

The exact items of the lectures in Budapest are: **Monday** 4th of October at 11 o'clock, "*The roots of Christian faith in Genesis*". **Tuesday** 5th of October at 11 o'clock "*Isaiah 53 and the despiced Messiah of his despiced people*", **Wednesday** 6th of October 11 o'clock "*The signs of the Messiah*" and **Thursday** 7th of October at 9 o'clock "*The Meal of the Messiah in Jewish Sources*".

Lectures given in Buda-Pest by the Finnish dean and Dr theol. h.c. Risto Santala

PART I

"*The roots of Christian faith in Genesis*".

I feel today like Apostle Paul in **Acts 26**: "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you!" You know, I suppose, the book of **Demos Shakarian**, with the title "The Happiest People on Earth". I belong to them to day. It is a privilege to stand here as a gentile believer and to speak about **the Jewish roots of our Christian faith**. I should prefer to give my say in Hebrew. Even the small children speak it in Israel. And I think you are more intelligent! The British English or American English are lifeless languages for me. Paul said in the Acts that he wanted to "testify to small and great alike saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen" to Christ. So do we also. Paul himself "explained and declared" the word of God trying to convince the people "about Jesus *from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets*", as we read in the last chapter of Acts - and he "taught about the Lord Jesus Christ". The Gospel is according to the Swedish well known professor **David Hedegård** "the same as Jesus is and what He has done for us".

Jesus explained the Scriptures "*beginning with Moses and all the Prophets*", and he "opened the minds" of his disciples to understand what is written about him "in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms". These words found in Matthew 28 remind us of the 7th clause in the thirteen principles of **Maimonides**: "I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be unto him, was true, and that *he was the chief of the prophets!*" This is also the reason why we proceed our studies with the teachings of the "**Chumash**", the five books of Moses. We must only remember some of the main rules in Rabbinic exegesis. **Hillel's** third principle, "*binyan av mikatuv ehad*" means the grouping of Bible verses, opinions and facts into one "building", like a family. Furthermore, the rabbis taught that "*a biblical verse never loses its literal meaning*" regardless on how the verse may be employed in rabbinic interpretation. This principle affirms that the literal meaning is stable and primary and that the rabbinic interpretations are added matters and secondary to their nature, whatever their predecessors may have done with it before. The rabbinic writings repeat often also the Aramaic saying, "*ha be-ha talya*", that is "*this depends on that*" - thus *inner bridges* were constructed to connect the subject with the common message of the Bible. This is our aim, when we present the Messianic prophecies in Genesis.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MESSIAH IN THE CREATION ACCOUNT

Genesis begins with the creation of heaven and earth: the earth was without form, and void, "*tohu wa-bohu*". According to the Talmud, this chaos "*will not be settled until the Son of David will come*". The Talmudic Sages scented in this creation account the beginning of salvation plan

for humanity: *"The tradition of Elijah teaches that the world is to exist for six thousand years; In the first two thousand desolation; in the next two thousand the Torah will flourish and the next two thousand are the days of the Messiah, but on account of our sins, which were great, things turned out as they did."*(Sanh. 97a) We are living now in the year 5765 according to the Jewish calendar. The computer testing and evaluation of Egyptian and Assyrian chronologies made by Prof. **E.W. Faulstich** shows that there is probably a gap of 242 years in the Jewish estimation - the actual year would thus be about 6007. This may say that the Messianic era is going to end in our generation.

The severe words in the Jewish morning prayer that *"now on account of our sins, which were great, the Temple has been destroyed and the daily sacrifices have been annulled"* are related to the tradition of Elijah. The same wording is written also in the popular Hebrew "Siddur Tefilah ha-Shalem" in the order of the Passover sacrifice. Rabbi **Elia de Vidas**, who was active in Safed in Palestine in the 16th century, says likewise: *"Thus the Messiah suffered on account of our sins, and was wounded; He who does not wish the Messiah to be wounded for our transgressions may choose himself to suffer and carry his own sins."*

When the Bible speaks of how "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters", they see a reference to the Messiah. The Midrash Rabbah says in this context that, *this was the "spirit of the Messiah, as it is written in **Is. 11:2**, and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him"*. A couple of other writings also mention that this refers to the *"Anointed king"*. This kind of hint is understandable when we bear in mind the rabbis' view that even the names of the Messiah were determined before the creation of the world.

THE LIGHT OF THE MESSIAH IN THE CREATION ACCOUNT

God's first words in the Bible are: "Let there be light! And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good." When we study the creation account closely we notice that it was not until the fourth day that God created the "two great lights", the sun and the moon. The Sages understood this too to be a Messianic allusion. The Midrash known as **Pesikhta Rabbah**, which was read from the 9th century on in connection with feast days, asks, *"Whose is this light which falls upon the congregation of the Lord?" and answers, "It is the light of the Messiah"*. The **Yalqut Shimoni**, comprising catenae of Talmudic and Midrashic passages drawn up in the 12th and 13th centuries, adds to this exposition the words: *"This is the light of the Messiah, as is written in **Psalms 36:10**, 'In your light, we see light'"*.

The Rabbis considered **the Aramaic word Nehora**, 'light', to be one of the secret names of the Messiah, since we read in the Aramaic part of the book of **Daniel** that, "He knows what dwells in darkness, and *light* dwells with him" (**2.22**). Furthermore, on the strength of the prophecies of **Is.42:6 and 60:1-3** the Messiah is seen as "the light of the Gentiles". Did not Jesus announce that he was himself the "light of the world", and that, "whosoever follows me will never walk in darkness"? The Midrash understands the words of Daniel 2:22 Messianically: *"And Nehora dwells with him. This is the Messiah-King, for it is written: Arise, shine, for your light has come (**Is.60:1**)"*. Even **Psalms 43:3**, which is used in the prayers of the synagogue, is related often to the Messiah: *"Send forth your **light** and your **truth**, let them guide me."*

We can see from the above words that the associative Jewish method finds Messianic allusions in places where Christians have not seen them. The Apostle Paul says that this Christ-mystery "has been kept hidden for ages and generations" (**Col.1:26**). Could it be possible that with these words Paul was referring to Jewish tradition?

THE PROTO-EVANGEL

Part of our church's Messianic interpretation is inherited straight from Judaism. **Gen. 3:15**, often called the "proto-evangel", is found with a Christian explanation only from the time of **Irenaeus** in the second century. The NT does not refer directly to it. It has even been claimed by some scholars that there is "no hint of Messianism in it". The Aramaic Targum tradition, however, finds a central Messianic prophecy even here.

The Proto-evangel reads: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." The text speaks first of the "enmity" - or as it is Hebrew, "hatred", "*eivah*" - which came into the world on account of sin. Communion with God was broken and Man began to hide himself from His presence. The consequences of the Fall were sin, sickness and death. The Bible speaks of the personification of evil in the Devil. The Wisdom of Solomon, an Apocryphal book from the second century before Christ, says that, "*Because of Satan's jealousy death came into the world.*" One of the Messiah's tasks is just to conquer the death.

Since the style of exposition in the Midrash is to elucidate "every single detail" of the Torah, it is worth looking at the whole message of the Proto-evangel using more or less the same method. According to the Rabbis *the Messiah will effect a "reparation", **tiqun ha-olam**, in the world.* Theologians of today have begun to discuss the concept of "rehabilitation". When Christ atoned for our sins, bore our sicknesses and conquered death, he "rectified" the consequences of the Fall. **Daniel 9:24** describes this Messianic commission more briefly and clearly. The Anointed One will come "to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness and to bring in everlasting righteousness". In this way the seed of the woman is to crush the head of the serpent. These aspects of the Proto-evangel are handled figuratively in both Jewish and Christian exegesis.

The **Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel** states here that if the woman's offspring observes the Law they will be in a position to crush the serpent's head: "*And they will finally make peace in the days of the Messiah-King*". The Targum plays on the words *aqev*, "heel", and *iqvah*, "end". The **Jerusalem Targum** calls attention to the endtimes when it interprets the verse saying: "*They will make peace in the end, at the close of the end of the days, in the days of the Messiah King.*" The Aramaic word for "making peace", *shefiyuta*, resembles the Hebrew word for "crush", *yeshufkhah*, and some Aramaicists would accept the translation, "*Finally, in the days of the Messiah King, he will be wounded in the heel.*" This is in keeping with **verse 16 of Psalm 22**, which in Christian exegesis is understood as a hint to the Messiah. In many languages this verse has been translated, according to the most probable reading of the original, as "They have pierced my hands and feet". Similarly **Zechariah 13:6** reads in Hebrew: "What are those wounds between your hands? (*bein jadekha*) and he will answer, They were struck into me at the house of my friends."

The most common understanding of this verse among the Rabbis is illustrated by the so-called '*Jonathan's interpretation*': "*They will be healed (from the bite of the serpent) means that they will receive an antidote; Making peace means peace and security; and He will be their healer in the future, in the days of the Messiah, that there will be peace and rest.*"

In the traditional footnotes for the story about Nicodemus (**John 3**) there is a reference to the **16th** chapter of the **Wisdom of Solomon**. Jesus spoke about the snake which Moses lifted up in

the desert. This old source explains, as I will show in the item about the signs of the Messiah, as follows: *"For you gave them a token of salvation to remind them of your law's command. He who turned toward it (the brazen serpent) was saved, not by what he saw, but by you, the Saviour of all - "You lead men down to the gates of Hades and back again."* **The Targum** explains that we must *"lift"* and *"commit"* our hearts to the Mimra, the Word of God, in order to be saved.

But who is this "seed of the woman"? Why is the personal pronoun *hû*, "he", used of it? Is the "seed" to be considered as a singular or a collective noun? The Targum certainly associates "him" with the Messiah King. But does the "seed" concept have Messianic implications in other contexts too? Indeed it does: the Rabbis discuss this very issue at great length. In **Gen.4:25** we read: *"God has granted me another seed in place of Abel."* **Rabbi Tanhuma**, "the seal of the Midrashim", mentions that *"here are we dealing with another seed who is from another place. And who is he? He is the Messiah-King."* **Midrash Ruth V:9** speaks about the coming of the Messiah and states that once *"the blessing will be in the stomach of that righteous woman"*, Ruth. In **Isaiah 48:19** and **2 Samuel 7:12** the concepts "seed", *"zera"* and *"me'aya"*, the "stomach" or probably the "uterus" are used side by side.

The promise of Abraham's seed in Gen. 22:18, which occupies a central position in Christian theology, is also seen in Midrashim as referring to the Messiah: *"And through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."* **Midrash Rabbah** discusses the subject extensively and declares that *"in the days of the Messiah, Israel will be compared to the sand of the sea."* Paul, in **Gal. 3:16**, understood the meaning of "Abraham's seed" in a similar way: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds', meaning many people, but 'and to your seed', meaning one person, who is Christ." Here Paul uses the typical Midrash *al tiqra* formula, "read not so, but so" -- a promise given in the singular is taken as referring to Christ as the Messiah.

The prominence is given here to the Messiah-King by the Targums. He will make **peace** in place of the Proto-evangel's **"enmity"**. This is reflected in Paul's letter to the **Ephesians**, although we do not know whether there are any intrinsic connections. In chapter **2:14-16** we read, "For he himself is our *peace*, who has made the two one, and has *destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility* - thus *making peace* - through the cross, by which he put to death their *hostility*. He came and preached *peace*". The rabbis explain that there are 613 main ordinances in the Torah - around it there is the so called **"seyag ha-torah"**, a *"dividing wall"* of additional ordinances. It helps for the believers to remain in the bosom of Judaism.

There is a Latin phrase, "Non multa sed multum". According to it we ought not to present "many different things" of the matter but rather "a multiful quantity" of one and the same item. We have applied here the same mode of presentation.

THE MESSIAH WHO WILL BREAK DOWN THE HEDGE AROUND THE LAW

The enmity, the barrier and the dividing wall present a kind of figurative language typical to the Sages. It was commonly accepted as a precept in the rabbinical literature that every single detail of God's revelation, the Torah, should be interpreted. The discussions about **Perez in Genesis 38:29** gives additional light to salvation history.

It is actually to Perez that the observation about the Messiah rectifying the havoc caused by the Fall is related. The **Midrash Rabbah** describes the new phase which began with Perez: *"This is the history of Perez and it has a profound significance - When the Holy One created his world*

there was as yet no Angel of Death - But when Adam and Eve fell into sin, all generations were corrupted. When Perez arose, history began to be fulfilled through him, because from him the Messiah would arise, and in his days the Holy One would cause death to be swallowed up, as it is written, He will destroy death forever (Is. 25:8)."

The roots of this mystery in the history of salvation reach right back to the account of the fall of humanity. The Swedish rabbi **Gottlieb Klein** wrote at the beginning of last century that by means of the method known as *notarikon*, an aspect where each letter of a word was regarded as an initial letter of another word, that the three Hebrew letters of the word "Adam" were interpreted as referring to Adam, David, and the Messiah. In this way Christ will "correct" Adam's fall. Perhaps this is for some people just fanciful nonsense, but it derives from the Messianic expectation of believers who lived in ancient times.

We have already come across the discussion associated with the name of Perez, regarding the Messiah as the conqueror of death. *Ben Parets*, "son of Perez" is actually one of the best known cryptic Messiah epithets. In Matthew's genealogy of Jesus the name appears in the form 'Phares': "And Judah begat Phares" (**Matt. 1:3**). Therefore Jesus was, in a sense the "Son of Perez". The "Seal of the Midrashim", R. **Tanhuma Bar Abba**, speaks again and again of the Messiah in connection with Perez. "He is the final saviour, the Messiah-King." Tanhuma states that "there are sinners who through their falling have sustained great loss, and those who have benefitted from their misdemeanours." "Thus Judah profited, because from him came forth Perez and Hezron from whom are descended David and the Messiah-King, he who will save Israel. Behold how great the difficulties the Holy One indeed gave until he was to raise up the Messiah-King from Judah, he of whom it is written, "And the spirit of the Lord will be upon him."

The **Midrash Rabbah** discusses about Judah and Tamar at greater length. Firstly the half-humorous observation is made that, "Judah was busy taking a wife, while the Holy One, blessed be He, was creating the light of the Messiah". One of the Rabbinic expository works known as "**The Priestly Gift**" says of this that, "The last Saviour is the Messiah, the Son of David, who is descended from Judah's son Perez". The **Midrash** continues: "This is the Messiah-King; as it is written, A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse and The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion." (**Is. 11:1** and **Ps. 110:2**) The Rabbis' explanation adds: "This is the Messiah, who will soon appear, because it is written of him, that the one who breaks open the way will go up before them." (**Micah 2:13**) In Hebrew the word "porets", the "breaker", is the same root as Perez.

RaMBaN, R. Moses Ben Nahman, who lived towards the end of the 13th century, describes the birth of Perez as follows: "He was encircled by a **hedge**, and he was enclosed within it. That is why it is said 'So this is how you have broken through the hedge and come out from within it'." Perez was "**the first-born through the power of the Most High**, as it is written, 'I will give to him a first-born son'. This was written about the holy person who is to come, David, the King of Israel - long may he live. Those who are wise will understand."

What would "those who are wise" understand, and what is meant by "breaking through the hedge"? Historically this well depicts what happened when Christianity broke out of the Judaic mould, as we can see from the history.

It would appear that the development of Judaism into a religion of law took place at a very early stage. The prophet Isaiah wrote ca. 700 years before Christ that instead of being the "word of repose", religion had become a demand: "Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little

here, a little there - so that they will go and fall backwards, be injured and snared and captured" (28:10-13). And the fear of God was nothing more than "rules taught by men" (29:13). The **Targum of Jonathan** from the time of the Second Temple explains that God made Man of 248 bones and 365 sinews, the number of days in the solar year (together = 613). *In addition to these 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not' commands there was a separate group of ancillary commands which made up the 'hedge around the Law'*. In the shelter of this fold the devout Jew had to live.

Jesus, in his teaching, was forced to speak about this very misapplication. Referring to the words of **Isaiah 28:10-13** and **29:13** he said: "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men - Then the disciples came to him and asked, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this? He replied, Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them alone" (**Matt. 15:8 -14**). Thus Jesus truly broke in his way through the hedge of the Law.

Moses, when he instituted the commandments, said to the people: "Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you - *do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it!*" Jewish scholars have, of course, tried to give the **taryag**, the 613 precepts, a foundation in the Pentateuch, but in both these and in the **seyag**, the ancillary rules, there are elements which are of much later origin. If we read the Rabbinic precepts from 362 to 365 they forbid to take **the king** from "those who do not belong to the seed of Israel, even if he would be *ger tzedek*", a righteous proselyte. They warn the king also from taking many horses, or wives or "private property for himself". In the time of Pentateuch there were of course no kings. The "thou shalt not" commands include also prohibitions for the priests not to eat certain things or "to enter the Temple with "tattered clothes" or "disheveled hair". The Temple was not built until in the times of Solomon.

Paul spoke about this "dividing wall, hedge around the Law and the Law with its commandments and regulations" as we saw in **Ephesians 2**. The purpose of Jesus as the Messiah was to create in himself a new relation with God. Christ, by his sacrificial death, has broken down the hostility between the gentiles and the Jews. "And they who are wise shall understand", claimed RaMBaN.

Isaiah 8:14, which the Talmud interprets as signifying "the Messiah, Son of David" , describes this same 'breaking through', which is connected with the Perez illustration: "He will be a sanctuary, a rock of offence and stone of stumbling to both the houses of Israel, a snare and a trap to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." All of these features are well applicable to Jesus: he was "the first-born through the power of the Most High", he unintentionally created a breach between the mother and daughter religions, and he became "the stone which the builders rejected". It is amazing to see that in the writings of the most widely recognised Jewish exegetes help us to understand the Plan of Salvation and some of Paul's more difficult teachings.

THE MESSIAH WHO WILL RULE THE NATIONS

It has been often emphasized by Christian scholars that "the critical science admits only two prophetic texts from the OT literature as Messianic", **the first of them being Jacob's blessing**. Christian exegesis contents itself here with the general statement that the Messiah is of the tribe of Judah. The old Jewish interpretation sees a Messianic reference in the very first words of that blessing, which speak about "the end of the days". Rabbi **Qimhi** has stated, "*Everywhere that there is mention made of the last days, the days of the Messiah are intended.*"

The saying about the end of the days makes its first appearance in the Bible in Jacob's blessing, in **Gen. 49:1**; "Then Jacob called for his sons and said: Gather around so that I can tell you what will happen to you *at the end of the days*." The blessing which Judah received speaks of the Messiah as the ruler of the nations. *All the expository works of the Rabbis beginning with the Targumim and Midrashim see here a clear Messianic prophecy.* The various shades of the Messianic expectation can be seen in their interpretations almost as if refracted through a prism.

Verses 11 and 12 read: "*The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.*"

In Christian theology and in Judaism the attempt has been made to deny altogether the doctrine of the end times. **Martin Buber**, the Jewish professor considered as a master of religious dialogue, once told me in a private conversation an old anecdote bearing on Jacob's blessing: The Holy Spirit departed from Jacob, the story goes, when he mentioned the last days. "Personally", Buber explained, "I completely reject eschatology, the doctrine of the end times. Eschatology is not history, neither is history eschatology. The prophets were not fortunetellers; they wished to reveal what was necessary and relevant to their own time, just as God reveals himself in each age according to our needs."

I can well understand Buber's attitude. It brings to mind the words in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, that the prophets recorded of the visions they received "*only that which is needful for Mankind*". Even **Midrash Rabbah** maintains that, "*Jacob wished to reveal the end times, but they were hidden from him*".

Christian exegesis has considered Jacob's blessing Messianic since the time of **Justin Martyr** in the middle of the second century. The Jewish Messianic understanding of this text is founded on older material. **Targum Onqelos** says of Judah's sceptre that it will not depart "*until the Messiah comes, he who has the power to reign*". **Targum Jonathan** puts it that the verse refers to "*the age of the Messiah-King*". **Targum Yerushalmi** speaks of the time when "*the Messiah-King will come*". The Midrash literature attaches to the blessing some additional features based on the nature of the Hebrew language. **Midrash Rabbah** states that, "The sceptre will not depart from Judah - until Shilo ('he') comes, *this is the Messiah-King*."

In this connection the Sages discuss such matters as the ancestry of the celebrated **Rabbi Hillel** and declare that, "A genealogical table was found in Jerusalem which said that he was descended from David". "*He will tether his donkey to a vine*", the Midrash continues, "*means the city which he has chosen*". The unusual word *tyroh* used here for donkey or colt sounds the same as *irô*, "his city", ie. Jerusalem. Then follows a shattering observation: "**Rabbi Hanin** said that *Israel will not require the teaching of the Messiah-King, because it is written in Is. 11:10; In that day the Gentiles will rally to the root of Jesse, but not Israel.*" The commentary known as **The Priestly Gift** explains what this means from the point of view of the Torah or Law: "*The Messiah-King will clearly elucidate for them the Torah and the errors into which they have thus far fallen*".

And what significance do the images of the Donkey and the Vine have? The Talmud and Midrash Tanhuma have devoted particular attention to the symbols of the donkey and the vine in Jacob's blessing. "**Our Rabbi Obadiah**" describes Jacob's blessing as follows: "The Messiah will not come on a warhorse, for he is the King of Peace -- On the other hand he will tether his donkey to a vine, which means that his kingdom of peace will reign in Israel, which is likened to

a vine - And when it is made known that he comes in peace then the nations will obey him - And the weak, who are left behind, will hear him and return to him."

In the Talmud it is said that *if someone dreams about a donkey, he may hope for the Messianic salvation*. Both the Talmudic and the Zohar traditions state that, if someone *"dreams of a vine he may look forward to seeing the Messiah, for it is written: He will tether his donkey to a vine"*. The symbols of the donkey and the vine are further clarified by the fact that in Aramaic both words are written in exactly the same way in the unpointed writing: *hamara*, "donkey", and *hamra*, "vine". These Aramaic words do not, of course, appear in the Hebrew OT text.

The comparison of the Messiah to a vine also appears in the NT. Jesus declared in the 15th chapter of John that, **"I am the true vine** and my Father is the gardener - Remain in me and I will remain in you". It is perfectly possible that the traditional thoughts preserved in the Talmud regarding hopes attending pious dreams were known even in Jesus' time. The background of the Vine allegory can thus be better understood.

In their translations of Gen. 49:12, **Targums Jonathan and Yerushalmi** speak of *"the eyes of the Messiah-King"*. *How beautiful they are, "as resplendent as wine"*. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT made ca. 200 BC, follows however more or less the same interpretation as the Targums do. The Revelation of St. John was written according to the words of the Medieval **Rabbi Abraham Ben Ezra** *"under the power of the Holy Spirit" and it was "acceptable for all Jews to read"*. The Revelation says three times about the eyes of Jesus that they were like "a flame of fire". The Gospels tell us also how Jesus "looked at" the rich young man "and loved him", or how he "turned and looked straight at Peter" who, broken by that glance, started to weep bitterly.

The Jews have dreamed of the Messiah as a "noble vine," something which is brought out by the Hebrew word *sôrêqâh* (**Gen. 49:11**), a vine yielding purple grapes, the richest variety. Jesus is the true vine. He will cleanse his people with the "blood of grapes". And all Israel will be called as Jews on account of the blessing which Judah received. The main thing, however, is that the Messiah has descended from Judah. In this way Jacob's blessing already reflects all the shades of the Jewish Messianic expectations as if seen refracted through a prism. The book of Genesis makes a bridge to the New Testament and its message.