikvah	Southwest	56	White	Married, 3 adult children	Home maker

Sous la Loi de Dieu : mimèse et disciples mimétiques parmi des chrétiens d'affinité judaïque

Résumé

Le judaïsme messianique, réseau de congrégations qui intègrent le rituel judaïque dans la vénération évangélique, est une branche d'un courant dans lequel de plus en plus de chrétiens du monde entier se tournent vers une « affinité judaïque ». À partir d'une comparaison multi-sites menée en Amérique du Nord, l'article examine l'un des débats internes les plus importants du judaïsme messianique : les « croyants gentils », qui ne sont pas ethniquement juifs, doivent-ils obéir aux lois bibliques ? Il avance qu'ils ne font pas qu'imiter médiocrement les juifs, comme le croient souvent les observateurs extérieurs et les chefs de leur propre mouvement. Leurs actions relèvent plutôt de la mimèse, sous deux formes complémentaires : mimèse des juifs et statut de « disciples mimétiques » de Jésus-le-Juif. Ces deux formes réunies forment un outil heuristique qui peut expliquer à la fois la propension des individus à la pratique judaïque et les manières socialement spécifiques dont elle se construit. L'auteur conclut que l'affinité judaïque reflète un problème crucial du christianisme contemporain : que se passe-t-il lorsque les croyants d'une religion (le christianisme) en viennent à croire que leur Dieu s'est incarné dans un homme qu'ils associent à présent à une autre religion (le judaïsme) ?

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