Negotiating a Messianic Identity

A Study on the Formation of Messianic Identity through

Space, Art, and Language in Modern Israel

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Abstract

At the intersection of contemporary Judaism and Christianity, Messianic Jews continue to negotiate an identity that tries to balance a Jewish heritage with faith in Yeshua. Messianic Jews challenge contemporary Jews and Christians alike by mixing elements from both traditions. By balancing various aspects from Jewish and Christian tradition, Messianic Jews raise questions about the construction and dynamic of groups identity. How do they balance an identity between two world religions?

This thesis is a qualitative study that looks at how identity is being negotiated through space, art, and language in the modern State of Israel. In the light of social identity approaches, the thesis analyzes how Israeli Messianic Jews balance a Jewish identity and being a follower of Yeshua. By analyzing two Messianic congregations from different ends of the spectrum within the Messianic movement in Israel, the study seeks to understand how Israeli Messianic Jews create and negotiate a Messianic identity in the religious melting pot, that is Jerusalem.

The study presents the diversity within the Messianic Movement in Israel today and how they in various degree relate to Jewish and Christian tradition. It shows how historical and socio-political factors play an essential part in identity formation and negotiation.

Acknowledgement

The process of constructing this thesis has been both challenging and intriguing. Messianic Jews continue to both fascinate and challenge me in how I reflect on the concept of identity and religious and cultural belonging. During this project, I have been lucky to have had a lot of people that have guided me, inspired me, challenged me, and supported me in a way that made this project achievable.

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1. Introduction

At the intersection of contemporary Christianity and Judaism, Messianic Jews are challenging the established religious boundaries and are negotiating an identity that tries to balance a Jewish heritage with faith in Yeshua.[1] Messianic Judaism is often seen as "a hybrid blend of Judaism and Christianity," [2] and has fascinated and infuriated Jews, Christians and scholars whether Jews or Christian. Jewish followers of Yeshua, today more commonly referred to as Messianic Jews, is not a new phenomenon. Most of Yeshua's first followers were Jews. Throughout history, they have taken on various forms, like the Ephraimites, the Nazarenes, Jewish Christianity, and Hebrew Christianity. The group of Jewish Yeshua-followers challenges the boundaries of contemporary Judaism and Christianity by mixing elements from both traditions. This raises questions about the development of group identity and who or what is shaping identity as well as about what role out-groups and society play in the development of group identity.

Messianic Jews are often perceived as a threat against contemporary Judaism and Christianity. Such sentiments are based on the long, troubling and violent past between the two religious' groups. Christianity has a long history of being anti-Jewish, but the development of Christian Zionism and post-supersessionism shows a development towards a more positive Christian view on Judaism and Jews.

Evangelism is a central part of the Messianic movement which challenges the broader Jewish community due to the history of Jews being forced to convert to Christianity. Today, Messianic Jews are often viewed as apostates by religious Jews and are no longer considered Jews but Christians. When the state of Israel was established in 1948, it was a dream come true for the Zionist movement that had worked on creating a haven for Jews in the Land of Israel. While Messianic Jews identify themselves as Jews, the fact that they are considered

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[1] Most Messianic Jews use the name 'Yeshua' rather than "Jesus," which reflect the Hebrew/Aramaic name rather than the Greek "Iesous" from which we have the English 'Jesus.' The cantor in the Messianic synagogue even challenged the commonly used term "Yeshua" and referred to him as "Rav Yeshua," "Yeshua Ben-Yosef" or "Yeshua ben-David."

[2] Patricia A. Power, "Blurring the Boundaries," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Vol. 15,* No. 1 (2011), 70.

apostates by the broader Jewish community makes it difficult to make aliyah[3]. On the other hand, the establishment of the state of Israel is interpreted as fulfillment of prophecies and the beginning of the end time by many Messianic Jews and Evangelical Christians.[4] This makes Israel a special place in the eyes of Jews, Christians and Messianic Jews all over the world.

1.1. Background and Research Question

After having lived in Jerusalem and worked with people from the Messianic movement, I became fascinated by this group and how tried to balance between the Jewish and Christian world, and by doing so, trying to find their path. My first impression was that Messianic Jews did not refer to themselves as Christians even though they believed in Yeshua. This made me curious. How does someone express a faith of Yeshua outside the Christian label? While some did not mind being called a Christian by others, most referred to themselves as Messianic Jews or follower of Christ. Secondly, they continually tried to find the balance between being Jewish without it challenging their faith in Yeshua. It reminded me of children of parents from different countries and how they tried to find their own culture by mixing elements from the cultures of both parents. Through conversation, I found multiple answers and perspective which got me even more intrigued. Who are these people and how do they find their place a modern Jewish state?

Studies on contemporary Messianic Jews are limited and tend to focus on theological perspectives or is connected to religious dialogue. However, I believe that the Messianic movement is intriguing because of its hybridity and diversity. Messianic Jews are fascinating because they try to maintain a connection to two religious groups which by others are viewed as separate. The movement is still quite young and continues to try and find its understanding of what it means to be a Jewish follower of Yeshua.

Based on this, my research question is:

"How does Messianic Jews express and negotiate their identity?"

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[3] *Aliyah* is a Hebrew word and translate to "elevation" or "going up" and is commonly used when talking about Jews moving and settling in Israel.

[4] Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism. A rabbi's Journey through Religious Change in America.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 61.

At this point, the research question is too extensive and needs further developed. To be able to do this, I will in the next section present previous research on Jewish Yeshua-followers and contemporary Messianic Jews to better understand the context in which Messianic Jews operate and to see which areas that have not been studied before. In section 1.3., based on previous research, I will develop my research question.

1.2. Previous research

In this section, I will discuss previous research on Jewish Yeshua-followers and contemporary Messianic Jews. In the first section, I will look at what researcher has written about the first Jewish Yeshua-follower. I will continue by looking at various theories on the separation between Judaism and Christianity and how Christianity was created into a non-Jewish religion. In the next section, I will present studies on contemporary studies on Messianic Judaism.

1.2.1. Historical studies

As noted in the introduction, Jewish Yeshua-followers are not a new phenomenon. If Yeshua and his first followers were Jews, then how were the boundaries between Christians and Jews created? Daniel Boyarin talks about the concept of hybridity and how hybrids tend to create a need for borders.[5] It is when the boundaries are challenged that one needs to consider what the borders are, who is an insider and who is not. Boyarin looks at the difference between being a Jew before and after the rise of Christianity. He argues that it was sometime after the rise of Christianity that Judaism as a religion was established.[6] Before the Christian Era, a Jew would be viewed as something of opposite of a Greek and was therefore first of all an ethical identity rather than a religious one.

Explaining the separation between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, earlier studies talked about a "parting of the ways" in which "two linked paths branched off from a single road, never to cross or converge again."[7] Based on this, Judaism and Christianity were often

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[5] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 13-19.

[6] Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or "Judaism"/ "Christianity"." In *The Ways That Never Parted,* ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 69.

[7] Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko, *The Ways That Never Parted* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.

referred to as relatives, Judaism as being the mother religion of Christianity. Boyarin, as seen above, Becker and Reed, among others, argues that it is a misleading concept because it does not portrait the complexity of the development of Jewish and Christian institution.[8] As Boyarin argued, the concept of religion was different before the rise of Christianity and one cannot talk about a Jewish institution in late Antiquity as we do today.

In the book, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* Magnus Zetterholm tries to understand how Christianity became a non-Jewish religion at the beginning of the second century. He looks at Antioch and argues that the formation of Christianity as a non-Jewish religion was the result of the socio-political situation in the Roman Empire and ideological elements within the Jewish fraction within the Jesus movement.[9] According to Zetterholm, the separation between Jews and Gentile emerged from within the Jesus movement rather than between "believers" and "non-believers."[10] Looking both at the socio-political situation as well as ideologies is essential since these two elements live side by side and interact with each other. Zetterholms book is intriguing because it shows how various factors play various parts in the formation of identity and highlights the role of intragroup conflict in the development of Judaism and Christianity.

Understanding the concept and challenges with theories on hybridity and "parting of the ways" are valuable, because contemporary Jews, Christians, and Messianic Jews and how they interact are to some degree shaped by the development of Jewish and Christian institutions and their historical relations. While Judaism and Christianity at some point became separate entities, they still to some degree communicated and negotiated their identity in relation to each other by comparing and reflecting on who was considered an insider and who was an outsider. While the concept of Jewish followers of Yeshua is not new, the context in which Jewish Yeshua-followers live in today is quite different from the ones in Late Antiquity.

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[8] Becker and Reed. *The Ways that Never Parted.*

[9] Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch. A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation Between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 231.

[10] Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch,* 222.

Patricia Power has written about the Messianic Judaism in connection to Judaism, and argues that Messianic Judaism *"is an ongoing discursive response to the historical and persistent colonizing work of Christianity, which in the past largely denuded Jews of their Jewishness, as a requisite to a full and true Christian identity."*[11] Historically, the Gentile believers need to create their own identity separate from the Jews came at the price of Jewish believers connection to the Jewish world. Messianic Judaism is not only response to contemporary Judaism and Christianity, but also to the religious past that has deprived them of their Jewishness. In the following section, I will look at studies on contemporary Messianic Jews.

1.2.2. Contemporary Messianic Jews

As mentioned in section 1.1., the research on Messianic Jews is limited. Still, there a few studies that need some consideration.

In her thesis, Patricia Power tries from a philosophical approach to understanding how Messianic Judaism is or is not as a sub-category of Judaism. She starts by looking at the rise of the Messianic Movement in connection to Jews for Jesus (JFJ), a Protestant Christian evangelical mission outreach led by a convert from Judaism, that happened around 1970 in the United States. JFJ grew and became a large organization that proclaimed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. The proclamation of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah challenged the broader Jewish community which led to the need to establish more clear boundaries that demonstrated that Messianic Jews were Christians, not Jews. In her papers, she continues to reflect on and discuss the in-between space that Messianic Jews operate in. She writes;

> … exploring the process by which Jews and non-Jews have negotiated the in-between spaces helps to integrate the Messianic movement into the history of Jewish-Christian relations in America, and allows us to see how the interplay of practice, belief, and ethnicity can be used to construct and deconstruct religious identity and set social boundaries.[12]

Her research shows how the hybridity of Messianic Judaism is a source of information not only about Messianic Jews but allows us to study how or why the boundaries are created in

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[11] Power, "Blurring the Boundaries," 70.

[12] Power, "Blurring the Boundaries," 85.

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the first place. Her research also highlights the importance of Yeshua in connection to the Jewish identity since it has become commonly understood within the broader Jewish community that to follow Yeshua is to give up ones Jewishness. Because Messianic Jews try to balance the Jewish and Christian traditions in an attempt to be a part of both worlds, it is essential to understand the dynamic relationship between Judaism and Christianity, at the same time; how Messianic Jews express their identity may also reflect the Jewish-Christians relations.

Through their very existence, Messianic Jews challenge the definition of "who is a Jew?" Reconstructionist rabbi and scholar, Carol Harris-Shapiro studied a Messianic congregation in the United States. In her book, "Messianic Judaism," she discusses some of the challenges with religious boundaries within the broader Jewish community that excludes Messianic Jews from being Jewish;

> To make religious ideology the touchstone of Jewish acceptability by excluding Messianic Jews for wrong belief threatens to exclude a large number of Jews who have no religious belief, or whose religious beliefs can be judged as heretical. "Correct" historical or communal attachment is a matter of strong intra-Jewish disagreement. Even being born Jewish is a matter of dispute. Who, in fact, truly belongs in the Jewish community? Far from retaining an essential Jewish core that Messianics abandon, American Jews cannot agree on what that core is.[13]

Through her book, Harris-Shapiro is skeptical to the Messianic movement, its perspectives, and how they challenge the Jewish identity, but her quote touches upon a crucial issue of excluding Messianic Jews from the broader Jewish community. As she writes, by rejecting Messianic Jews because of wrong belief challenges the fact that many that are considered Jews today are atheist. Still, her quote is radical and not many religious Jews would agree, but it touches upon the essences in the discussion about who is Jew is. Is being a Jew an ethnic or religious identity and according to whom?

In the book "Introduction to Messianic Judaism" from 2013, David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts have collected a wide range of articles that gives an insight into Messianic Judaism.

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[13] Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism,* 184-185.

The book presents historical factors, looks at various aspects of Messianic life, and discusses the relations with both the Jewish and the Christian world. The book gives an overview and introduction to Messianic Judaism but lacks to some degree in the depth and the diversity within the movement.

1.2.3. Studies on Messianic Jews in Israel

While Rudolph and Willitts's book has a chapter on Messianic Judaism in the land of Israel, most of the articles and books on contemporary Messianic Jews focus on the United States, which is the place where the movement started. While the American context is essential to understand the beginning and early development of the movement, Israel is an interesting case study due to the importance of the land of Israel and city of Jerusalem as a part of the Messianic identity. Not only that, these two countries are very different when it comes to language, political climate, culture, and religious landscape. Today, the state of Israel is the only Jewish state in the world. In both Judaism and Christianity Jerusalem and the land of Israel plays a unique role. In his article, "Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel," Akiva Cohen argues that Israeli Messianic Jews are to some degree different American Messianic Jews. Israelis often have a strong national identity, but rather few embrace a more traditional Jewish identity.[14] For example, while there are several Messianic synagogues in the United States, they are uncommon in Israel.

In 1999, Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt conducted a survey on Messianic congregations in Israel.[15] The book, "Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel," presents the various congregations in Israel and looks at aspects such as the history of the congregations, theological character, leadership, membership and weekly service. While the survey gives an introduction to the Messianic landscape in Israel, it is in many ways outdated. Through the twenty years since the study was conducted and published, the movement has continued to develop. A new survey is in development but is still not finished.

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[14] Akiva Cohen, "Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 109.

[15] Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt, *Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel*, (Jerusalem: United Christian Council in Israel in cooperation with the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, 1999).

One of the few studies done explicitly on Messianic identity in Israel is the doctoral thesis of Keri Zelson Warshawsky, "Returning to Their Own Borders". Her thesis is written from an anthropological perspective and seeks to study "…the sociocultural construction of identity among contemporary Israeli Messianic Jews."[16] Her findings indicate an "ongoing struggle within the Israeli Messianic Jewish community to construct a viable identity somewhere between the current extremes of non-Messianic Jewishness and non-Jewish Messianism."[17]

1.2.4. Summary

In this section, some of the previous research on Jewish Yeshua-followers and Messianic Jews have been discussed. Because of the connection between the first followers of Yeshua and contemporary Messianic Jews, research on Jewish Yeshua-followers in Late Antiquity and the separation between Judaism and Christianity is essential. Comparing the understanding of the Jewish and Christian identity in late antiquity in connection with the present categories shows that the categories have changed and are influenced by the historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, historical studies are essential to understand the dynamic between contemporary Jews, Christians, and Messianic Jews.

As seen above, the research on contemporary Messianic Jews are limited both in its approach, choices of topics and more often than not focuses on American Messianic Jews. While Messianic Jews challenge the boundaries of contemporary Judaism and Christianity, they are still developing and negotiating their identity. In the light of previous research, there is a need to develop the research question which will be discussed in the next section.

1.3. Developing the research question

Looking at previous research one can see that the United States is the leading geographical area that has been studied. While the Messianic movement in the United States is essential due to it being the place where the movement started, other areas are of interest. Israeli Messianic Jews are not many, but they are unique in the sense that they live in the "promised land" of the Jews. It is also the only Jewish state in the world which raises the question; how

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[16] Warshawsky, Keri Z. "Returning to Their Own Borders," (PhD. Diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008), 12.

[17] Warshawsky, "Returning to Their Own Borders," 220.

does the Jewish society affect their continues balance between Jewish and Christian traditions?

One of the areas of study that require further research and discussion is the area of the construction and development of group identity in the space in-between. Warshasky's thesis presented how Israeli Messianic Jews struggle to find an identity between two extremes. There are various angles from which identity may be analyzed. One that is often neglected is the role of space and art, especially in connection with Messianic Jews. Sitting in a Lutheran church in Norway some years ago, a Messianic Jew from Israel asked me, "Why are there so many crosses in here?" Baffled by the question I answered, "Yeshua died on a cross." The Messianic Jew replied "… and rose again." The conversation intrigued me. It showed how differently one could interpret religious space and art even within the same faith in Yeshua. It led me to the question, how is religious space created to a specific group and how does it shape their identity?

Because the area of space and art often is neglected, it is an area in which many people have not reflected enough on. It is, therefore, a challenging topic to discuss. One aspect that many Messianic Jews have reflected on is the issue of language. As mentioned in section 1.1., many Messianic Jews would not consider themselves Christians; some even had various ways to express their identity through language and speech. While the study of space and art within the Messianic movement might be challenging, I believe there is a lot to learn from how they have created a Messianic space and how that space is used. By combining the issue of language with the aspect of space and art, I hope to grasp more aspects and better understand how a Messianic identity is negotiated in the State of Israel.

Based on previous research, I have developed my research question:
"How do Messianic Jews, through space, art and language, express and negotiate their identity in a modern Jewish state?"

To be able to discuss and answer my research question, different aspects need addressing. I have developed three sub-questions to help me answer my research question.

Sub-Questions

1. What does the congregational space look like in relation to Jewish and Christian traditions, and how do the members relate to the physical space?

2. How is the congregational space used and how does it relate to Jewish and Christian traditions?

3. How do Messianic Jews in Israel express their identity through language and speech?

To be able to understand how the Messianic identity is expressed through the use of space and art, it is essential to look at how the congregational space looks like and how the congregation uses elements from Jewish or Christian tradition. To be able to understand the Messianic identity from the perspective of a Messianic Jew, I have added a question which seeks to understand the connection between the space and the people that uses it.

The second sub-question relates to how the congregational space is used. The question seeks to understand how Messianic uses the congregational space and how it may reflect an identity. Again, by comparing with Jewish and Christian practices, the question focuses on understanding how Messianic congregations negotiate between Jewish and Christian styles and practices.

The last sub-question looks at the issue of language and how Messianic Jews themselves uses words to communicate their identity. By letting Messianic Jews use their word to express identity, I hope to see if the use of language corresponds with the use of space and art, to better understand the negotiating process of the Messianic identity in Israel.

In this section, I have developed the research question in the light of previous research. By developing the research question, I have been able to narrow down the field of research to discuss identity formation through space, art, and language in the modern state of Israel. Based on the new research question, I have created three sub-questions which will be essential in the process of answering the research question. In the next section, in light of the research question, I will discuss various theories that will be used as my theoretical framework.

1.4. Theory

To be able to discuss how Messianic identity is being negotiated, I will use the theoretical framework of social identity approaches. In this section, I will discuss group belief theory, social cohesion theory, Social identity theory (SOT), and self-categorization theory (SIT) to try and better understand how previous scholars have viewed the construction and dynamics of group identity. Through these theories, I will look at the phenomena of social groups, how they are created, how identity becomes salient, and issues of intragroup and intergroup conflict.

As individuals, people belong to several categories and groups. Continually, people try to balance various identities, like gender, occupation, religion, ethnicity, and nationality. There are often different levels of identity. Not only general group identity categories are used, in this case, Jew and Christian. Some prefer to emphasize on sub-categories such as denominations or movements which expresses a belonging to a more distinct group within the group. In this thesis, I am discussing the more general religious categories of Jews and Christians to be able to understand a much narrower identity, which is a Messianic Jewish identity.

1.4.1. Group Belief Theory

An essential part of the Messianic identity is their belief in Yeshua which, according to Messianic Jews, is a continuity of Jewish beliefs. Daniel Bar-Tal looks at group belief as a driving force of group formation. He writes: *"Group beliefs are defined as convictions that group members (a) are aware that they share and (b) consider as defining their "groupness.""*[18] According to group belief theory, two beliefs are important in the formation of a group, the conviction in which they share and the understanding that they share the same belief. Group belief can consist of "myth, goals, values, ideology, norms, tradition, or history."[19]

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[18] Daniel Bar-Tal, *Group Beliefs. A Conception for Analyzing Group Structure Processes, and Behavior* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990), 36

[19] Ibid.

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1.4.2. Social Cohesion Theory

What makes people want to be part of and continue to part of a social group? Earlier, studies focused on attraction and influence among people in social groups. This was presented in the *social cohesion model*.[20] Attraction and influence between members are often found in group dynamics, but scholars have disagreed to which degree it is a driving force behind group formation. John Turner argues that it is the category itself and how people view themselves that is the most crucial aspect of how social groups are created.[21] When it comes to religious identity and belongingness, one can argue, in the light of Turner, that a shared faith or theology is more important than attraction and similarities among members. That does not mean that attraction and similarities are not there, but rather that it is not what drives the construction of a social group and are not what determines membership. Turner argues that group formation is instead an "adaptive social psychological process that makes social cohesion, co-operation, and influence possible."[22] In that sense, cohesion may be a product of the creation of the social group. On the other hand, one argues that the social cohesion model is suited for analyzing smaller groups, like groups of friends, rather than religious communities.

1.4.3. Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was introduced by Henri Tajfel in 1978 and was further developed in 1979 in cooperation with John Turner. According to Turner, a social group is created when «... two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or, which is nearly the same thing, perceive themselves to be member of the same social category."[23] Philip F. Esler refers to Tajfels three components that make people feel a part of a group,

> "… (a) a cognitive component, meaning the knowledge that one belongs to a group;
> (b) an evaluative component, in the sense that one's belonging to a group could have a

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[20] John C. Turner, Michael A. Hogg, Penelope J. Oakes, Stephen D. Reicher and Margaret S. Wetherell, *Rediscovering the Social Group. A Self-Categorization Theory* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 15-16.

[21] John C. Turner, "Toward a cognitive redefinition of the social group." In *Social Identity and intergroup relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 16.

[22] Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, *Rediscovering the Social Group,* 40.

[23] Turner, "Toward a cognitive redefinition of the social group," 15.

positive or a negative value connotation and (c) an emotional component, in the sense that the cognitive and evaluative aspects and one's being a member of it 'may be accompanied by emotions (such as love or hatred, like and dislike) directed towards one's own group and towards which stand in certain relation to it'."[24]

Social identity theory looks at more than how people categorize themselves. By being part of a social group, an outgroup is often constructed, which can create an inside-outside dynamic. It also shows how membership in a group may develop a picture of the outgroup as less diverse than what reality shows by placing everyone that is not an insider in one group. An example would be the refugee crises that was triggered by the Syrian War. When the flood of immigrants, many of whom are Muslims, came through the borders of Europe, there was a rise of a Christian identity in Norway which created a separation between the 'Christian' Norwegians and the 'Muslims' immigrants. While the reality was more complicated, by creating these two groups made it easier for those who so wished to separate between who belonged inside the borders, and who did not. The separation created a positive ingroup distinctiveness that focused on the positive aspects of being a Norwegian Christian and viewing the outside-group as terrorists, a highly problematic distinction to be sure.

The inside-outside dynamic can be found through the history between Jews and Christian. It is also reflected in how the broader Jewish community claim that Messianic Jews are outsiders. The outsider-group is essential because it may indicate what the inside-group is not. Because Messianic Jews claim to balance a Jewish identity with faith in Yeshua, which is considered a standard Christian identity marker, it will be interesting to see how Messianic Jews through the three components negotiate between the two groups.

1.4.4. Self-Categorization Theory

While social identity theory focused more on relations between groups and intergroup conflict, it is weak in the understanding of how groups are created and functions. In the book, "Rediscovering the Social Group. A Self-Categorization Theory" from 1987, John Turner with others introduces a new theory. Self-categorization theory is based on social identity theory and tries to understand how a group of individuals acts as a group. One important

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[24] Philip F. Esler, "An Outline of Social Identity Theory," In *TT Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (Great Britain: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2014), 17.

aspect is the separation of personal and group identity and how these components interact. They argue that "…individuals form a psychological group in so far as they develop a shared social categorization of themselves in contrast to other, which, in a given situation, becomes the basis of their attitude and behavior."[25] It highlights the idea that the development of groups happens through individuals that share a common self-categorization. Which in turn creates a common way of thinking and acting.

Another important aspect is how people balance various identities. In certain situations, specific categories become more important than others. Turner writes that "… the issue of salience refers to the conditions under which some specific group membership becomes cognitively prepotent in self-perception to act as the immediate influence on perception and behavior."[26] In an Israeli context, many Israelis are immigrants and have to balance the identity of the country they grew up in and the Israeli identity they are becoming a part of. Not only that, in the state of Israel one has to be registered in a religious group. One can, therefore, for example, be an Israeli Jew, which is the majority, an Israeli Muslim[27], an Israeli Druze or an Israeli Christian. All these categories are continually being negotiated in the social and political context. For example, all Israeli Jews have to serve two or three years in the army, but the other groups have the opportunity to choose whether or not they want to serve. While differences exist in how many choose to be a part of the army from the various groups, some decide to serve. The choice to participate in Israeli army indicate that the Israeli identity becomes salient, which is reinforced through the years in which one serves the country.

1.4.5. Summary

Through the various social identity theories, multiple aspects of the study of social identity have been presented. While not all of the approaches above will be used in the analytical part of the thesis, they are essential to shows the complexity of social groups and social group dynamic. The theories above also show the development in the understanding of group identity, self-categorization, and the importance of understanding group identity processes in connection to relating groups.

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[25] Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell. *Rediscovering the Social Group.* 203

[26] Ibid. 54.

[27] Muslims with Israeli citizenship are often referred to as Israeli Arabs rather than Israeli Muslim.

While the theory of Group Belief highlights the importance of a shared conviction which is essential in religious groups, the hybridity of the Messianic identity reflects the need to understand the relations with other groups and how people balance various identities. Based on the aspect of hybridity and in light of my research question, I will focus on elements from social identity theory and self-dentification theory. As Messianic Jews to some degree identities with two different religious groups, through the use of social identity theory I will analyze how Messianic Jews use the evaluative and emotional component to connect to Judaism and Christianity. To what degree do they try to use or demonstrate elements that are part of Jewish or Christian identity? Because of the continues balance of elements from two religious' group, I will also discuss how various part of the Messianic identity in connection to Jewish and Christian tradition becomes salient in various situations.

To be able to do the analyzes how Messianic identity is negotiated in the State of Israel, there is a need to produce new data. In the next section, I will look at what kind of material is required to discuss how Messianic identity is negotiated through space, art, language.

1.5. Material

This thesis seeks to discuss the formation of a Messianic identity in Israel. The Messianic movement is diverse, not only globally but also within the state of Israel. The diversity makes it challenging and to some degree misleading to discuss the movement as a single entity. I, therefore, choose to limit the research by focusing on the geographical area of the city of Jerusalem. Not only that, I choose two specific congregations, Roe Israel and Jerusalem Assembly, which belong to different ends of the spectrum within the movement. Both congregations use Hebrew which is the national language in the state of Israel and is the commonly used language among Jewish citizens. Because of the continuous flow of new immigrants making aliyah, the State of Israel is a multi-linguistic country. In Israel, some Messianic congregations, which consist of a large number of immigrants, have chosen to keep their mother tongue as the primary language in their services. For this thesis, I decided to use Hebrew as a criterion in the election of the congregations used in this study in the hope that it would reflect congregations that are more integrated into the Israeli society than congregations that use another language. In a more comprehensive thesis, it would have been interesting to add a fuller spectrum of congregations which would include those using foreign

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languages, for example, Ethiopian and Russian Messianic congregations. By combining these types of congregations, it would have made it possible to discuss an even broader diversity in religious culture within the Messianic movement in Israel and might have enabled one to discuss the impact of immigration on religious life and identity. Due to the length of this thesis, I choose to focus on two congregations that are more integrated into Israeli society.

To discuss the aspect of space and art, I have chosen to focus on the congregation hall and the Shabbat morning service. The congregation hall is the place where members frequently meet and interact with each other from all different age groups. It is a place of fellowship and interaction not only within the group but also with newcomers or visitors. The congregational hall is used as the place of worship and listening to scripture and the word of God being preached. One can argue that the congregation hall is an important center of community life as it is frequently used by the in-group. It is, therefore, an intriguing space to analyze and reflect on to better understand how this room has been created for and by this specific group, and how its users interpret and relate to the congregational hall. It is important to note that the two congregations in this thesis and their members do not represent the Messianic movement as a whole but allows reflecting on the diversity of Messianic identity and how it is being negotiated.

To be able to discuss the physical space, I needed to visit the congregational halls. It was important that both congregations owned the space they used and that they had the opportunity to renovate and adapt it to their needs. This made it clear that the room was created for the congregation and that the choices in design were their own and not based on previous owners. Through conversation with pastors, other leaders, or people working at the congregation, I wanted to understand how the congregational space was constructed. Why was it created this way? What was in the space and what was not? To be able to know how it was used, I chose to participate in a Shabbat service in each of the congregations on an ordinary Shabbat morning. By observing a Shabbat morning service allowed me to see how members interacted with the congregational hall.

In addition to observing the space and Shabbat morning service, I wanted to talk pastors or leaders which would allow me to discuss the process of purchasing and renovating the property. Secondly, I wanted to understand what members thought about the congregation

hall. Through interviews with various members, I hoped to see how they interpreted the space and how they thought the congregational space reflected a Messianic identity. Did the space or artifacts in the room have any particular connection to them? To be able to get a broader perspective, I wanted to interview 4-5 members of various ages, gender, and background from each congregation. To better reflect the dynamic within Messianic congregation, I chose to include one member that was non-Jewish because of the numerous Gentile believers in Messianic congregations in Israel, I will discuss more how I found informants in section 1.5.3.

To require these materials, I needed to conduct field research and semi-structured interviews, which will be discussed in the section below.

1.6.   Methodology

As mentioned above, to be able to discuss the topic of how Messianic identity is being constructed and negotiated, I needed to conduct field research in combination with semi-structured interviews. In order to get access to the material, I traveled to Jerusalem in November 2018. I had previously lived in Israel and worked with Messianic Jews which made it easier to travel on my own. I will start by reflecting on how to situate oneself as a researcher and discuss researcher/informant relationships which are especially important because of my history in Israel and with the Messianic movement. Secondly, I will present the premises of field research and semi-structured interviews as methods and reflect on some of the benefits and challenges with these methods. Thirdly, I will look at some of the obstacles when researching another culture. Fourthly, I will present how the data was organized and coded for the use of this study. At the end of the section, the ethical aspects of this research will be discussed.

1.6.1.   Situating the Researcher

Before entering into the field, it was important to reflect on my history in Israel, my relationship with the Messianic Jews, and how it might affect my work. When researching people and interacting with informants in the field, it is crucial to understand one's own biases. As Neumann and Neumann wrote: "The better work the researcher does on situating

him or herself in relation to their field of study, the better the quality of the ensuing data. The better the data, the better the text that constitutes the result of the research."[28]

In 2013/14, I had the opportunity to live and work as a volunteer at the Caspari Center for biblical and Jewish studies, a center in the heart of Jerusalem. At the center, Messianic Jews and Gentile Christian work side by side. The work of the center has two main objectives, strengthen the movement of Jewish Yeshua-followers and provide insight into the Jewish roots of Christianity among Gentile Christians all over the world. Since my time at Caspari, I have traveled regularly to Jerusalem and had the opportunity to get to know the Israeli society and the Messianic movement even more. Graham Harvey writes that many researchers gain respect for the group they are studying, and the informants might evolve into conversations partners.[29] Through the years, I have had several interesting conversations with Messianic Jews, which has led me to this research. Some of them are not just great conversation partners but have become great friends. By entering the field as a researcher, it was important not to be blinded by good relationship while at the same time treat people with respect and care.

There are different ways of reflecting on researcher/informant relationships. Some refer to it as an outsider/insider binary, the researcher being the outsider and informants being the insider. However, is even it possible to research a group from within when being an outsider? Are there ways to create bridges between the researchers and informants that can transport fruitful information? Even though I have experience from the Messianic movement, I do not belong to the group. I am both a Lutheran Christian and a foreigner.

On the other hand, the fact that I had been able to create relations with people from the group made it possible to share information and reflect on similarities and differences. This exchange of ideas and experiences has been fruitful, not only to understand more about Messianic Jews but to understand my own identity. Another perspective is the guest/host binary, "Guests cannot become locals, but local cannot become host without guests"[30] While

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[28] Cecilie B. Neumann and Iver B. Neumann, "Uses of the Self: Two Ways of Thinking about Scholarly Situatedness and Method," *Millennium: Journals of International Studies* Vol.43(3) (2015), *818.*

[29] Graham Harvey, "Field Work. Participant Observation" In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion,* ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), 221.

[30] Harvey, "Field Work," 227.

it is not possible to become an insider, one can still be able to get to know the host. The guest/host binary shows a picture of a researcher/informant relationship that goes beyond the insider/outsider binary. The researcher will never be a part of the inside group but that does not mean that the relationship with the group is without value.

These binaries show the complexity of the researcher/informant relationship. Working with people and their religious beliefs and experiences can be an enriching experience both as an individual and as a researcher, but it requires awareness and reflections on one's role as a researcher. Field research requires the ability to create good and professional relationships with informants and being able to establish a safe space in which informants feel comfortable sharing their religious practice, experience, and belief. Religion is personal, and people might withhold key information. These challenges show the importance of balancing openness and critical thinking. Situating the researcher is not a onetime thing; it is something one has to reflect on throughout the process continually.

Through the process of collecting data for this thesis, it has been necessary to reflect my role in the research continuously. Many of the opportunity I got was based on my connections with people from the insider-group which could vouch for me. I could also refer to my experience from Caspari center which showed my informants that I had previous experience from the Messianic world and had prior knowledge and experience which made some of the communication easier.

1.6.2. Field research

Through the use of field research, I wanted to study and analyze the congregation hall and to observe how members interacted and used the room. Field research aims to understand religion by looking at how religion is practiced, and fieldworker, therefore, often interacts with people. Harvey mentions methodological agnosticism as a position among scholar within field research. Methodological agnosticism argues that scholars should not ask questions about the truth. The scholar should focus on what people believe, and not if the belief is valid or not. It is impossible to test scientifically if a religious belief is true or not, and is therefore

not of interest, according to methodological agnosticism. Methodological agnosticism focuses on reporting what people believe is the truth.[31]

Scholars are different, the same way that there are several ways to conduct field research. Harvey states that some researcher seeks mainly to observe while trying not to stand out in the group, while others strive to be a part of the religious experience.[32] Harvey continues to write about the issue of finding a balance between getting close to the religious life and experience, and at the same time being scholarly objective. This balance is both challenging and very important. The closer one gets to the religious life, the better the data, but there are also many pitfalls.

Before entering the field, there is a need to gather background information about the group that is being researched. Gathering information gives the opportunity to prepare oneself and what to expect when engaging with the field and the people one is studying. If the researcher is asking too many questions, especially during religious activities, it might create a distraction both for the researcher and the people being researched.

When I arrived, I only had ten days to collect all the data I need. Thankfully, I had lived in the city before which made it easier to arrange meetings and travel around the city on my own. In both congregations I had the opportunity to look at the congregation hall both without people and when it was used on Shabbat.

Having participated in various Messianic services made it possible for me to some degree know what to expect when entering the field. My previous experience was helpful, but there were times when my experience and knowledge became a challenge. Before starting my research, I had already attended Shabbat services at the Jerusalem Assembly a couple of times before. That made it easy to blend in and be a part of the service. My previous knowledge made it easier to focus on the activity and experience at hand, and I did not feel the need to ask any questions.

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[31] Harvey, "Field Work," 224.

[32] Ibid, 219.

On the other hand, because I knew what to expect my notes were not as thorough as they could have been. My previous experience made it more difficult to notice certain aspects of what was going on; the familiarity made me take some elements for granted. The service at Roe Israel was different from what I had previously experienced, but I thankfully had a friend from the congregation sitting next to me and guided me through the various part of the service. More visits to both congregations would have made my observations more in-depth but would have required a more extended stay in Israel which I did not have the opportunity to do. My experience shows the value of preparation, the need to be able to adjust when the circumstanced requires it, and to learn from experience. Being prepared can help the researcher to go deeper into the research to try to understand various aspects of the activity.

To be able to record the data, I chose to make notes after the service and was able to take pictures of the congregational hall without people. Photos of people are sensitive, and it was not allowed to take photos in the congregation hall in neither of the congregations during Shabbat services. Later the same day that I attended the Shabbat morning services, I wrote down all my impression and various details about the congregation and the service. I did not take notes during the service to be able to participate fully and to not draw to attention to myself. The notes I took, I organized in a form where I placed the two congregations' side by side which made it easier to see the similarities and differences.

1.6.3. Semi-structured Interviews

While the physical space and observation of how people interact with the congregational space may indicate how identity is being shaped and negotiated, I needed to understand how members related to the congregational space. I, therefore, chose to conduct interviews to allow people to share their perspectives and experience which is essential in understanding how the Messianic identity is being negotiated. In the following section, I will discuss the framework of qualitative interview and benefits and challenges connected to the use of interviews. In light of the framework of qualitative interviews, I will present some of my experience in the field and reflect on some of the difficulties I faced during the interview process.

Anna Davidsson Bremborg argues that "the main purpose of qualitative interviews is to understand and interpret people's thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and conceptions." Even though most people would agree that the interviewee is the primary source of knowledge in an

interview setting, there are diverse conceptions on how knowledge is created or collected concerning informants.[33]

Kvale and Brinkmann use two different metaphors to demonstrate different epistemological conceptions of how knowledge is created which is demonstrated in the use of the images of a miner and a traveler.[34] The concept of the interviewer as a miner expresses knowledge as something stable and constant in the wait to be uncovered. The interviews, therefore, rely on the right question to be able to extract the objective facts. Contrary to the perspective of a miner, the concept of a traveler describes the researcher as seeking knowledge by walking alongside the interviewees, through listening and interpreting the stories of the interviewee. In addition to gaining new knowledge, the journey may change the researcher in some way. The two metaphors reflect different views on the production of knowledge. As mentioned in 1.6., the aim of the study of religion is not to find out if a religious belief is true or not, but instead seeks to understand what people believe to be true. The perspective of the researcher as a traveler is valuable because it demonstrates a dynamic relationship between the informants and the research as a way to understand someone else's world view rather than construct one true belief.

There are several ways of doing interviews. For this thesis, I chose semi-structured interviews which consist of an outline of the topic being studied and some suggested questions.[35] Because of the structure being open allowed me to ask follow-up questions, change questions that appeared irrelevant and discuss new topics that emerge. Kvale and Brinkmann write that there are several ways of organizing and conducting a semi-structured interview which is influenced by the goal of the thesis.[36] For example, one can start the interview by given information about the thesis, or one can give the information at the end. Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin argue that the researcher's personality to some degree shapes the interview.[37] Some personalities are aggressive in their chase for information, while others are more

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (United States: SAGE Publication, 2009), 48.

[35] Ibid, 130.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data* (Unites States: SAGE Publication, 2005), 80-81.

passive and might fail to pursue a clarification. To be able to get the information needed and to create a good and respectable relationship with the informants, it is, therefore, essential to reflect on one's personality and to try to adjust in the interview setting.

At first glance, semi-structured interviews might seem easier to prepare and use, but Tom Wengraf argues that there are challenges with using it.[38] Even though all the questions are not written down beforehand, there is a need for good preparation before the interviews. Because all the questions are not written down, one needs to listen and interpret what the informants are saying to be able to construct relevant follow-up questions.

I created an interview guide and an information letter before I entered the field. In the interview guide, I made three main questions which cooperated the main topics that I wanted to discuss in this thesis. At the beginning of the interview guide, I added some more general questions to make the informant comfortable before digging into the main questions. In the information letter, I presented the project and the premises for the research. I sent the letter to both congregations and handed out one to each of my informants along with a consent form before the interview. By giving the information beforehand, made it easier to create trust and gave the informant some time to reflect before starting the interview.

To require informants, I asked the leaders of both congregations for assistance. They were able to spread the information through their channels but without any tangible result. My next step was to try and get in contact with people by attending Shabbat morning services. I was able to attend with some friends who knew both congregations. They introduced me to various members, and I was able to get their contact information and arrange meetings. Some of them had already seen the information given to the leaders. At the Jerusalem Assembly, I was able to conduct two interviews after the service. The third thing I did was to ask previous colleagues if they knew someone, and they were able to get me in contact with a couple of informants. By using friends and previous colleagues, they were able to point out who was able to express themselves in English and were able to vouch for me. This was the best and most effective way for me to find people willing to be interviewed. The selection of informant will be presented in the next sub-chapter.

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[38] Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Great Britain: The Cromwell Press Ltd, 2001), 5.

To make the informants feel more comfortable in an interview setting, I decided to let them choose the place where the interview took place. Interviews were held at the congregation, some after the service, others during the week. One interview was held at an informant's office, another at someone's home. The biggest challenge was in places that were not closed off and where people could come into the room in which the interview took place, but most of the recording was of good quality.

During the interview, most of the informants were baffled when asked about how they experienced the congregation hall, but most of them were able to share some reflections after they got some time to think. Several of the participants were intrigued by the questions and said that they never had thought about it but felt it was both interesting and relevant. Because it was a foreign topic for many, it was challenging to get more in-depth answers and find new questions to ask. If I had gotten the opportunity, it would have been of great value to ask for a follow-up interview with some of the informants. A follow-up interview would have given them time to reflect on the first interview and given me time to process the answers and created new questions in the light of the first interview. Still, the informants' thoughts were of great value, and I was able to work with the information I had gotten.

To document the interviews, I used an audio recorder which was later transcribed, see section 1.6.6.

1.6.4. Presenting the Informants

In sub-chapter 1.5., I argued that I needed 4-5 members and one leader from each congregation to be able to get a variety of perspectives. In this section, I will present the informants that I was able to get in touch with.

I was only able to get in contact with the pastors of Jerusalem Assembly and the office manager at Roe Israel. Both pastors at Roe Israel were out of reach due to traveling and military services, but thankfully the office manager had grown up in the congregation and knew it well. Because both leaders were out of reach, I considered reaching out to other congregation, but because I knew Roe Israel owned their building was very different from Jerusalem Assembly, I chose to keep the congregation as part of the study. While I was not able to interview either one of the two pastors at Roe Israel, I got the opportunity to talk to the cantor which allowed me to get perspectives from someone that plays an active part in the

Shabbat service. The cantor got the interview guide beforehand in which he replied in an email. I was able to conduct a follow-up interview later where I was able to ask questions in connection to his previous reply.

At Jerusalem Assembly, I was able to get all the informants I needed both Jewish and non-Jewish members. Within the group of informants there where both men and female and people of various backgrounds. There was some diversity in age both all of them was over the age of 39. At Roe Israel, I was able to interview three Jewish members and one non-Jewish member. After one of the interviews, I decided not to transcribe it since the informant mostly avoided the questions or did not want to have the answer on the record. Still, the interview was valuable in the sense that she got to share her thought and experience about Messianic art. While I was not able to get four Jewish members, the cantor and the office managers interview was able to make up for the one I could not find. I was also able to find one non-Jewish informant in both congregations.

	Jerusalem Assembly	Roe Israel	Total
Leaders	1	2*	3
Jewish members	4	3**	7
Non-Jewish members	1	1	2
Total	**6**	**6**	**12**

* The informants were not pastor but office manager and cantor

** One of the interviews was not transcribed

Figure 1: List of informants.

1.6.5. Research in another culture

Even though I had previous experience of living in Jerusalem, Israel has different cultures than my own. Cultural differences can be challenging because it may lead to misunderstandings and wrongful interpretation of the material. Not only that, setting up interviews, reaching out to people and even interacting with people in the field can be quite challenging without any knowledge about the cultural codes.

Before my interviews, I wanted to get a second opinion on my interview guide to see if the question were understandable, relevant, and not in any way offensive. A friend of mine, who was a Messianic Jew and have lived in the country for a long time, was able to look at it and

give me feedback. This allowed me to test my interview guide in the right context before my interviews.

One of the challenges during the fieldwork was the aspects of language. While I was able to find informants that were able to communicate well in English, not everyone had English as a mother tongue, myself included. While most of the communication went smoothly, it was an important consideration to make. Have the informants understood the question I asked and have I, as a researcher, interpreted the answers as it was intended? Here, my previous experience from Israel was helpful since the setting and context was not foreign to me.

While most of the interviews were in English, many Hebrew words and categories were used. This was both valuable and challenging. It was valuable because it was closer to Israeli/Messianic categories rather than Western/Christian ones. On the other hand, it was challenging to find the right translation or description of the word.

While Hebrew words and categories were used, some still used Christian terminology. For example, the pastor at Jerusalem Assembly refers to the congregation as a church, which is not common amongst Messianic congregation since "church" is closely linked to Christianity. One of the reasons might be that he knew that I was a Christian. During the interview, the pastor talked about how he uses different terminology depending on whom he is talking to which might be the reason for using the word "church." Had an Israeli conducted the interview in Hebrew the terminology might have been different. The issue of language is important to take into account when working with the material.

1.6.6. Coding the data

Due to the limited time in the field, I had to conduct most of my interviews before having time to process them. Bremborg argues that one should interview a smaller group first and analyze those interviews before continuing the interviewing process.[39] This would have made it possible to readjust the interview guide, add questions, and could have given me time to reflect on who could be good informants. Even though I was not able to transcribe and read through my interviews in the field, I was able to process some of the information through

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[39] Bremborg. *Interviewing*, 311.

conversations with friends and people at the Caspari Center. This made it possible to some extent to be better prepared in the interviews that followed.

As mentioned briefly in the section about fieldwork, I took notes after my observations at the Shabbat service in the two congregations. First, I wrote down everything I had noticed at the congregations both in connection to the physical space, how the congregational space was used, and how people interacted with the space. After finishing my notes from both congregations, I organized my information and placed the information of the two congregations' side by side. I continue to organize my data into various categories and six main categories emerged. By doing this, I was able to see the differences and similarities between the two congregations much more easily. The pictures of the congregation halls have mainly been used to illustrate my descriptions.

After finishing all my interview, I was able to start transcribing the recordings. There were some challenges in transcribing due to the language barrier. During some of the interviews, some words were unclear or difficult to hear. While I was able to find the right Hebrew word, a couple of them were difficult to find the right spelling. The places that were difficult to transcribe was marked with either [unclear] or [unknown Hebrew word.] Even though there were some challenges in transcribing, I was able to transcribe the most important parts.

Finishing the transcription, I read through the interviews to get an overall impression of what information I had. The next step was to code the interviews by dividing the interviews into sections. By organizing my interview material with the help of my notes from observation, analytical categories emerged. Three main categories stood out, space and art, rituals, and language, which became the outline for chapter 2, 3 and 4, in which I had several sub-categories.

1.6.7. Ethics

When conducting research, there are certain responsibilities and obligations. While there are no ethical codes within the studies of religion, due to researcher often using very different approaches, there are certain aspects that need considerations.[40]

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[40] Frederick Bird and Laurie Lamoureux Scholes, "Research Ethics", in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), 84.

This thesis is about people and their religious life. There is great value in treating informants with respect, not just the ethical part. Giving people respect and being openminded might create new opportunities in the future. Not only academic research is evolving. Lived religion is dynamic an influenced by time and society. Building respectful relationships might make it possible to come back or open up the door for another researcher in the future.

Another important aspect is securing informants anonymity. Before entering the field, I sent an application to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). They evaluated my interview guides and the guidelines for securing the information about my informants. NSD approved my application. Before conducting the interview, the informants were able to read through the information letter and signed a consent sheet. Because the movement is quite small in Israel, it was important that the leaders knew and understood that they might be recognized in the data. The issue of recognition was made part of the consent sheet. Through this project, I have tried to keep the informant's anonymity by using a recorder that was not connected to the internet, and by storing the contact information and the interviews separate. The transcribed interviews were stored in a folder on my computer, which was locked with a password. The name of the participants was changed and given numbers.

1.6.8. Summary

In this section, I have looked at how I have conducted the research, my role as a researcher, and what methods I have used. I have discussed the challenges of researching in another culture and reflected on the ethical aspects of the research. While there have been several challenges during the collection of data, the process in itself creates valuable experience and material that allowed me to discuss my research question.

After collecting and organizing the data, it was time to create the structure of the thesis. What was my main finding and how best to present it? In the next section, I present how the analytical part of the thesis is organized and why.

1.7. Mode of procedure

In this section, I will present how the thesis is constructed and explain why these titles were chosen. The thesis looks at how Messianic space is negotiated through space, art, and

language. Already three important areas appear. I decided to look at space and art at the same time because they tend to go hand in hand. When looking at space and art, two important aspects are important, how the room is created and how its members use it.

As mentioned above, the first analytical chapter looks at how space and art have been created for the use of the congregations. By looking at both the space and material in the space, which is shown in the photographs, and in dialogue with the pastor, office manager and members of both congregations, I will discuss how the physical space has been created. I have chosen to first focus on the congregations separately, before discussing the similarities and differences at the end of each section. To be able to understand the socio-political context for creating a Messianic space, I will first look at some of the challenges Messianic congregation face when establishing a physical space. I continue will by presenting the internal architecture which is the first thing people interact with when entering the congregation hall. Next, I analyze if there is any form of division or segregation in the physical space. In section 2.4., I will analyze the space and look for any Christian or Jewish symbols. Symbols are often a part of sacred spaces which makes it an important aspect to discuss. It will also be essential to look for symbols that are not present and to find out why they are not there. After having discussed my observations of the physical space, I will continue by looking at why they choose the specific location and what that might say something about the congregation's identity.

In chapter 3, I present how the congregational hall is used on ordinary Shabbat morning. Through my observation from a Shabbat service, I will look at how people interact with the room and what atmosphere is created. I have divided the chapter into four different parts in which I will see how the two congregations relate to the broader Jewish and Christian communities. I will start by looking at the content and practice of Shabbat morning. Since Israel is a land of immigrants, language is important. I will, therefore, continue by looking at the use of languages and how it affects the dynamic of the room. Next, I will look at how people dress for the service to see if there is any religious symbolism, before looking at the practice of worship music and Jewish prayer.

In chapter 4, I look at how Messianic Jews communicate their identity through language and terminology. I will start by discussing the issue of who is a Jew, in which I will look at different ways of discussing who a Jew is. Next, I will discuss how non-Jewish believers in Messianic congregation express their identity, before looking at the main aspect of Messianic

identity. In connection to the Messianic identity, I will discuss how a Messianic Jew is, challenges with the term "Messianic Jew," and how Messianic Jews express their identity in conversations with "outsiders."

In the last chapter, chapter 5, based on my findings in the previous analytical chapter, I will present how Messianic identity is being negotiated through space, art, and language. By relating my research and findings to previous research, I will show how it adds to the field of study. Lastly, I will reflect on the still missing pieces within the research field and present some of the areas that need future investigation.

2. Space and Art

In this chapter, I will discuss how two different Messianic group identities are expressed and negotiated through physical space and art. By looking at the congregational hall, I will look for Jewish and Christian feature to analyze how Messianic identity is created in the space between Judaism and Christianity. In the next section of this chapter, I will reflect on the challenges Messianic congregations in Israel face when trying to establish a permanent location and how this might affect the construction of the space. Next, I will continue by presenting how the congregation halls, through the help of observation and interviews, have been created for the use of morning Shabbat service. I will analyze to what degree it reflects a Christian, Jewish or hybrid space, and look at what is important to the members. To be able to discuss this, I will look at how members of the congregation interpret and relate to that space. In the light of my findings, I will look at the evaluative and emotional component of Messianic group identity reflected in the congregation hall by looking at how Jewish and Christian elements have been used or not used. How do they negotiate in the use of space and art the space in-between? How does the congregational space reflect relations with Christian and Jewish traditions?

2.1. Requiring a Messianic Space

Today, most Messianic congregations in Israel do not own the space they use but are renting in various locations and buildings. Some congregations in Jerusalem rent their congregational space from various Christian denominations, for example in a church building. Others rent a room in a hotel or a kibbutz[41] from non-believers. Using rooms that are owned by non-believers may create difficulties as anti-missionary organizations tend to pressure property owners to stop renting to Messianic Jews.[42] Renting space in a church there is usually no room for making the space their own.

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[41] *Kibbutz*, or *kibbutzim* in plural, are collective communities in Israel which historically often have included agriculture.

[42] As an example, one of the goals of the anti-missionary organization Yad L'Achim in Israel is: "Fighting the missionaries, who have millions of dollars a year at their disposal, has long been one of Yad L'Achim's top priorities." Because many Messianic congregations practice evangelism, they are considered as missionaries that Yad L'Achim is fighting. For more information on the group at their website, www.yadlachim.org

Congregations that are dreaming of having their own space are met by the challenges of finding and purchasing property, building or smaller spaces. Both congregations in this research have through an extensive amount of time been able to buy the building or the floor they are using today.

Creating a Messianic space in Israel, even more so in the religious melting pot of Jerusalem, is challenging. In various interviews with people from the congregations, both leaders, staff, and members, it became clear that the selection of locations and buildings available for them were limited in Jerusalem. Both congregations have experienced legal battle in connection to buying and rebuilding their space. The pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly referred to a conversation he had with the advisor of the mayor of Christian Affairs in Jerusalem where he had asked about a place to build a church. The answer he had gotten was, "Over my dead body! You will never receive a new Christian place in Jerusalem. Why don't you go to the Vatican and ask if they have a monastery for sale?"[43]

The issue of land and property in Israel are sensitive and highly political based on the fact that Jerusalem is a religious place in Judaism, Christianity and even Islam. The Old City of Jerusalem reflects the religious complexity of the city, not only within the walls of the Old City but also in the surrounding areas. Synagogues, churches, and mosques exist side by side — the sound from the various buildings mixing in a continual battle. Jerusalem is a multi-cultural and multi-religious urban space. In this mix, there are many Christian spaces, the Greek Orthodox church being the second biggest property owner in the state of Israel after the Israeli government, but the authorities of Jerusalem do not want any more Christian places that can challenge the balance. Most secular Israeli do not wish to live in Jerusalem. Leaman writes: "For secular Jews, Jerusalem is an increasingly difficult place in which to live, since so much of the city and administration is dominated by the religious community."[44] Looking back at the election in Jerusalem last year, which ended with a Jewish religious mayor, which both reinforce Leaman's statement and is an indication that requiring a Christian space in Jerusalem will not be any more accessible in the near future.

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[43] Quoted by the pastor of Jerusalem Assembly during the interview.

[44] Oliver Leaman, *Judaism* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 26.

Looking back on the answer from Jerusalem authority quoted by the pastor of Jerusalem Assembly, the quote indicates that many within the Jewish community view all Christian, or in this case, people following Yeshua, as the same, belonging to one category. The issue of viewing all Christians as Catholics will be discussed further in connection to the use of language and terminology in chapter 4, but it is important to note that many Messianic congregations in Israel are independent entities and do not to belong a more prominent denomination, like the Greek Orthodox church or the Roman Catholic church.

Jerusalem Assembly started as a bible study group in the pastor's living room, but after the group started to act like a congregation, they decided to become one. After years of renting and moving to various locations, and through the challenging process of acquiring property, the Jerusalem Assembly was able to buy the upper floor of an industrial building on the outskirt of Jerusalem. The building was outdated, and the congregation had to do a total renovation of the space through various phases.

The same way as with Jerusalem Assembly, Roe Israel rented the space they used for several years. In 1981, Roe Israel bought an apartment, which served as the congregation room for some years. Later, they were able to buy another apartment in the same complex and tore down the wall between them. In the end, they were able to purchase the rest of the building. After a legal battle, they were able to tear down and rebuild the entire building to create a space that was suited for the congregation and the non-profit organization that the congregation is connected to.[45]

In this section, I have a look at some of the challenges many Messianic congregations faces in the process of establishing a physical and more permanent congregational space. The discussing on these challenges mostly reflects the tension between Messianic Jews and the religious Jewish community in Israel and present the common misconception among many Jews that view all Christians are Catholics. According to the quotation from the pastor at Jerusalem Assembly, it is clear that the Jerusalem authorities consider Messianic Jews as Christians and not Jews. In the next section, I will look at how Messianic Jews have

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[45] Roe Israel is part of Netivyah, an Israeli non-profit organization that conducts bible teaching and humanitarian aid. The building rooms both the congregation and the rest of the organization.

constructed their congregation hall. I will compare both spaces with Christian and Jewish architecture and internal design.

2.2.   Internal Architecture

Entering into a congregation, a church, or a synagogue the internal architecture is one of the first things people experience and interact with. Gail Ramshaw argues that "The theology of a church ought to be apparent by the layout of its ritual space and altering the interior of a church building may have a considerable effect on the community."[46] The relation between theology and layout of ritual space can also be argued to be present at congregations and synagogues. Ritual space, in this case, the congregational hall, is an integrated part of the community. The layout of the room is created for the service and may, therefore, reflect how the group views themselves in connection to one another and God. It may also indicate how people relate to other groups, in this case, the broader Jewish and Christian community.

In this section, will present how the congregation hall at both congregations looks. Through my observations, I will discuss how the congregational space reflect an identity and how it relates to Jewish and Christian elements. To be able to analyze the room in connection to Jewish and Christian tradition, I will start by presenting common features in Jewish and Christian internal architecture.

2.2.1.   Jewish Internal Architecture

Looking back at Yeshua and his first followers, most of them being Jewish, they continued to go to the synagogue in addition to having meetings outdoors and at people's houses. In the context of the first followers of Yeshua, there were no separation or contradictions between attending the synagogue and following Yeshua.

After the destruction of the second temple, the synagogues were further developed and became an integrated and essential part of Jewish community life. James F. Strange presents typical elements from synagogues found in archeological findings.[47] Synagogues in Antiquity

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[46] Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship – 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 47.

[47] James F. Strange, "Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues up to 200 C.E.," in *The Ancient Synagogue From Origins until 200 C.E.* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), 40-44.

had often a rectangle shaped with columns along all four walls and benches along the side of two, three or four of the four walls. The focus area of the room was at the center in which the Torah was read. The benches were close to the walls, and the people would have had to see through the columns, which suggest that it was not as essential to see what was going on at the center. Discussing how one can identify a synagogue from archeological remains, Strange writes that:

> The Jewishness of these structures is not given by building elements or decorations, unless we count the palm tree on the lintels at Gamla as Jewish decorations. Generally speaking, one understands the structure to be Jewish because they stand in a Jewish town or village.[48]

Today, many synagogues have similarities with synagogue in Late Antiquity in the sense that the seating arrangements are focus towards a center in the room. While archeological material from synagogues in Late Antiquity does not show evidence of an ark, contemporary synagogues contain an *aron kodesh*, which is the ark that holds the Torah scrolls, and a *bimah*, a raised platform which is where the Torah is being read. The aron kodesh is essential in a synagogue because it holds the Torah scrolls which is an important element within Jewish communities. The importance of the Torah within Judaism makes the aron kodesh a natural focal point in the room and Jewish identity. The aron kodesh and the bimah are often placed close to each other. The architectural structure suggests a low authority structure in the sense that there no assigned seats for leaders. As will be discussed in chapter 4, various members participate in activities such as reading the blessings and text from the Torah.

Synagogues often have a simplistic style, which is also shown in the quote above from James F. Strange in connection to synagogues in Late Antiquity. While there might be decoration, it usually is simple, and there is minimal use of images or status. When Meek is describing a Shabbat morning in the synagogue service, he writes:

> The desire to promote concentration in prayer (in Hebrew *kavvanah*) may be the reason for the restrained impact of the interior. The uncluttered spaciousness of the hall is

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[48] Ibid, 41-42.

impressive, and the east wall has its marble cladding, but there is no adventitious aid to devotion such as pictures or status.[49]

This highlights that the interior may have an effect on the congregation and how they are able to conduct religious practices in the room. In this case, the lack of visual imageries is thought to create an atmosphere that makes it easier for the people to connect to God through the concentration of prayers. This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

2.2.2. Christian Internal Architecture

After the rise of Gentile Christianity and with the Roman emperor making Christianity legal, there has been a development of various denominations within Christianity that have through time created its preferred style of internal architecture. One of the structural models for worship space commonly used within the Christian tradition is the Roman basilica, a rectangle shaped room, called the nave, which continues into an apse, a large semicircle, at the end. The apse creates a focus area in the room.

In many Christian basilicas, the clergy is placed in the apse, while the laity is located in the nave. The separation between clergy and laity suggests a division among the members. Gail Ramshaw writes that "Some churches intentionally separate the clergy from the people, with steps between the chancel and the nave to symbolize that the altar represents proximity to God."[50] This gives a connotation to the Temple within Jewish tradition which was divided into different sections, holy of holies, the court of the women, and the court of the Gentiles.

As mentioned, the various denomination has created their preferred styles. While some have chosen to fill the space with religious symbolism, others have emphasized that fewer symbols are preferred.[51] What is commonly found in churches and congregations is a pulpit which is easily seen by the audience and is where the word of God is being preached. Gail Ramshaw writes that "In many Protestant churches, the primary architectural symbol set before the people is the pulpit,"[52] which reflects that teaching and the bible is at the center of the service.

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[49] H. A. Meek, *The Synagogue* (Hong Kong: Phaidon Press, 2003), 8.

[50] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship*, 47.

[51] Ibid, 23.

[52] Ibid, 109.

In the Protestant tradition, the congregational space often resembles a lecture hall and contains little that is considered sacred. Another interesting element that is common in many contemporary Protestant churches, according to Ramsaw, is book racks on the seats that highlight the expectation that people are to join in the songs and prayers.[53]

Other physical elements found in churches are an altar, holy table, baptismal font, table or vessels used for the Lord's Supper[54] which reflects various aspects of Christian identity. Elements mentioned here are commonly known Christian feature which has developed through time and may indicate a Christian space.

2.2.3. The Internal Architecture of Jerusalem Assembly

Today, the inside of the Jerusalem Assembly resembles an ordinary conference hall, long rectangle room with two rows made up by chairs. The design of the room is casual with removable black and red chairs. On one side there are big windows with black roller blinds. On the left side are plain white cabinets, and in the back is a table with equipment to manage the sound and the projector. In the front is a slightly raised platform set apart from the rest of the room with black curtains covering the wall which is opened when the projector is used. On the right side of the platform, there are instruments, note stands, and a plant, and at the center, there is two note stand for the preacher's notes and a bible. Based on the space and numbers of the chairs, the congregation is larger.

Comparing the space to contemporary synagogues, there are not many similarities. Looking at the structural aspect, one thing that might resemble a synagogue is how the platform reflects communal participation. The causal layout, the instrument, and not having a separate area for the leaders indicate that the platform is not only used by leaders. Other than that, there is not much from the internal structure that resembles a synagogue or gives any indication that the room is a Jewish place. Looking at elements in the interior architecture of Jerusalem Assembly, it does not include Jewish objects or features that are found in most synagogues, like the aron kodesh. While there are no Jewish objects or symbols, the simplistic design is

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Several names that are used for the ritual connected to Jesus's Supper with his disciples. Various denominations have different understandings and practices connected to the ritual which is to some degree connected to the different names used names, like the Lord's Supper, Eucharist, and Holy Communion.

not uncommon in synagogues. The lack of Jewish influence is not surprising, as Akiva Cohen argued, most Messianic Jews in the State of Israel does not embrace a traditional Jewish identity but rather a national Israel identity.[55]

Comparing the space to churches today, the structure of the congregational hall resembles a basilica. As mentioned in section 2.2.3., a basilica is a commonly used structure model for worship space used within the Christian tradition. Comparing the room with the structure of a basilica the platform in Jerusalem Assembly to some degree resembles an apse in the sense that it is set apart from the rest of the room. The separation between the room and the platform is highlighted by the black curtains that hang in front of the wall. While the area is not explicit a semicircle, it resembles a similar shape that is clearly separate than the rest of the room.

On the other hand, there are some critical differences. At the platform, there are no seats for leaders of the congregation. The pastor usually sits at the front row of the ails. Where the leaders sit is essential because it might indicate the relationship between the congregation's leaders and its members. As mentioned in section 2.2.2., a physical separation in the rituals space can be interpreted as symbolizing differences within the group. Based on the internal structure one can, therefore, argue that the congregational area reflects a low authority structure within the congregation. One of the members noted this in the interview when reflecting on the difference with the congregation she had attended in the United States. In connection to her first impression of Jerusalem Assembly, she said: "It was like there were no barriers."[56] Another aspect is that the band is on the platform and the room reveals a multipurpose platform that is used by leaders and members alike.

The pastor explained that the room was designed to make the pulpit the focus in the room. Today, the pulpit consists of two note stand on the platform. The pastor expressed the desire to purchase a pulpit that could replace the note stands in the future. By adding a proper pulpit the room would have an even clearer focal point. The pastor expressed his vision that "no one will enter into the church and find something more interesting then listening to the person

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[55] Cohen, *Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel,* 109.

[56] Messianic Jew 4, Jerusalem Assembly.

standing at the pulpit."[57] The focus on the pulpit is similar to the practice in many Protestant churches.

Contrary to many traditional churches, Jerusalem Assembly does not have any visible religious objects or elements in their congregational space. The congregational space contains neither an altar, holy table, baptismal font, table or vessels used for the Lord's Supper. These are physical objects that are connected to various aspects of Christianity and Christian ritual and practices. The lack of ritual objects is a factor that makes it difficult for an outsider to interpret the congregational hall as a religious space. The absence of religious markers is interesting but is not uncommon. Several Christian denominations and congregations use simplistic styles. In Protestant churches, there are similar ideas where one uses internal architecture to highlight and try to make people focus on the pulpit and the word of God. This is also reflected in the idea that there is no requirement for using a synagogue or a church to worship God in either Judaism and Christianity.

As seen from the internal architecture at Jerusalem Assembly, the congregational space has a simplistic design. Members noted that simplicity was valuable because it created no interference. Because of the simplicity of the room, people started reflecting on the value of having space with minimal distractions, which is also apparent in the lack of symbols which will be discussed in section 2.4. While it can be argued that the congregational space resembles churches within Protestant tradition, it is important to understand it in relation to the Israeli society and the historical relations between Jews and Christian which will be further discussed in connection to the use of symbols.

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[57] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

Figure 2: The inside of Jerusalem Assembly.

Figure 3: The platform at Jerusalem Assembly.

Figure 4: The inside of Jerusalem Assembly

2.2.4. The Internal Architecture of Roe Israel

The first impression entering into the congregational hall is that it resembles a synagogue rather than a church. The room has the shape of a rectangle, but contrary to a basilica the center of the room is on one of the longer walls. In the room, non-removable chairs are placed in rows along with three of the four walls. On the back of the chairs are small shelves that pop out and can be used for holding the siddur, the Jewish prayer book, during the service. The seating area is faced toward a raised semicircle platform, the bimah, which creates a focal point in the room. On the bimah, there is a desk used for reading the Torah. Next to the desk is a stand for the siddur. On the back of the bimah is an integrated wooden cabinet. Inside the cabinet is the aron kodesh which are covered with a *parochet*[58]. Due to security reasons, the ark is a fireproofed safe which is uncommon.[59] Every Shabbat morning, the cabinet doors are opened, and the parochet and the aron kodesh becomes visible. The cantor of the congregation

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[58] *Parochet* is the name of the curtain that covers the ark.

[59] The Torah scrolls are kept in a fireproof safe because a previous scroll was stolen.

explained that the room was designed as "a relatively traditional synagogue"; which is a place of prayer, socialization, and education. Looking at the size of the room and the numbers of seats, Roe Israel is a much smaller congregation compared to the Jerusalem Assembly.

In the congregational space, several features that indicate a Jewish space and are commonly found in contemporary synagogues. First, the seats are arranged in a semi-circle rather than in rows side by side. Next, the seats are faced toward an aron kodesh which is closely linked with a bimah. On the bimah, there is a reading desk used for Torah reading which is a common feature in synagogues. Because the aron kodesh is the focal point in the room, it indicates that it is an important feature in the room and to the people using the space. The office manager of the congregation noted that the ark spoke to him as it was the point of reference in the room. He said that aron kodesh had become to represent and symbolize the Lord.[60] The ark and the bimah is an integrated part of the Shabbat morning service which will be discussed further in chapter 3.

The emphasize on Jewish elements, and features make Roe Israel quite different from many other Messianic congregations in Jerusalem. When asked about if the Jewish elements were a big part of the identity of the congregation, one member said:

> It is a big part of the identity [of the congregation]. It is part of what separates it [from others] and makes it special because it keeps and preserves the traditional aspects of Judaism and that is something that has been important to me.[61]

The Jewish aspects of the congregation were essential to most of the informants and were one of the main reasons why they choose to be part of this congregation. When reflecting on artifacts or areas that they had a special connection to, most of them referred to the aron kodesh or the bimah. The ark and the platform were highlighted because of its connection to the Torah either by being the space in which the Torah scrolls are kept or the place in which the Torah was read. The Gentile believer noted the value that the seats were arranged around the bimah which made the platform visible to everyone which had not always been the case. The fact that visibility is highlighted is interesting as synagogues in Late Antiquity was not

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[60] Office manager, Roe Israel.

[61] Messianic Jew 1, Roe Israel.

focused on the use of sight. Another aspect is that the seas are arranged in a way that makes the audience integrated into the service. While the platform is slightly raised, it is inside the room rather than attached to it, like for example an apse. While the physical spacecan give some indication on the use of the space, in chapter 3 look at how a Shabbat morning prayer service is practiced.

While the congregation is created as a synagogue, it is interesting to discuss how it relates to Christian traditions. There are some similarities in connection to the internal architecture of Christian churches. The shape of the bimah resembles an apse but is placed in the opposite direction, towards the congregation. Still, the raised platform is created in a way that makes it separate from the rest of the room. The Gentile believer at the congregation argued that the fact that the platform was set aside from the rest of the room emphasized that it was a sacred space.[62] Another interesting element is the shelves behind the chairs which is for the siddur, but in relation to Christian tradition, this has also become an element common in churches which highlight the aspect of people participating through song. At Roe Israel, it indicates the expectation that people join in the prayer but the idea that people join in is found in both Jewish and Christian tradition, which suggest that the practice in the congregational hall beyond audience/speaker dynamic.

One of the challenges with comparing Messianic spaces with Jewish and Christian spaces is that both Jewish and Christian traditions have developed their styles in conversation with each other. The development of common Jewish and Christian structures is shaped by the relationship with the other as well as the society in which it interacts. Still, reflecting on the structure is valuable because it to some degree indicates the structure of the congregation which again indicates certain aspects of the congregation's identity.

As mentioned above, the congregation hall resembles traditional synagogues. One of the members recounted that she had visited the congregation when she first made aliyah from the United States. Based on her first impression she believed it was a non-messianic synagogue mainly because she did not speak any Hebrew. After having visited several other congregations, one friend recommended a Messianic congregation and brought her to Roe

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[62] Messianic Gentile, Jerusalem Assembly.

Israel, only then did she realize that Roe Israel was a Messianic synagogue. Without any knowledge in Hebrew, it is difficult to interpret the space as anything other than Jewish.

Figure 9: The inside of Roe Israel.

Figure 8: The inside of Roe Israel.
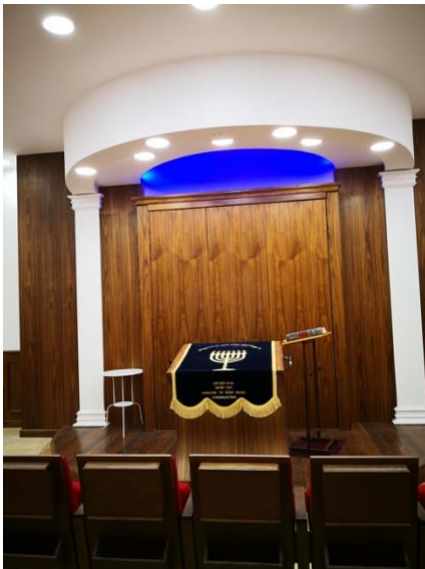
Figure 7: The bimah at Roe Israel.

Figure 6: The reading table on the bimah.

Figure 5: Inside the aron kodesh which contains three Torah scrolls. As seen in the picture, the scrolls are kept in a safe.

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2.2.5. Messianic Internal Architecture

The congregation hall of these two congregations are very different. In many ways, it reflects the diversity of Messianic internal architecture and how differently Messianic Jews can interpret and relate to Jewish and Christian tradition in the modern Israeli society. For example, even though Jerusalem Assembly has some of the characteristics of a Christian church, its simplistic style highlights the sensitivity of religious connotation and focuses on practicality which will be further discussed in 2.4. Another interesting aspect is the flow of the room, which contrary to more traditional churches, the internal architecture presents quite low hierarchy with communal participation which is found in both Jewish and Christian communities. Contrary to Jerusalem Assembly, Roe Israel, through its internal architecture, expresses an explicit desire to belong to the traditional Jewish community by emphasizing the Jewish elements in the room.

Even though the internal architecture is quite different in these two congregations, it indicates their relations with the wider Jewish and Christian community. The physical space in conversation with reflections from members shows a continuous struggle between Judaism and Christianity. The two congregations present different visual expressions that show various interpretation on where Messianic Jews belong and what their identity should look like. It shows the challenge of talking about Messianic Jews as a single group and instead reflects a movement that is trying to find its path. Both congregations agree that scripture is important and should be at the center of the congregation, which again is highlighted in the structure of the room.

2.3. Division or Segregation

As mentioned above, the internal architecture indicates the structure of a religious group. Analyzing the two congregations, two binaries that are interesting to discuss in relation to the dynamic of the physical space; men/women and clergy/laity.

Within Jewish tradition, some movements have a physical divider in the synagogue between men and women. The divider is called a *mechitzah*, a divider that separates the men's section

and women's section. Some synagogues place the women on the balcony.[63] A mechizah is common in many traditional synagogues, especially Orthodox.

Looking at Roe Israel, which in many ways resembles a traditional synagogue, it is interesting to note that they have chosen not to have a mechitzah. While there is no physical division today, there was previously a trial period for about two years where the congregation had separate seating areas for men and women, according to the office manager. The cantor noted that one of the reasons there are no dividers today is the challenges with translations. Messianic congregations in Israel tend to have many immigrants, visitors, and tourist-groups at their Shabbat service, which have created the need for translation of the service into various languages. I will discuss further the issue of language and translation in chapter 3.2. In Roe Israel, the various groups that need translation are sitting in smaller groups with a translator. The various translations make it challenging to have a separation between gender because it would have required serval mechitzah's.

Looking at the internal architecture in both congregations there is no physical separation between leaders of the congregation and its members. As mentioned in section 2.2. the internal architecture of both congregations indicates a low hierarchy. In both congregations' various members come up to the platform. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

2.4. Symbols

There are various ways of communicating. Throughout history, humans have been using symbols to communicate and express identity. The word "symbol" comes from Greek and means "throw together." Symbols are layers of meaning that are continually negotiated and even redefined through interaction people and societies. Symbols are therefore not stable entities but can change through time. Not only that, they can be interpreted differently by various people in different cultures. For example, the swastika is an ancient icon from Eurasia that initially symbolizes divinity and spirituality. After the Nazis used it to promote the Aryan race, it became stigmatized and associated with racism and antisemitism in the Western world. The fact that people interpret symbols differently is essential because it stresses the fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic of interpretation of symbols. It is, therefore, crucial

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[63] Leaman, *Judaism*, 145.

to look at the various interpretation of any given symbols. Gail Ramshaw wrote that "a symbol not only is something, it does something."[64] It is an active category and needs to be addressed as such.

The use of religious symbols is one way of expressing religious identity. Many Christians, for example, choose to wear necklaces with a cross as a way of expressing their faith. However, even though the interpretation of certain symbols seems evident to some, it is essential to remember that religious symbols, as with any other symbols, are negotiated and developed through time and can be interpreted in various ways in different cultures.

Religious symbols are often seen in religious buildings, but not every religious group uses symbols, art or other visual imaging the same way. Some religious groups choose to not use religious symbols, art or other visual imaging in their religious space. There can be different reasons why people make a choice not to visualize their belief. John Harvey refers to two attitudes to why people do not use religious symbols or imagery. (1) Anti- iconicism which is a "manifestation of former attitude."[65] Therefore, no symbols may tell us something about how the group relates to other groups or former groups. (2) Non-iconicism reflects an "uninterested response to religious representation or the absence of a strong visual sensibility in the social and cultural context in which religion (or one of its subsets) is situated."[66] Harvey continues by arguing that "Some religious movements, while repudiating the accessories and elaborations of worship, have developed a simple dignity and dignified simplicity, manifested in, for instance, the design and fitting of their places of worship."[67]

Through history, Judaism and Christianity have used and developed symbols that are today commonly used in many synagogues and churches. In the next section, I will present commonly used Jewish and Christian symbols today. To better understand the symbols, I will reflect on its origin and how it became an important Jewish or Christian symbol. I will continue by looking at what kind of symbols are present at their congregation hall in the two

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[64] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship,* 16.

[65] John Harvey, "Visual Culture," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), 504.

[66] Ibid

[67] Ibid.

congregations. In conversation with members of the congregations, I will discuss how members understand the use of symbols or lack thereof. I will analyze how the two congregations, Jerusalem Assembly and Roe Israel, are balancing Jewish and Christian elements.

2.4.1. Jewish Symbols

Within Judaism, many synagogues use *the Magen David*, a six-pointed star, on the external architecture, which marks it as a synagogue, and inside the synagogue. The Magen David is not only used in connection to religious buildings or settings but is also found in the Israeli flag and used by the Israeli branch of the red cross, the Red Magen David.

While the Magen David is a commonly used Jewish symbol today, the *menorah*, a seven-branched candelabrum, is a symbol with long roots in Judaism. According to Lee I. Levine, the use of the menorah as a Jewish symbol can be traced back to the Second Temple period and was a commonly used symbol in Late Antiquity.[68] Today, many synagogues have images of menorahs inside the synagogue.

At many Jewish homes and synagogues all over the world, a *mezuzah* is placed next to the front door. A mezuzah is a small box which contains a handwritten parchment with the two first paragraphs of the Shema on it. When entering or leaving a building with a mezuzah, a Jew may kiss it or touch it and kiss the fingers. Oliver Leaman writes that the idea behind kissing the mezuzah is to pay respect to the Law.[69] Finding a mezuzah indicates that it is a Jewish house.

It is also valuable to mention some other Jewish symbols like the shofar, ethrog, luvlav, and pillar that referred to the temple.

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[68] Lee I. Levine, *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity. Historical Context of Jewish Art* (China: Regent Publishing Services Ltd., 2012), 412.

[69] Leaman, *Judaism*, 116

2.4.2. Christian Symbols

Today, the cross is one of the most commonly used symbols within Christian tradition all over the world. Like the Magen David, the cross is often seen on the external architecture of churches which marks it as a Christian space. While today the cross is recognized as a frequently used Christian symbol, the use of the cross only date back to around 300 CE.[70] During the first centuries of the Christian church; the cross was connected to crucifixion, an execution-style used by the Roman Empire to execute criminals. Ramshaw writes that it was after Christianity became legal and crucifixion was outlawed that Christian started to use the cross as a symbol.

Before the cross became a universal Christian symbol, images used by Christians often referred to fellowship and meals.[71] Tarald Rasmussen and Einar Thomassen argue that the rise of the cross shows a change in the self-perception among Christians.[72] Through time, different traditions have created various designs of the cross which have been layered with different meanings. While the many interpretation and uses of the cross are challenging to some, Ramsaw argues that "… because symbols have deep roots and many branches, devout believers can climb higher and dig lower into the meanings of their religious symbols each year of their worship life."[73] Despite the diversity of crosses, it is the most commonly used and recognized symbol within contemporary Christianity worldwide.

Iconography can be found in many traditional churches all over the world and often shows images of Yeshua, biblical characters, or biblical scenes. Contrary to the Catholic and the Orthodox churches, Protestant churches have a more simplistic style. The design in many Protestant churches focused on the bible highlighted through the pulpit where a Bible is placed. Ramshaw argues that the Bible in itself in an important symbol.[74]

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[70] Tarald Rasmussen and Einar Thomassen, *Kristendommen. En Historisk Innføring.* (Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 2002), 92.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship,* 19-20.

[74] Ibid, 23.

2.4.3. The Use of Symbols in Jerusalem Assembly

As mentioned in section 2.2.1. about internal architecture, the congregation hall of Jerusalem Assembly resembles an ordinary conference hall. When looking around the room, there are no visible religious symbols present. Nothing in the physical space indicates that it belongs to a religious group. The pastor said no element is "jumping to the eye" which is "allowing the eyes to rest" and gives a sense of tranquillity.[75] The pastor explained why religious symbols are absent in the congregation hall:

> The reason is that we wanted people to focus on Christ and it does not matter what I put on the wall. It will never make everyone happy. I decided to reduce the level of arguments and keep it as empty as possible. The presence of God in this place will be seen in the born-again believers and not in any symbols.[76]

When reflecting on the pastor's explanation above, there are some interesting aspects. First, he talks about the congregation's vision to keep Christ, Yeshua, at the center of the community. In section 2.5., I will discuss further the place of Yeshua at the congregations. Secondly, he refers to the presence of God as not being present in artifacts but through believers. Thirdly, he refers to the idea of "making everyone happy" which suggest a diversity within the congregation and that people have different views and opinions on what kind of symbols should or could be present. One can argue that the group is taking a stand, by avoiding visible symbols and removing the issue out of the conversation. On the other side, it reflects the historical and socio-political context in which the congregation is situated, the multicultural and multireligious melting pot of Jerusalem.

In the section about the internal architecture of Jerusalem Assembly, the pastor explained that the vision for the design of the room was to create a focus on the platform where the word of God was spoken. The value of the style was reinforced through conversations with members in the congregations. They said that the simplistic style and the lack of symbols made it easier to concentrate on what was going on at the platform. The pastor highlighted that the focus of the room should be on the word of God either through the reading of scripture or teachings instead of through symbols and decorations. The focus on the word of God in the design

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[75] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

[76] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

resembles the design of many Protestant churches which focuses on the teaching area and the bible. The resembles will be even more visible if Jerusalem Assembly is able to get a proper pulpit which the pastor expressed a desire to require.

One of the members noted that he did not feel comfortable with images of Jesus or the cross.[77] While he said it was acceptable in other settings, he would not like to have it at his congregation. Another one said that she had no problem with the cross, but rather images of Jesus on the cross.[78] Most of the members explained that while they do not mind other Christian denominations having religious symbols in their space, they prefer not having any themselves. Some went as far as to say that they understood why some congregations outside Israel use symbols, like the cross, but argued that it was problematic in an Israeli/Jewish context. One member said that because there are no visual symbols, it was easier to invite Jews of different backgrounds to the congregation without them being offended or feel uncomfortable.[79] Not wanting to offend anyone reflect the desire to create a comfortable and safe space which will be discussed further in section 2.8.

Both the members and the pastor all agreed that they would not want to use any symbols or pictures in the congregational hall. If they were to add something to the white walls, it would be verses from the bible. The use of scripture and calligraphy is not uncommon in religious art. It is especially prominent in Islam in which images of animate beings is prohibited. The use of scripture could be a way of avoiding using symbols that might be interpreted by some as offensive or challenging.

While they all agreed that they do not want any symbols in the congregation hall itself, one of the members said that she would have liked more art or decorations at the congregation but not in the congregational hall itself.[80] She explained that there are several artists in the congregation and that she wished that they would be able to use their gift within the congregation the same ways as the worship teams and the preachers. In the hallway and other rooms on their floor, they have some things hanging on the walls. For example, they have

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[77] Messianic Jew 3, Jerusalem Assembly.

[78] Messianic Jew 4, Jerusalem Assembly.

[79] Messianic Jew 3, Jerusalem Assembly.

[80] Messianic Jew 1, Jerusalem Assembly.

pictures of members that are in the army, which shows their Israeli national identity, and drawings and paintings made by the Children at Shabbat school.[81] Still, the decoration is quite simple throughout the congregation.

Another religious symbol that is not present is the mezuzah. One member explained why:

> I appreciate that we do not have the mezuzah. There has been a debate about it and there were some Jews that really wanted to have it. We said that we are a multicultural congregation, just as a fulfillment of the prophecies, and we do not want to make a wall between Jews and Gentiles.[82]

What he says reflects one of the constant challenges Jewish Yeshua-followers have faced throughout history. If believing Jews and Gentiles are equal before Christ than how can one promote Judaism and Jewish tradition without making one "better" than the "other?" This was highlighted by Zetterholm when he argues that the separation between Jews and Christian happen between Jewish Yeshua-followers and Gentile believers.[83] This can also be said about promoting Gentile Christianity, where Jews previously have been forced to leave their Jewishness behind. Therefore, the fact that the congregational space does not contain any Jewish and Christian symbols might be an attempt to balance the scale.

On the other hand, reflecting on Harvey's statement that "anti-iconicism is one manifestation of former attitude,"[84] the lack of religious symbols in Jerusalem Assembly may indicate a need to distance itself from the former use of symbols either it be the traditional churches or synagogues. Also, it reflects the multicultural and multicultural society in Israeli in the fact that it is stript of any symbols that might offend someone.

In a way, the congregation does not use symbols that demonstrate a Jewish or Christian identity. Looking at the evaluative component in social identity theory that makes people feel a part of a group, it highlights how Messianic Jews balance between two groups in the fact

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[81] Shabbat school is similar to Sunday school for children.

[82] Messianic Jew 2, Jerusalem Assembly.

[83] Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 222.

[84] Harvey, *Visual Culture,* 504.

that it restrains in the use of physical symbols that might indicate a stronger connection to one group. Because the use of either Jewish and Christian symbols might challenge members or visitors in the congregation, the congregation tries to balance the belongingness to both the Jewish people and Christianity.

2.4.4. The Use of Symbols in Roe Israel

Contrary to Jersulam Assembly, the congregation hall at the Messianic synagogue, Roe Israel, there are some religious symbols. Entering into the room the first visible symbols are found on the velvet covering on the bimah since the aron kodesh, the ark, is hidden inside a cabinet. At the center of the bimah cover is a lighted menorah which is a commonly used Jewish symbol and is also found on the parochet. When asked if there were any connection to Yeshua in the physical space, one member referred to the lighted menorah and said:

> We would say 'yes' because the curtain on the Ark and the bimah, we have lighted menorahs, and we understand him [Yeshua] to be the light of the world and living Torah incarnate. In that sense, yes, but the menorah obviously is a widely used Jewish symbol, and many non-believing Jews would not automatically make that connection as they would with a cross or something like that, but that [the cross] is seen as an offensive symbol with baggage connected to it.[85]

As he says, the lighted menorah might not be interpreted by non-believing Jews the same way as he does. From a Christian perspective, this might also be the case, in the fact that without someone knowing it is a Yeshua-following community might as well interpret it as a Jewish space because the menorah being a Jewish symbol.

When the cabinet doors are open, one sees the parochet that covers the aron kodesh. On the parochet two pillars symbolize the Temple. Around the pillars are grapevines with light green text in Hebrew. On the right pillar is the verse from Hosea 10:1, "Israel is a fruitful vine," on the left is John 15:5, "I am the vine, and you are the branches." At the center of the cover is a lighted menorah, as mentioned above. Above the menorah is a crown which represents the Lord as the king. On the top, it is written in Hebrew, "He is our mercy seat."

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[85] Gentile believer, Roe Israel.

Most of the symbols on the parochet are being used in the broader Jewish community. While based on the knowledge that it is a Yeshua-following community, one could find elements that could be interpreted in connection to Yeshua such as the lighted menorah and the crown, but because many of the elements are common in Judaism and the space resembles a synagogue, it could easily be mistaken as a traditional Jewish space. I will argue that at first glance it is difficult to see the Messianic aspect of the parochet like the written element from the New Testament, which is in light green next to elements in similar colors and lies on top of blonds. Only by standing very close is it possible to notice the text itself. It is interesting to note that Yeshua explicitly is not mentioned anywhere on the parochet. That being said, the idea behind the design does reflect some idea or vision of building a bridge between two traditions by using scripture and symbols that are reflecting faith in Yeshua. Some of the symbols that are used are rooted in Jewish tradition and culture rather. The choice of Jewish symbols and adding aspects of Yeshua rather than using common Christian symbols used today, which have been created through time and to some degree based on a troubling past connected to Judaism, may be seen as an attempt to create a Jewish Yeshua-following community that tries to reconnect with the Jewish community.

As seen above, the congregation have several common Jewish symbols. The congregation also have a mezuzah that indicates a Jewish space. In many ways, Roe Israel has mainly chosen components connected to Jewish identity which suggest that they feel a secure connection to the Jewish community. Still, the attempt to in-cooperate symbolism that reflects faith in Yeshua should not be overlooked which suggest that they to some degree is different from non-believing Jews. In the next section, I will look at the two congregations to better understand how Messianic Jews negotiate a Messianic identity through the use of symbols.

Figure 12: The parochet in front of the ark.

Figure 11: The menorah on the parochet.

Figure 10: Grapevines on the parochet. Hebrew text in light green.

Figure 13: Bimah cover.

Figure 14: Lighted menorah on the bimah cover.

2.4.5. Negotiating Messianic Symbols

Based on the observation from the two congregations, both groups have a simplistic style which focuses on practicality, scripture and creating a comfortable space. The fact that traditional Christian symbols were not present were not a surprise. Christian symbols, an especially the cross, is filled with history and connotation. The reflections from the members of both congregations reaffirm the experience I had in conversation with a Messianic Jew, as mentioned in section 1.3., that asked about all the crosses in the Norwegian Lutheran church. While I have grown up being used to the cross as a reminder of what Christ did for me, the cross for many Jews, including Messianic Jews, have different associations and their relation to the cross is affected by history and relations between Jews and Christians.

Looking past the similarities, the congregations have a different use of symbols. Jerusalem Assembly has chosen not to use any symbols either it be Christian or Jewish. The lack of religious symbolism may be seen as an attempt to balance the Jewish, and Gentile perspective in the congregation, and rather than choosing commonly used symbols, and by that establish a more Jewish or Christian identity, it tries to focus on other aspects of its identity. Still, the congregation uses the Christian bible, and the pulpit and teaching can be seen as Christian elements.

While Roe Israel does not use traditional Christian symbols, they use Jewish ones. Through the design of the parochet and the cover of the bimah combined with the aron kodesh and the bimah, there is an attempt to connect to the Jewish community. On the other hand, they do attempt to balance Jewish symbols with faith in Yeshua through the use of the crown, lighted menorah, and scripture from the New Testament. However, what is intriguing is that the elements that might be an attempted to reflect a Messianic identity can be challenging to interpret for people outside the group. As the Gentile believer noted in connection to the lighted menorah as a symbol of Yeshua being the light of the world, the menorah is a commonly used Jewish symbol and most might not make the connection. This was demonstrated by one of the members, as noted in 2.2.4., that had attended a service at the congregation without realizing it was Messianic.

2.5. Location

Where a congregation is located can tell us certain things about the group and its members. The two congregations in this study have chosen two entirely different locations within the city limits of Jerusalem. While Roe Israel is located in the city center, the location of the Jerusalem Assembly is at the outskirt of the city. There are two aspects in connection to the locations that might tell us something about the group identity, the ability to participate and being part of the community.

Before discussing these two aspects, it is important to emphasize that a significant number of Messianic congregations rent the space they use and the challenges many congregations face when requiring property in Israel, as mentioned in section 2.1. Therefore, the location is not only based on preferences, and the choice may be founded on what is possible to find. Still, there is some value in discussing how the location might affect the congregation and its identity.

First, the choice of location can determent the ability of various people to participate. The Sabbath is a day of rest within Judaism which is highlighted by a range of restriction observed by religious Jews. Because the Sabbath is a day of rest, one is not supposed to for example drive a car. When it comes to Israeli public transportation, it all stops running right before the sun goes down on Friday evening and does not start running again before after the sun is set on Saturday. The issue of transportation means that it can be challenging to go to a congregation that is not close to once home especially for people that want to observe the Shabbat which indicate that one identifies with a more traditional Jewish perspective. As mentioned previously, Jerusalem Assembly lies on the outskirt of town, and one may need a car to get there. Roe Israel, on the other hand, lies in the city center which might suggest that it is easier to get to. As seen through the use of internal architecture and symbols, members of Roe Israel reflect a more traditionally Jewish identity, which makes the importance of accessibility without public transportation or car more crucial.

The second part is the idea of being part of the community. When asked about the location of the congregation, the office manager at Roe Israel noted that the desire to be in the city center of Jerusalem and indicated that by having a central location made it possible to the part of the community. He said:

The idea was to be part of the community. Which of course is carried onto the food distribution center which was done with our contact in the social service offices here in downtown Jerusalem and we receive people whom we help through them originally, now it is grown into more offices in other parts of the city.[86]

The distribution center is part of the non-profit that is connected to the congregation. The idea of helping the needy is an integrated part of both Judaism and Christianity. While Jerusalem Assembly is located in the city center, they also have a distribution center and other charity work. Several Messianic congregations have work amongst the poor and needy, which indicate that it is an essential part of the Messianic identity.

In this section, I have looked at how the location of the two congregations can give some information on the group identity. Again, Roe Israel suggests a much stronger connection to more traditional Jewish ideas. By being at the city center makes it easier for members living in the city to participate in the service and still keep Shabbat.

2.6. Yeshua

Yeshua is an essential part of the Messianic identity, and it is also one of the aspects of Messianic Judaism that challenges the broader Jewish community. In this section, I will discuss how Yeshua is present in congregation halls through space and art.

Looking around the congregational hall at both Jerusalem Assembly and Roe Israel, it is interesting to note that there are no visible signs of Yeshua through common elements such as the cross or images of Yeshua. This differs from many traditional Christian denominations and churches, which often have crosses or pictures of Yeshua present in the room, especially in the front.

As mentioned in the discussion about symbols, many traditional Christian symbols, like the cross and pictures of Yeshua, are problematic within a Jewish context. One of the members at Jerusalem Assembly noted even if they were to have pictures om Yeshua no one know how he looked like. While Jerusalem Assembly does not have crosses or images of Yeshua, the

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[86] Office Manager, Roe Israel.

design is focused towards the stage where teachings about Yeshua is presented, from an inside perspective one could suggest that there is a focus on Yeshua in design by highlighting the aspect of scripture. In Roe Israel, the lighted menorah was presented as a representation of Yeshua as the light of the world. Again, the presence of Yeshua in the physical space is easier interpreted from the inside than the outside. It is there essential to look at the use of the space and the practice of the Shabbat morning service in connection to the physical space to be able to understand the dynamic between them.

Another aspect is the sensitivity connected to the use of pictures and symbols, as shown in the section about symbols. The aspects of sensitivity reflect the need to create a safe and comfortable space also that are not members of the congregation, which will be discussed further in section 2.8. In this section, the issue of Yeshua in the physical space have been discussed. While Yeshua is an essential part of the Messianic identity, he is difficult to find in the physical aspect of the congregational space. In the next section, I will look at how scripture and word of God I reflected in the congregational space.

2.7.   Focus on the Word

When talking to both congregations about their space, one thing always came up, scripture or the word of God. This was important to both leaders and members, but how is it reflected in the space? The architectural design and the use of symbols at both congregations reflect an emphasis on scripture and the word of God, either emphasizing the Torah scrolls in the aron kodesh or the pulpit where the word of God is shared.

The sections about internal architecture and symbols show how the congregational hall at Jerusalem Assembly promotes the scriptural aspect of their identity. Both members and the pastor of the congregation argued that the minimal distraction in the room made it easier for them to focus on listening to the word of God being read and preached in the front. In a way, they use the physical aspect of the room to focus the attention of the members towards the stage. Therefore, by not using symbols or art, according to the members, the room is designed to help people to listen and reflect.

In Roe Israel, the internal architecture is designed to make people focus on the bimah and the aron kodesh, similar to Jerusalem Assembly. The most significant difference is in the Jewish

elements of the room, such as the bimah, aron kodesh, the Torah scrolls. Rather than focusing on the teachings, members highlighted the connection to the Torah. The visible symbols in the room are in the front which highlights the place to focus one's attention which again is connected to the Torah. While there is a much bigger emphasis on the Torah, the New Testament is reflected on the parochet, but as mentioned in 2.4.4., it is hard to see from a distance.

The internal architectural highlight areas connected to scripture and the word of God which indicates that it is an essential part of the congregation's identity, but what is different is how the Torah is more integrated into the design in Roe Israel which suggest a closer connection to the Jewish identity. As seen in this section, scripture is an essential part of the Messianic identity. Before looking at how Messianic congregational practice mornings Shabbat service, I will look at how Messianic congregations tries to create a comfortable space within the Israeli/Jewish society.

2.8.   Safe Space

When asked about their experience when entering the congregation hall, members used words like 'homey' or 'coming home,' 'comfortable' and 'family.' These words to some degree reflect how people relate to the congregational space, maybe more importantly, how they relate to the congregation and its members. The congregation is by many of its members considered a loving family. As a family, the members meet and regularly interact at the congregational space, not only on the Shabbat but they also interact in various activities at the congregations during the week. Most of the members from both congregations said that this was a big part of why they choose their congregation. It was a placed they felt welcomed and embraced as part of a bigger family; it was a safe space. One said:

> I think it is a feeling of being home, a feeling of being with people that are of the same mind. I guess the impression that we were happy to arrive somewhere that we felt comfortable.[87]

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[87] Messianic Jew 3, Jerusalem Assembly.

In the two congregations, the idea of safe space in an Israeli context is reflected quite differently. Israel is a multicultural state that is shaped by the various waves of immigrants making aliyah, but also the significant number of students, volunteers, and tourists. Another important aspect is that the Jewish population is often separated between the religious, dati, and the secular, hiloni, even though both groups are considered Jewish. Therefore, Messianic congregations do not only balance between Judaism and Christianity; it is doing so in a multicultural setting with various people coming and going.

Unlike many Christian denominations, both congregations have no visible crosses in their space. As seen in the discussion on symbols, the use of the cross is challenging to many Messianic Jews. While some of them understand why others would use it, they know it is a problematic symbol in connection to Jews. Therefore, by placing crosses it the congregational hall might create an even bigger wall between Messianic Jews and the Jewish community.

The challenges connected to the cross was one of the reasons why the Messianic Jew visiting the Lutheran church in Norway asked me about the crosses. She asked me, "Why do you focus on his death? He rose again?" One of the members from a secular Jewish background shared about her struggles with the cross as a Christian symbol.[88] One day she met a Christian with a neckless shaped as a cross with Yeshua in the middle and she had asked the same question as the Messianic Jew in the Lutheran church asked me. The Christian had explained that she wore it to remind herself of what Yeshua had done for us. The symbol of the cross is interpreted differently. Some Messianic Jews see the cross as a strong symbol, but the past makes it difficult to reclaim and use.

As shown throughout the chapter, the issue of physical element connected to identity is challenging. Both congregations argued that they wanted a space where they could bring non-believing Jews and that there should not be elements present that would make the visitors uncomfortable. However, how have the two congregations interpreted what that entails?

In the Jerusalem Assembly, one can see an attempt to create a safe space by making the space as neutral as possible. The lack of symbols, like the cross, reflects an attempt to take away misunderstandings and differences in interpretation. What separates Jerusalem Assembly

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[88] Messianic Jew 4, Jerusalem Assembly.

from Roe Israel is that Jerusalem Assembly does not have any Jewish symbols. As mentioned in 2.4.3., the absence of Jewish elements might be a way to create a space that does not divide between Jews and Gentiles. On the other hand, the fact that there are many secular Jews in Israel, they might feel more comfortable in a space that did not resemble a synagogue.

Roe Israel has created a Jewish space without any traditional Christian symbols in an attempt to create a space that resembles a traditional synagogue. When the Gentile believer was asked if there were anything in the room that Jews would find different from other synagogues, he said: "Nothing in the visual space that I can think of at all that would make them aware or make them uncomfortable in any way. Just in the liturgy itself."[89]

The interpretation of what a safe space looks like is different in the two congregations. What they do agree on is that many Christian symbols are problematic and should be avoided. When it comes to Jewish symbols, on the other hand, the two congregations have very different opinions. While Jerusalem focuses on creating a space without any religious connotations, Roe Israel uses the space to connect to the Jewish community, more precisely, towards traditional synagogues.

2.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have look at how the congregational space has been created. The space and art in Jerusalem Assembly and Roe Israel reflect two different ways of relating to Jewish and Christian tradition and by that creating different Messianic Identity. They both have a simplistic and practical design, but it is clear Roe Israel has a much more visible Jewish character.

When reflecting on Messianic Jewish relations to various forms of Judaism, Carol Harris-Shapiro writes that, *«… this love-hate relationship with Jewishness does seem to appear and reappear as a pattern of discourse. The struggle to affirm Jewishness and yet separate from Jewishness ranges over the whole life experience of the Messianic Jews.»*[90]

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[89] Gentile believer, Roe Israel.

[90] Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism*. 61.

Her reflection shows the struggle throughout the Messianic movement. How Jewish should they be? The two congregations, through their space and art, or lack of art, show how different one can interpret the importance of traditional Jewish identity markers. Roe Israel tries to create a traditional Jewish space that includes faith in Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah and aims to become a part of the wider Jewish community. Jerusalem Assembly, on the other hand, focuses on creating a "neutral" multicultural space. Rather than using elements from Judaism and Christianity, Jerusalem Assembly chooses to use none in which can either could offend someone or reinforce an identity.

While many have emphasized that the design of the rooms is based on practicality, it is possible to argue that focusing on practicality is in itself is a choice that reflects some aspects of the congregation's identity. For example, the pastor in Jerusalem Assembly said that the reason why they did not have much decoration was to help the audience focus on the preacher in the service and especially on the scripture. The focal point in the congregation hall, which is reflected in the internal architecture and the lack of art, is at the front. By taking away elements, the goal was to remove unnecessary distractions and lead the audience to the Word of God. By creating the focus in the room towards the stage and the preaching suggest that the scripture is an essential part of the identity.

The space of the congregations shows how both the in-group and out-group shape the identity of the space. What is mainly present in the physical space is the relations to the out-group. While Roe Israel is expressing a desire to be close to traditional Judaism, Jerusalem Assembly is not, and none of the congregations reflect more traditional Christian symbolism but instead uses a design that is closer to Protestant churches. The members and leaders emphasize the importance of scriptures, which is highlighted in the internal architecture and the lack of distraction. Informants in both congregations talked about the importance of safe space when they reflected on the importance of welcoming people from other backgrounds. The congregational space is not only designed and created for the members, but also as a safe space in which people from various backgrounds can feel at home.

As seen through this chapter, there is a lot that can be said about how identity is expressed and negotiated through space and art. Still, the fact that many elements such as symbols are sensitive because of the historical relationship between Jews and Christianity makes certain aspects of the space challenging to interpret. In the next chapter, I will look at how the

congregational space is used on Shabbat to see how it corresponds with the congregational space and art that have been discussed in this chapter.

3. Shabbat Morning Service

In this chapter, I will discuss how the congregational space is used and how it relates to Jewish and Christians. I will focus on the Shabbat morning service and look at essential elements that are connected to it.

Shabbat morning service is one of the commonly used religious practices within the Messianic movement. As seen in the previous chapter, space and art, or the lack of art, can reflect group identity, but "the primary Christian idea is that when a group of Christians gathers around the word and sacrament, rituals space is created."[91] Christians continue to create religious spaces but it is commonly understood among Christian that one can worship anywhere, or as it is written in the gospel of Matthew, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."[92] Even in Judaism, it is not required to conduct religious practices in a synagogue, but what is required for certain elements is the presence of ten men above the age of 13.[93] It is therefore essential to not only look at the physical aspect but to continue to look at how the congregational space is used. By looking at how the congregational hall is used on Shabbat, I will discuss how the two congregations relate to Jewish and Christian practices, and how the Messianic practices balance elements connected to Jewish and Christian identities.

Religious practices can be divided between public and private religion, which again can reflect individual and group identity. Fraser Watts suggests that "the collective manifestations of religion are equally influenced by the personal religion of particular individuals, and that a systemic interrelationship normally occurs between public and private religion." [94] The separation between personal and public practice can be misleading as the public practices are made up by individuals. One can say that personal and public religion overlaps and interacts in various degree. People have their faith which they bring with them into their congregation

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[91] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship,* 46-47.

[92] Matthew 18:20

[93] There are some movements, like Reform Judaism, that permits women to be one of the ten that have to be present.

[94] Fraser Watts, *Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*: *Concepts and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 64.

and in interaction with other members. When people attend Shabbat morning service, they participate as members of the congregation, but their faith is part of the experience.

To be able to discuss how the two Messianic congregations relate to Jewish and Christian traditions, I will compare how they use the congregation hall with the practice of Jewish Shabbat prayer service and Christian Sunday service. Meek challenges the comparison between the synagogue and the church and writes that even though the synagogue is an important institution in Jewish life:

> Judaism embraces every aspects of life, from civil law to dietary regulations, and finds ways of consecrating the secular, in the search to fulfil what it takes to be the will of God, all day, every day, in ways you could hardly begin to imagine, from moment you rise to the moment you fall asleep.[95]

His statement is essential in the understanding of Jewish practices. Comparing religious practices can be misleading in the sense that religions have various structures and play different parts in people's lives. Looking at Meeks statement, it is true that many devoted Jews consider Judaism to be a part every area of one's life and therefore the synagogue is only a fragment of Jewish practice, but there are also many Christian that would argue that their belief affects every aspect of their life. While keeping in mind that synagogues and churches to certain degree plays different parts in Judaism and Christianity, the comparison is valuable based on the fact that Messianic Jews tries to balance between Jewish and Christian tradition.

In the next two sections, I will start by discussing the content of the Shabbat morning service. I will first look at standard features of Jewish prayer service and Christian Sunday service, before presenting how the Shabbat morning services at the two congregations are practiced. There are many elements connected to the Shabbat morning services that could be discussed. I have chosen to focus on the general content, use of language, clothing, and worship and prayer. While topics, such as the practice of the Lord's Supper and the use of scripture is an essential part of the practice, I have chosen not to include them based on the depth of the topics and the gaps in the material I collected. Through the various elements that I will

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[95] Meek, *Synagogue,* 18.

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present, I will analyze how Messianic congregations have developed an identity and continues to negotiate an identity.

3.1. Content and Practice

In this section, I will look at what is practiced at the congregation on Shabbat and how it relates to Christian and Jewish practices. To be able to discuss how the congregations interact in the space between Jewish and Christian traditions, I will first present some essential elements from both the practice of Jewish Shabbat morning prayer service and Christian Sunday service. I will continue by describing what elements are present at the Shabbat service in the two congregations. Through observation at Shabbat services at both congregations, I will discuss how the content and practices relate to various Jewish and Christian practices of Shabbat prayer service and Sunday service. What identity is found in the way they conduct their service?

3.1.1. Jewish Shabbat Prayer Service

Synagogues have not always been part of the religious life of the Jewish people. We know that synagogues were present and used during the Second Temple period alongside the Temple, but after the destruction of the Second Temple, synagogues were further developed and became an even more integrated part of Jewish community life. While the synagogues have become an essential part of the lives of devoted Jews, various Jewish movements have developed numerous styles and practices. Today, the most significant Jewish religious movements are Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, and Orthodox Judaism, which includes Haredi Judaism and Modern Orthodox Judaism. While different movements have developed their liturgy and structure, there are several similarities and common elements.

Prayer is an essential and important part of Jewish practice. Devoted Jews are expected to pray three times a day and extra on the Shabbat and during the festivals.[96] The structure and length of the service depend on which group one is a part of. According to Leaman, the performance of prayers differs in various types of synagogues.[97] In this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the practice of Shabbat morning prayer service and how the two congregations

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[96] Leaman, *Judaism,* 105.

[97] Leaman, *Judaism,* 106.

relate to it. The Jewish Shabbat prayer service follows the same patterns as morning prayer services conducted during the week with a couple of adjustments. Of the things that are added on Shabbat is that the Torah scrolls are taken out from the ark, and the weekly Torah portion is read, followed by the Haftorah, a passage from the Prophets. Prayer services follow the siddur, the Jewish prayer book, and consist of elements such as the Shema, the Amidah, which is made up of 19 blessings[98], psalms, and readings from biblical and rabbinic writings.

While there is structure to the prayer service, Jews do not have to follow the entire service and may come and go. During the prayer, people may join the cantor, or whoever is leading the prayer. Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin writes that it is not enough to just read the text from the siddur but says that the reading has to be transformed into prayer, which is presented in the concept of *kavvanah*, the intention of prayer.[99] Kavvanah highlight the individual role in Jewish practice. It is not it enough to recite prayers from the siddur; one has to be able to attain a level of kavvanah. In section 2.2.1., Meek noted that the simplistic interior of the synagogue might have been created to promote or help people focus on the prayers. Due to the importance of prayer in Judaism, his interpretation seems quite realistic and shows the relation between the physical space and religious practice. Another element that is used to attain kavvanah is music which is expressed through cantillations and *nusah[100]*.[101]

In the synagogue, the rabbi is considered the community leader, but contrary to Christian priests does not play a crucial part in the service. The prayer service can be led by anyone and is not reliant on a rabbi being present.[102] Taking out the Torah scrolls and reading the weekly Torah portion is an integral part of Shabbat morning service. The ark is opened, the scrolls are taken out, and carried through the room in which people touches it with the siddur or fringes from the tallit and kisses the item that has touched the Torah. Rabbi Donin argues that kissing

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[98] The Amidah used to be made up by 18 blessings. One has been added that refers to heretics and is more considered a curse.

[99] Hayim Havely Donin, *To Pray as a Jew. A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service.* (United States: BasicBooks, 1980), 19.

[100] The word *nusah* has two meanings in a musical context, a public reading of the Torah within Sephardic tradition, or to say someone has good *nuash* may mean he follows traditional tunes.

[101] Raphael Posner, Uri Kaploun and Shalom Cohen, *Jewish Liturgy* (Israel: Keterpress Enterprises, 1975), 58-45.

[102] Leaman, *Judaism*, 107.

is an act of religious devotion which is highlighted in the fact that many Jews touch the mezuzah and kisses the fingers which were used.[103]

The geographical focus of this thesis is Jerusalem, Israel. The Jewish religious landscape in Israel differs from countries like the United States. In the United States, the Reform and the Conservative are more significant than the traditional groups, like the Orthodox. In Israel, the Orthodox movement is the bigger while the Reform and Conservative struggles. The reasons why the Reform and Conservative tradition are struggling in Israel is closely linked to the fact that Israel is a Jewish state where the Shabbat and the Jewish festivals are national holidays. Israeli citizen does not have to attend synagogues as a way to maintain a Jewish identity because they live in a Jewish society that evolves around Jewish aspects. They can celebrate Jewish holidays in their own way, like going to the beach or having a barbeque.

3.1.2. Christian Sunday Morning Service

The Sunday service is an important part of Christian community life and is where members meet each week to worship. The structure of Sunday service has been developed through time, and as with the internal architecture, various denominations have created diverse ways of structuring their Sunday service. Still, certain elements that are commonly present in Christian meetings. By referring to Justin Martyr and *the First Apology 67*, Rasmussen and Thomassen present common elements that have been standard practice during Sunday service since before 150 CE, which include reading from the apostolic writings or the prophets, sermon or teachings, prayers, commemoration of the meal Yeshua shared with his disciples before he was crucified, and collection.[104]

Some of the elements are similar to Jewish practices such as the reading of scripture, even though some of the scripture is different, and prayer. While some of the element seems similar, some differences need clarification. Even though there are some written prayers, such as "The Lord's prayer" found in Matthew 9:9-13, and prayer book, Christian Sunday service is not center around prayer the same way as a Shabbat prayer service. Within Christian denominations, it is not uncommon to conduct more informal prayer, prayers that have not previously been written down, during a Sunday service.

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[103] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 43.

[104] Rasmussen and Thomassen, *Kristendommen*, 88.

Through the years there has been a development of hymn singing in some of the Christian denominations. According to Rasmussen and Thomassen, previously in Protestant churches, it was common to sit while singing, but today there are many congregations in which people choose to stand.[105] Various instruments such as drums have been common in some traditions. In churches such as Evangelical congregations, a worship session through music has become a big part of the service.

3.1.3. Shabbat Service at Jerusalem Assembly

Every Saturday morning, Jerusalem Assembly practice Shabbat morning service. Entering into the hall on Shabbat morning, the room is buzzing with people who are greeting one another and making small talk. More and more are coming into the room as it gets closer to the beginning of the service. The atmosphere is casual and friendly. There are no arranged seats, and people find a place to sit as the service is about to start.

The performance and structure of the service are informal. The pastor welcomes the people that are present and guides the congregation through the program that is planned. Part of the service is worship led by a worship team which consists of both singers and a band, parts of the weekly Torah portion is read and reflected on, and prayer. The main segment of the service is the sermon. At the service that I attended the teaching was held by a member of the congregation and not the pastor himself. The service was conducted in both English and Hebrew, while the worship was sung in Hebrew.

The practice of Shabbat morning service at Jerusalem Assembly does not resemble prayer services at the synagogue. What is present is the use of prayer, but while the Shabbat morning prayer service is centered around the siddur, the prayer book, the prayer at Jerusalem is less formal and does not follow a book. The prayer is also not sung or performed through rhythm. One of the elements which are not common in Christian churches that are practiced is the weekly Torah portion, but rather than reading the whole portion a selection is made.

Comparing the service with common practices in Christian tradition there are several similarities as the service consist of prayer, scriptural reading, and teachings. The fact that the

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[105] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship*, 134.

structure is quite casual, the services in many ways resembles a less traditional church or congregation. By looking at the elements in the service, it has more elements and content from Christian tradition than Jewish. At the same time, the Christian elements are simplistic and less formal than what is found in Christian denominations such as the Catholic or the Orthodox church.

3.1.4. Shabbat Service at Roe Israel

Contrary to Jerusalem Assembly, Roe Israel practices morning prayer service, a Jewish prayer service, every Shabbat, which is not unexpected since the congregation hall is designed as a synagogue. Just outside the congregation hall, people are taking the siddur from a book shelve before entering the service. Inside people are greeting one another as they find a place. In the congregational hall, the cantor, which is the prayer leader, is standing on the bimah *daveding[106]* and trough his voice and by the use of his hands, he makes a rhythm. The cantor explained the atmosphere he tries to create:

> … anyone is welcome to join with me, but at the very least, even if they do not join with me, I provide something of an atmosphere. If I am here daveding and particular if I raise my voice and do not stay quiet about it, I can make myself heard over the hubbub of the people coming in greeting one another. And those two things together form part of the atmosphere. It says: "This is a shul[107]"[108]

The two things he refers to is prayer and fellowship, two essential aspects of Shabbat morning prayer service. Through the service, the cantor is guiding the congregation through the prayers.

The cantor had training from conservative synagogues in the United States. He explained that the technique he uses is originally from Europe and are, according to him, mostly found in Ashkenazi synagogues, but explained that he sometimes borrows from Sephardi and Mizrahi traditions. His reflection on the service highlighted that the structure and content of the service are continually developed and negotiated. The fact that the structure and content is

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[106] *Daveding* is act of praying.

[107] *Shul* is Yiddish and refers to a synagogue.

[108] Cantor, Roe Israel.

continually developed was also reflected in the through the question of the separation between men and women, as mentioned in 2.3., where they had a trial period of two years.

The Torah service is an essential part of the service. The cantor described it as "the central focus"[109] The Torah scrolls are taken out and carried around the room by a male member of the congregations as people touch and kissed it, some by the use of the siddur. The scroll is placed on the reading table, and men are called up to do the blessing and read, first a Cohen if one is present, which is a common practice in synagogues.

Through the content and practice of the Shabbat morning service at Roe Israel, there are many similarities with traditional Jewish prayer service. While the service in many ways feels like a regular Jewish synagogue service, there is some aspect that non-believing Jew would find different. One explained:

> At the beginning of the service, there is a line that says, "Never has a prophet risen in Israel like Moses," and if you are following the Hebrew you will notice that we skip that, but if you are reading the English version you assume we sing it. Then at the beginning of the Amidah, the standing prayer, where we sing, "open my lips that I may…", the second time through we say, "that I may proclaim the name of Yeshua" Which would be an "in your face" to someone who did not believe in Yeshua.[110]

What he says shows how the congregation has changed certain elements to make it fit their belief in Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah. Adjustments are made to incorporate Yeshua into the tradition of Jewish prayer service. In addition to these small but significant adjustments, the 19th benediction is skipped as it is directed towards heretics. There has been a scholarly debate on whether or not the benediction is directed directly towards *notzrim*, Christians. The Gentile believer noted that "We do not pray against ourselves."[111] Furthermore, the prayer in Matthew chapter 6 from the Christian bible is prayed. According to the cantor, the prayer reflects the

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[109] Cantor, Roe Israel.

[110] Gentile believer, Roe Israel.

[111] Gentile believer, Roe Israel.

Amidah. He argues that "such prayers were offered by a number of rabbis in the time [of Yeshua] as a way of emphasizing their particular points that they liked to teach."[112]

Still, because of the issue of Yeshua have been a stumbling block in the issue of the Jewish community accepting Messianic Jews, one can assume that a traditional Jewish synagogue would never use the prayer from the Christian bible. These adjustments and changes are essential because they reflect how the congregation tries to balance their Jewish heritage with faith in Yeshua without the practice of one contradicting the other. By taking away elements that are 'wrong' to them in Jewish tradition and adding new elements that emphasize a belief Yeshua, they continue to negotiate between Jewish and Christian components in their identity. While their love for Jewish tradition is evident, changes are made to make room Yeshua.

Looking back at David Rudolph and Elliot Klayman observation about Messianic synagogues, which states that Messianic Shabbat services have incorporated song, dance, instrumental music, Roe Israel have not except the rhythm that is made in the performance of prayer.[113] The role of instrumental music will be discussed further in section 3.5. about worship. What is interesting is how close Roe Israel is to Jewish practices. In Roe Israel, elements, such as worship sessions, which is common in Messianic congregations in Israel, is not practiced.

While congregation in most aspects resembles a synagogue in the way it practices Shabbat morning services, there are some interesting similarities with traditional churches. The fact that the service has a clear pattern that is followed every week resembles may be compared with how traditional churches conduct liturgy. An essential part of the service is also the sermon or teaching, which is common in Christian churches. The sermon may include texts from both the Jewish and the Christian bible.

Through the practice of Shabbat morning prayer service, Roe Israel to many degrees expresses a traditional Jewish identity that emphasizes Jewish components in the construction

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[112] Cantor, Roe Israel.

[113] David Rudolph and Elliot Klayman, "Messianic Jewish Synagogues." In *Introduction to Messianic Judaism. Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundation*, ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willits (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 37.

of their group identity. The Jewish identity has become salient except in the areas that contradict the belief in Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah.

Figure 15: Torah scroll used during morning Shabbat service.
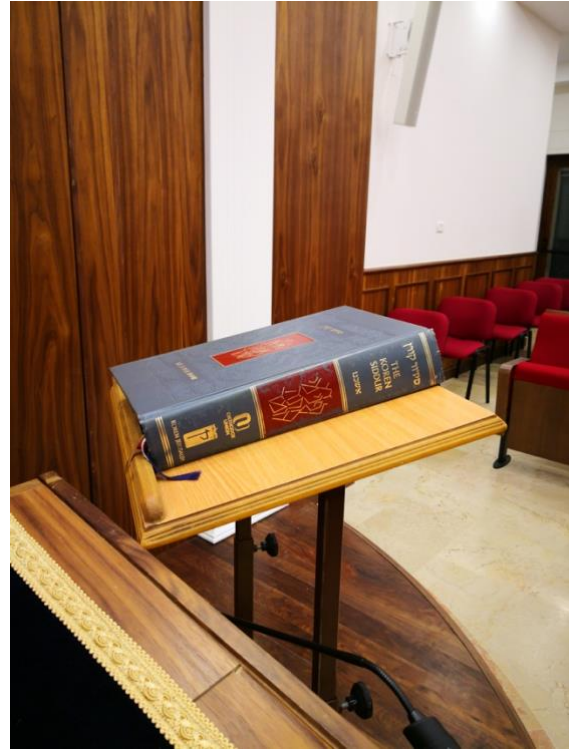
Figure 16: The siddur, prayer book, used during morning Shabbat service.

3.1.5. Messianic Shabbat Service

The structure of the Shabbat services in these two congregations are very different. The Jerusalem Assembly has adopted a more casual structure and resembles how low churches practices Sunday service which puts little emphasis on rituals and authority of the clergy. Roe Israel, on the other hand, have much more liturgy and structured form of their service but, as the cantor suggests, there is a balance between participating and fellowship which suggest a less formal atmosphere. Not only is the structure different. The way of worship is different in the sense that Jerusalem Assembly uses time on worship session led by a worship team, while Roe Israel focuses on following the siddur and developing kavvanah, which will be further discussed in section 3.6.

The practice at the Jerusalem Assembly shows how Jews might interpret Messianic Jews as Christian in the sense that the religious practice is closer to Christian ways of conducting Sunday service. On the other hand, the fact that many Israelis are not religious Jews may also indicate that members of Jerusalem do not feel the same need to follow the Jewish tradition of prayer service and Torah service to maintain a Jewish identity. At Roe Israel, the fact that the practice of the prayer service is very close to Jewish practices challenges the Jewish perception that Messianic Jews are not Jews. However, by altering essential elements of the service and adding elements of Yeshua further adds to the idea that Messianic Judaism is a syncretic religious movement rather than a movement within contemporary Judaism.

While the differences are many, there are some similarities. Both congregations are affected by tourist groups visiting on Shabbat, but also to some degree by students or volunteers that are only part of the congregation for a shorter time. Israel is a special place in the heart of many Christians, and Jews coming to faith in Yeshua is seen as a fulfillment of, and it is, therefore, appealing to many Christian tourists to come and visit Messianic congregation. While having visitors is not a bad thing, it may disrupt the picture of what a "normal" Messianic congregation looks like when it sometimes feels like a tourist attraction.

From looking at these two congregations, it is clear that there are several interpretations of what a Messianic service should contain. Not only by observing the services, but also through the interviews, it was expressed that the structure by no means are sat and are continually negotiated. The two congregations show different ways of practicing a Messianic service

which is continually negotiated. The differences show that there are various ways of relating to Jewish and Christian practices.

Roe Israel is closer to traditional Jewish synagogues, but it is interesting to note that there are few similar congregations in the State of Israel today. As mentioned in connection with space and art and conversation with Akiva Cohen, Israeli Messianic Jews do not relate as much to traditional Judaism as Americans Messianic Jews do, which is shown in the practices at Jerusalem Assembly.

3.2. Language and translation

Language is part of people's identity in the fact that it is one of the primary forms of communication. The language used in a congregation can indicate who is the audience. The Hebrew language is part of Jewish practice and is an essential part of Jewish liturgy all over the world. Even though synagogues within Reconstruction and Reform movements tend to use local languages in a bigger more significant portion of the service, the Hebrew language is an essential part of Jewish identity.[114]

While the Messianic movement started in the United States, modern Hebrew is the official language in Israel which makes Hebrew a more natural part of Messianic congregation.[115] While there are many participants and members that do not speak or understand Hebrew, the people that have grown up in the country or are planning to stay for a longer term usually do as language often is an important part of the integration. While modern Hebrew is part of the Israeli society, the Torah is written in biblical Hebrew which differs to some degree from modern Hebrew.

The use of language is different within the Christian tradition. Ramshaw writes that it is commonly recognized within many Christian denominations that the word of God speaks to everyone and is not depended on the language used. Still, contemporary Greek Orthodox churches use classic Greek translation of the Bible.[116]

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[114] Yiddish and Amharic are also used within Jewish movements.

[115] While Hebrew is the official language, it is important to note that there are several languages commonly used. Arabic, Russian, and English can all be found on, for example, road signs in various parts of the country.

[116] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship,* 71.

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In Jerusalem Assembly, everything is communicated in both Hebrew and English from the front stage, while people who need translation into other languages get it through earplugs that are handed out before the meeting. The use of both Hebrew and English on the platform may be interpreted to reflect the balance between Israelis and short-time stayers. Because the congregation has several short-time stayers that do not know Hebrew, English is also an integrated part of the service. The use of both Hebrew and English on the platform indicate that the primary audience is not only Israelis and Jews. The different translation is connected to short-time stayers and visitors. The fact that there are many visitors and tourist on Shabbat, one of the members noted that, "If you want to get to know the Assembly, it is not on Shabbat, it is more during the week."[117] He is referring to various meetings during the week in which various groups within the congregation interact in different activities and teachings, like bible study groups and youth group. The range of activities and the issue of visitors are essential to keep in mind when interpreting the Shabbat morning service. The various meetings and activities are an essential part of community life, but because the Shabbat service is the time all age groups meet, it is a valuable practice to discuss.

In Roe Israel, Hebrew is the primary language that is used on the bimah. The people that need translation gather in groups in which one sits with them and translate. The prayer book they use is Jewish and because the prayers and blessings are performed in Hebrew the adjustments and alternations are challenging to pick up on if one does not have any knowledge in Hebrew or have someone to help translate. Therefore, one could say that knowledge in Hebrew is an essential part of belonging and interacting in the congregation. Still, the cantor at congregation noted that they have translations into English, Spanish and Russian, and sometimes more even more languages depending on people present, which shows that short-timer stayers are also present at Roe Israel.

Both congregations use Hebrew as an integrated part of the service, but contrary to other countries, the use of Hebrew is a natural part of being situated in Israel. What is interesting with the use of language is the need for translation into a various number of languages. It demonstrates that a continuous flow of non-Israelis influences both congregations, but while

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[117] Messianic Jew 1, Roe Israel.

the Jerusalem Assembly has integrated English into the service, Roe Israel has not. In the next section, I will discuss how the choice of clothing expresses religious identity.

3.3.   Clothing

Clothing is another visible factor that can reflect religious belonging. Walking through the streets of the Old City, there are numerous variations of religious clothing present. One may see it, for example, in various types of head covering or in different level of formality of clothing. While there a no formal or required dress code in either congregation it is interesting to look at how members choose to dress when attending Shabbat morning service. I have chosen to focus on items used in Jewish tradition because of the Jewish context in which they interact.

Although the Hebrew Bible does not require a head covering it is a common practice among devoted Jews. According to Posner, Kaploun, and Cohen, Men use a head covering as a sign of humility before God while women use it in relation to showing modesty towards men. They write:

> The covering of the head has become one of the most hotly debated points of controversy between Reform and Orthodox Jewry. The latter regards the covering of the head, both outside and inside the synagogue, as a sign of allegiance to Jewish tradition, and demands the wearing of at least of a skullcap (which in Hebrew is called a *kippah*, and in Yiddish a *yarmulka*). Worship with covered heads is also the accepted rule in Conservative synagogues. In reform congregation, however, it is optional.[118]

As seen in the quote, there are various practices when it comes to covering one's head. The multiple practices indicate that the use of head covering inside and outside the synagogue may indicate what Jewish tradition the men belong to. The same way as there are various practices of men wearing a kippah, there are different practices of women covering their head in various tradition.

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[118] Posner, Kaploun and Cohen, *Jewish*, 58-59.

As with the kippah, Jewish men within certain traditions wear a *tallit* at the synagogue during morning prayer service. The tallit is a rectangular shaped prayer shawl with fringes on all four corners and is based on two biblical verses, Numbers 15:38 and Deuteronomy 22:12. The same way as the covering of the head may indicate which movement one belongs to within Judaism, the same could be said about the tallit.

In the Jerusalem Assembly, most members were dressed casually. None of the people present was wearing clothing that reflected a religious identity; this included the pastor. While there are no clear religious markers in the choice of clothing, it is not uncommon. As seen above the use of kippah and tallit within Reform and Reconstructionist movement in Judaism is optional, but the complete absence of the Jewish items might better be compared with many Christian denominations, such as Evangelicals.

At Roe Israel, this is quite different. While there is no formal dress code, most of the men were covering their head with items like a *kippa*. Not only that, several of the men were wearing the tallit. Some of the women were covering their head with a scarf. The choice of clothing underlines the Jewishness of the congregation.

By looking at both congregations, it is possible to see how the evaluative component of social theory kicks in by how they have interpreted the balance of Jewish and Christian aspects. In Jerusalem Assembly, the group has distance itself from traditional Jewish clothing by not wearing it, members of Roe Israel, on the other hand, have chosen to embrace religious clothing such as the kippah and the tallit which suggests a desire to be closer to the broader Jewish community and continues to choose Jewish components.

3.4. Worship and prayer

As Messianic Jews balance between Judaism and Christianity there are different expressions of worship. In this thesis, I have chosen to look at the practice of Jewish prayer and Christian contemporary worship. Seth N. Klayman writes that, "When the Messianic Jewish movement emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Messianic Jews could have adopted in toto

forms of worship and prayer from the Jewish traditions."[119] According to Kleyman, Messianic Jews were challenged by practices within both Christianity and Judaism. While they could not find Yeshua in the Jewish practice of prayer through the siddur, Christian worship did not reaffirm Gods covenant with the Jewish people. Based on the challenges with Jewish and Christian practices, Messianic Jews started to develop new "Messianic" ways of prayer and worship music. "Messianic music," was created, which tries to balance the Jewish perspective with faith in Yeshua. On the other hand, a Messianic Jewish siddur were published.

From the segment about the content and practice of Shabbat morning service in the two congregations, it was shown how the worship session was an essential part of the service in Jerusalem Assembly, while prayer was a big part of the service at Roe Israel. Contemporary worship was only found at Jerusalem Assembly, and Jewish prayer was only found in Roe Israel, the choice of practice may indicate how they have interpreted and created a Messianic identity. I will start by discussing Messianic worship in Jerusalem Assembly, before I look at the aspect of Jewish prayer in Roe Israel.

3.4.1. Messianic Worship in Jerusalem Assembly

The worship session an essential part of the Shabbat morning service. As mentioned in section 3.1.2., worship sessions have become an important part of the service in many Christian congregations, such as Evangelical churches.

In Jerusalem Assembly, the worship sessions resemble an evangelical worship style in the sense that it is led by a worship team which consists of singers and a band. The lyric is presented on the wall behind the platform and is written in both Hebrew, both with Hebrew letters and with use of the Latin alphabet, and a translation into English.

When the worship session starts, many of the members at the Jerusalem Assembly rise and sing while standing. Without the exception of the use of the Hebrew language it many ways feels and resembles contemporary Christian worship. However, the songs that are used are to some degree different. Looking at the English translation of the worship songs, it reflectes to some degree a different genre then contemporary Christian worship. There is a clear emphasis

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[119] Seth N. Kleyman, "Messianic Worship and Prayer," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism. Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations,* ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willits (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 52

on scripture which suggests that the songs are somewhat Messianic worship songs. The establishment of Messianic worship, as Kleyman mentioned, came out of the challenges Messianic Jews found in Jewish and Christian practices. By using Messianic worship, it uses a component that is similar to Christian practice but makes adjustments that make the practice fit into the Jewish context and further develop and establish an identity. By choosing a style close to Christian practices might suggest a closer relationship with Christian denominations, which is reinforced by the many Christian visitors to the congregation. Still, the fact that the congregation has chosen to use music that is suited for the Jewish context which includes God covenant with the Jewish people suggest that the Jewish aspect is essential.

3.4.2. Prayer in Roe Israel

The content and practice of Shabbat morning prayer service showed how Roe Israel practice traditional Jewish prayers. The prayer is expressed through rhythm and music led by the cantor. The congregations follow the siddur which includes scripture from the Tanakh. The cantor said: "The text serves as a springboard that propels the worshiper toward higher purposes."[120] As mentioned in 3.1.1., Jewish prayer is more than just reading from the siddur. It is about establishing levels of kavannah, intention of prayer, which is what the cantor referred to. In the discussion about the practice of Shabbat morning prayer service at Roe Israel, the cantor emphasized on creating an atmosphere when daveding on the bimah. As a prayer leader, it suggests that through the daveding with use of rhythm one tries to create an atmosphere that helped people rise to a level of kavannah.

It was also mentioned, in dialogue with Meek in section 2.2.1 and section 3.1.1., that the use of simplistic internal design may be a way to promote kavannah. The fact that the Messianic synagogue has chosen not to have many elements in the congregational hall, in addition to the use of the siddur, may indicate that the choice of design may be a way to helps members focus on the practices during Shabbat morning service.

Contrary to many Messianic congregations in Israel, Roe Israel does not practice Messianic worship, which consists of singers and various instruments. One of the members at Roe Israel that had become a believer in a charismatic congregation in the United States expressed that

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[120] Cantor, Roe Israel.

she missed the music and the instruments, but even though the saw the value of the Messianic worship, she argued:

> If we want to keep the congregation a place where Jews feel relatively comfortable entering, there are certain things we have to avoid. Worship with instruments is probably one of those things.[121]

In addition to her, the Gentile believer referred to the worship part from the previous congregations but stated that he was looking for something else, wanting to live more Hebraically. While some in the congregation appreciated other ways of worshiping, it was clear that the idea behind the congregation was to create a space in which Jews would feel comfortable. Roe Israel have, therefore, chosen to keep the Shabbat prayer service as close to traditional synagogues as possible.

Through the conversation with members, it shows that through the development of creating a Messianic synagogue, the congregation has taken an active choice to exclude Messianic worship. The members that appreciated Messianic worship, still felt that the Jewishness of the congregation was more important the Messianic worship style. By keeping the practice of Jewish prayer as close to Jewish practices, reaffirm that the congregation is creating and negotiating an identity that is closer to the Jewish ways of practices.

3.4.3. Messianic Worship and Prayer

The two congregations emphasize on various styles of worship which are expressed through the adapted form of practicing Jewish prayer and the use of Messianic worship which is in some degrees a Messianic interpretation of Christian contemporary worship music. The choice of practicing Messianic worship or Jewish prayers reflect the rest of the Shabbat morning service in the two congregations. While the two congregations use various components from Christian and Jewish practices, the fact that the elements that are practiced are adapted to fit into the context of Jewish believers, which suggest the continued need to find a way two balance their Jewish heritage with faith in Yeshua.

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[121] Messianic Jew 2, Jerusalem Assembly.

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3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented how Jerusalem Assembly and Roe Israel practice Shabbat morning service. By looking at elements such as content and practice, use of language, clothing, and worship through prayer and music, I have analyzed how the practice of Shabbat morning service at the two congregations reflect practices of Jewish or Christian traditions.

Two aspects arise in light of my observations; how the two Messianic congregations have chosen to relate to different practices, which suggest a closer connection to either Judaism or Christianity, on the other hand, by using elements from one tradition over the other have created the need to adapt the practice to incorporate elements from the other tradition.

How the of practice the Shabbat morning service at the two congregations relates to Jewish and Christian practices corresponds with the findings in the chapter on space and art. While Jerusalem Assembly is much closer to some Christian practices, Roe Israel has chosen to use content and structure that are closer to Jewish traditions. The two congregations do balance aspects from both Judaism and Christianity, but both congregations are closer to one of them. Again, the congregations show how it is difficult to talk about the Messianic movement as a single entity and instead reflect the need to talk about various Messianic identities.

The chapter on space and art and how the Messianic spaced is used on Shabbat have shown how differently a Messianic identity can look like. The various Messianic identities have been presented through various ways of relating to Jewish and Christian tradition. To better understand how Messianic Jews view themselves, in the next chapter, I will discuss how Messianic Jews in Israel express their identity through language.

4. Language

In this chapter, I will discuss how language is used to communicate a Messianic identity in Israel. The issue of terminology is often a stumbling block for many when talking about Messianic Jews. After my stay in Israel and during the process of writing this thesis, some people I talked to were baffled when I have tried to explain who Messianic Jews are, that they are Jews who followed Jesus. Many would say, "But if they believe in Jesus, are they not Christians?" The division between Jews and Christians are well established in terminology all over the world as two categories that do not overlap but are somewhat contradictions. Words are powerful and useful, but they can also create enormous challenges in communicating between people from various background with different world views.

As seen in the previous chapters, Messianic Jews relate in various degrees to Judaism and Christianity through space and art and how they use this space, and it is, therefore, interesting to see how Messianic Jews communicate their identity with people outside their congregational space, to see if the various perspectives a line. People are in contact with people from other groups often through personal conversations, or, for example, in contact with authorities such as when requiring property as mentioned in 2.1. Conversations might be with a Jewish colleague, family member, a foreign Christian worker, or a Christian tourist. To be able to discuss how Messianic Jews negotiate identity through language, the main question will be, how do Messianic Jews define themselves in the context of the contemporary Israeli society.

The issue of Messianic terminology is closely linked with the understanding of who is a Jew and who is a Christian. Before discussing the question of who a Messianic Jew is, I will start by discussing various ways in which people define a Jew. The issue of who is considered a Jew is essential because it is one of the biggest challenges Messianic Jews face in connection to the broader Jewish community, how can they express their identity so that they could be accepted into the Jewish group they consider themselves a part of. The fact that Israel is the only Jewish state in the world makes it valuable to discuss what the state thinks about the Jewish identity issue. How do they determine who is a Jew and who has the right to make aliyah according to Israeli law? Another aspect is one of the Gentiles within the Messianic movement. How do they express their identity, is it affected by the Messianic identity, and the relations to the Jewish community? Through this chapter, I will look at how language is used

and to what degree it reflects the identity shown through space and art. What role does language play in shaping and negotiating a Messianic identity in Israel?

4.1. Who is a Jew?

One of the things that frequently comes up in the discussion about Messianic Jews, is the question on who is a Jew and according to whom? It is something that is continually debated, and there are different opinions. Carol Harris-Shapiro statement on the issue with the rejection of Messianic Jews as Jews, as mentioned in 1.2.2., is a radical one, and many religious Jews would disagree. In this section, I will look at different ways of defining who a Jew is to be able to understand the context in which Messianic Jews negotiate their identity. The approaches to identity that will be discussed are the Jewish identity based on ethnicity and religion. How does the state of Israel define a Jew? Moreover, who Messianic Jews consider being a Jew?

4.1.1. Religious Jew

Today, Judaism is to various degree categorized as a religion, and by that, Jews may be perceived as a religious group. The aspects of religious practices and "wrong" belief are often used by religious Jews to argue that Messianic Jews are Christians and not Jews.

The challenges with only discussing the Jewish identity as a religious identity have already been highlighted through the work of Harris-Shapiro in the introduction. Even though she is skeptical to the Messianic movement, she reflects on the fact that if the 'right' belief and practices are what determines one's Jewishness, who then "truly belongs in the Jewish community" since the broader Jewish community cannot agree on what the core of Judaism is.[122]

Looking at statistic from Pew research center, see figure 15, the religious landscape in Israel continues to challenge the idea that the "right" belief and practice is what determines who is a Jew. In the Middle East, people tend to belong to religious categories even if they do not believe or practice the religion, as shown in 1.4.4., where Israelis can be divided between Israeli Jews, Israeli Muslims, Israeli Druze, Israeli Christians. The statistics from Pew

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[122] Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism*, 185.

presents the religious belongingness within the Israeli population, which shows how the Jewish population is divided into four categories, *hiloni*/secular, *masorti*/traditional, *dati*/religious, and *haredi*/ultra-orthodox. According to the research, 40 % of the Israeli population consider themselves Jewish hiloni, Jewish secular. According to the research, 40 % of the Israeli population consider themselves Jewish hiloni, Jewish secular, which is just under half of the Jewish population in Israel. The fact half of the Israeli that view themselves as Jews are secular shows how the Jewish identity goes beyond the religious category.
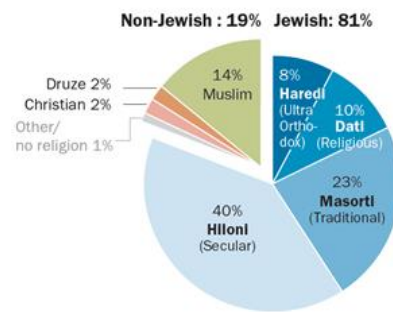
Figure 17: Survey on religious belonging in the State of Israel conducted by Pew Research Center.

Still, the statistics only give a general picture of what Israelis identifies as in connection to religion. When in the army, Israelis have to choose a religious category. The office manager at Roe Israel said that he identified closer to the hiloni, secular, while the cantor preferred dati, religious. This shows the difference in relating to the Jewish categories. The fact that the office manager chooses hiloni indicates that secular does not mean one does not believe in God and might have a religious belonging that does not fit into the other categories.

While the religious component plays a part in many Jewish lives, it is not the only aspects that are important when talking about Jewish identity. Kollontai looks at the dynamic between Jewish religious/spiritual identity and Jewish ethnic identity, she writes:

> Demonstrating one's Jewishness through the ethnic dimension without the spiritual is fully acceptable to normative Judaism and does not throw one's identity into question. It is only when the individual takes on a new spiritual identity that problems arise.[123]

Kollontai's statement shows how the religious component becomes salient in reaction to other specific beliefs; it shows how ethnic and religious aspects are continually negotiated. It reflects what the research from Pew shows, that one can be a Jew without the spiritual aspect. At the same time, it demonstrates why Messianic Jews are rejected by the fact that is

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[123] Kollontai, *Messianic Jews and Jewish Identity*, 198.

considered by other Jews to have changed spiritual identity, and therefore reject their Jewish identity. According to Kollontai's statement, it is accepted to be a Jew who does not believe in God, but if you change religion, one is no longer a Jew.

While religious belief and practices are still an essential element to many Jews, it is not enough to understand the complexity of who is considered a Jew. In the next section, I will look at the ethnic aspect of Jewish identity.

4.1.2. Ethnic Jew

As seen above, it is not enough to talk about being a Jew as only a religious category based on religious belief and practices. As Kollontai demonstrated, it is crucial to understand the religious and ethnic dimension of the Jewish identity and the connection between those two aspects. In this section, I will look at the concept of ethnicity and how it relates to who is considered a Jew.

Jews are a people, an ethnic group. According to George A. De Vos, "An ethnic group is a self-perceived inclusion of those who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact with," [124] which includes religious beliefs, historical continuity, common ancestry or place of origin. De Vos continues by saying, "The group' actual history often trails off into legend or mythology, which includes some concept of unbroken biological-genetic generational continuity, sometimes regarded as giving special inherited characteristic."[125]

Before looking at the ethnic aspect of contemporary Jewish identity, it is essential to understand the difference in the understanding of the Jewish identity before and after the rise of Rabbinic Judaism. While many today view Jews and Christians as oppositions, Boyarin argued that the categories of Yeshua-followers and Jews were different kinds of categories which did not contradict each other.[126] He writes: "Most, if not all, Christians of the first,

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[124] George A. De Voss, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation. The role of Ethnicity in Social History*", in *Ethnic Identity. Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation*, ed. Lola Romanucci-Ross and George De Vos (United States: AltaMira Press, 1995), 18.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Boyarin, *Semantic Differences; or "Judaism"/ "Christianity"*, 69.

second, and perhaps even third centuries considered themselves and were considered by others to be Jews."[127] The understanding of the difference between category used before and after the Christian Era is important because at times they can be confused. The Jewish world in which Yeshua and his followers lived and interacted in did not have religious categories as we do today. Therefore, when Messianic Jews refer to the fact that Yeshua and his first followers where Jewish, the concept of who was a Jew was different. The rise of Christianity and the concept of religion have both challenges and shaped to some degree the idea of who a Jew is.

Judaism and Jews are linked with ancestry, which is a common element of ethnic identity. A Jew could be defined through the family relations either through the mother or the father based on what tradition one belongs to. Leaman argues that this is one of the aspects that have been highly debated between tradition, since the Reform movement consider someone with a Jewish father as a Jew, while the Orthodox tradition based on the mother.[128] The different practices of conversion reinforce this.[129] The disagreement on who determines who is a Jew, further demonstrate that there is no common agreement on a definition.

The concept of ethnicity includes both ancestry and religious belief, but is ethnicity a stable concept? As seen above, there have been and is different definitions and understanding of who should be considered a Jew. By comparing the idea of who is a Jew before and after the rise of Christianity further demonstrate the fluidity of categories. Joane Nagel discusses a constructionist view on ethnicity:

> that stresses the fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic character of ethnic
> identification, organization, and action – a model that emphasizes the socially
> "constructed" aspect of ethnicity, i.e., the ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities,

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Leaman, *Judaism,* 147.

[129] Generally, Judaism does not promote conversion, but it is possible. The different practices have been continually debated as some traditions have rejected conversion conducted in other movements.

and cultures, are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities.[130]

According to a constructive view, ethnicity is a fluid and dynamic category which underlines the challenges with finding one common understanding of what it means to be a Jew. Still, ethnicity is an integral part of the Jewish identity, which is reinforced through historical continuity, common ancestry, place of origin, and to some degree religious belief. Still, to define a Jew based on ethnicity have been viewed as challenging in which various groups have a different understanding of the criterium. As noted above, there are different understandings of who is a Jew in Late Antiquity and various contemporary Jewish movements today. There is a lot that can be said about the concept of ethnicity and the Jewish identity as an ethnic identity, but, for this thesis, it is first of all essential to the understand the complexity of defining a Jew and that the definition has changed through time. In the next section, I will look at what the Israeli law says on the definition of who is a Jew.

4.1.3. Jew according to the State of Israel

The state of Israel is a Jewish state and was created based on the thought that Jews needed a haven, even more so after of the Holocaust, and a longing to return to the Land of Israel. Based on the vision for the State of Israel, all Jews should be able to make aliyah and become an Israeli citizen. The question is then, how does the State of Israel define who a Jew is and who has the right to become an Israeli citizen? The Law of Return, which states who have the right to make aliyah, says:

> 4A. (a) The rights of a Jew under this Law and the rights of an oleh[131] under the
> Nationality Law, 5712-1952***, as well as the rights of an oleh under any other
> enactment, are also vested in a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the
> spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person
> who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion.[132]

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[130] Joane Nagel, "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture." Social Problems 41, no. 1 (1994): 152.

[131] *Oleh* is Hebrew and refers to a Jewish immigrant.

[132] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Law of Return 5710-1950," Accessed May 7, 2019.
https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfa-archive/1950-1959/pages/law%20of%20return%205710-1950.aspx

According to the Law of Return, a person can make aliayh not only based on one's own Jewishness but also through the Jewishness of relatives or spouse. The law continues by defining "Jew," which shows a distinction between who is a Jew and who has the right to make aliyah as a Jewish immigrant;

> 4B. For the purposes of this Law, "Jew" means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion.[133]

According to Israeli Law, two aspects are connected to the identity of a Jew, both ethnicity and religion, but rather than focusing on Jewish beliefs it focuses on that one does not belong to other religions. The rejection of other religions in connection to the Jewish identity reinforces Kollontai statement in section 4.1.1., which shows that it is first when a Jew change religion that one loses the Jewish identity. It is therefore not an issue according to Israeli law that one does not believe in God or conduct any Jewish religious practices, but if one conduct other religious practices one is no longer considered a Jew. It is also interesting to note that even though one has the right to make aliyah based on the Jewishness of parents, grandparents or spouse, one has to have a Jewish mother to be considered a Jew according to Israeli Law.

4.1.4. Messianic perception of who is a Jew

As mentioned in the introduction, Messianic Judaism challenges contemporary Judaism and Christianity, one of the reasons being based on the issue of who is considered a Jew. Contemporary Judaism and Christianity have developed side by side and in many ways been established as two contradicting religions which argues that one cannot be both a Jew and a Christian. Because Messianic Jews argue that their faith in Yeshua does not take away their Jewishness, it is interesting to look at how they define a "Jew." One of the first questions the informants were asked was if they could define a Messianic Jews which implied that they had to define who is considered a Jew.

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[133] "Law of Return 5710-1950."

Messianic Jews perceive themselves as being part of the wider Jewish category but are rejected as Jews by the broader Jewish community. One of the informants said that: "The problem with Judaism as a whole is that it is a race, a religion, a peoplehood. Many different definitions work in different contexts."[134] His answer reflects the reality that was presented in the previous sections — talking to the various members of both congregations most of the focused on the ethnic aspect of the Jewish identity. Many of them answered that they consider people with either a Jewish mother or father as a Jew, some went as far as to say, grandparent. The definition of who a Jew is by Messianic Jews more reflect the Israeli law on who has the right to make aliyah and gives a much broader definition than both traditions, such as Reform and Orthodox.

The concept of who is a Jew can be addressed from different angles. The various approaches are challenging because when people talk about Jews, one can have a different understanding of what that means, which is one of the biggest challenges with the relationship between Messianic Judaism and the broader Jewish community. Jews and Messianic Jews tend to address the issue of the Jewish identity from different angles and perspectives.

4.1.5. Summary

In this section, I have discussed different ways in which people define a Jew. One of the biggest challenges in Israel when looking at the definition of who is a Jew the balance between the ethnic and religious identity. The Israeli landscape combined with the Law of Return reflects the challenges Messianic Jews face when their Jewish identity is being challenged. Some may argue that the religious aspect of the Jewish identity is necessary, the Israeli law, on the other hand, shows how the religious component first becomes vital in connection with other religions.

Messianic Jews highlight the ethnic aspect of the identity and refer to ancestry through the mother or the father. Before discussing how Messianic Jews negotiate their identity through language, I will look at how Gentile believers in Messianic congregations express their identity in connection to being part of the Messianic community.

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[134] Office manager, Roe Israel.

4.2. Gentile believers

Gentile believers are a big part of Messianic congregations in Israel. In this section, I will briefly look at the perspective of Gentile members. Gentiles believers consist of Israeli citizens or spouses of Messianic Jews, but also people that are staying in Israel for a longer or shorter period such as foreign worker, students, or volunteers. Because Gentile believers are an essential part of the congregations, it is valuable to include them in this research.

Most Gentiles believers refer to themselves as Christians, but as mentioned in section 2.1., the term 'Christian' in Israel can often be understood as belonging to more traditional churches, like the Catholic church, which many Gentiles believers would find problematic. The interpretation of who a Christian often depends on people's terminology, background, and knowledge. Within the Christian tradition, there are several denominations with its theology and tradition; the same ways Jews divide have developed various movement such as the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and secular. The challenges that all Christians may be perceived as Catholics by many Jews was shown in chapter 2.1, present shows how the Jewish perception of Christians affect both self-identified Christians and Messianic Jews. The fact that Jews tend to overgeneralize concerning Christians demonstrates the insider-outsider dynamic as shown in the Social Identity theory. By creating a picture of Christians as less diverse makes it easier to consider them as outsiders; which includes Messianic Jews.

While the Gentile believer in Jerusalem Assembly referred to herself as a Christian, the overgeneralization concerning what a Christian is sometimes making Christians feel the need to clarify in conversations with Jews. When asked about how he would identify himself, the Gentile believer at Roe Israel explained:

> For the people that know the terminology, especially a Jewish person, I tell them I am a *Ger toshav*, or a righteous gentile, sometimes they understand that. I identify as Christian at the minister of interior for my visa purposes and because I work with a Christian organization that blesses Israel. But because of the history between Jewish and Christian communities, to say I am Christian to a lot of Jews does not mean

anything to them. They think I am Catholic. They have a lot of different ideas. I try to clarify who I am.[135]

His answer presents three interesting aspects, a desire to connect to the Jewish people, historical factors, and the diversity within the Christian tradition. First, he uses Jewish terminology. Not only that, he uses a term which indicates a desire to connect and show support for the Jewish people and its tradition. The desire to connect may also be seen as an attempt to narrow the gap between Judaism and Christianity. Secondly, he refers to the troubling and violent past between Judaism and Christianity which is a stumbling block in the relations between Jews and Christian. The historical tension between Jews and Christian created an insider-outsider dynamic that created the possibility of overgeneralizing the outsider group. Lastly, he demonstrates the need to make people understand how he identifies himself and makes people understand the variety within the Christian tradition and its relations to the Jewish people which again is emphasized by showing support for the Jewish people and Israel.

Not only does many Messianic Jews feel the need to adjust and readjust their terminology in interaction with different groups; It leads to the discussion on how people or a group perceive themselves and how others perceive them.

One of the pastors who had grown up in Israel said that:

The word for "Christian" in Hebrew, *notsri*, to the regular Jewish mind it means everything but a Jew. It has nothing to do with Jewishness, and for many of them, it is a product of Catholicism. Is this what I am? The answer is no.[136]

As mentioned above, Christians are often perceived by Jews as Catholics or belonging to the traditional churches. While its long and violent past influences the relationship between Jews and Christians, the rise of Christian support for Israel does not go unnoticed. One of the Gentile believers said that "Depending on who it is, we use the term *Christian Zionist* because

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[135] Gentile Believer, Roe Israel.

[136] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

there is a growing knowledge of Christians support for Israel and the Jewish people."[137] The rise of Christian Zionism and Christian support for Israel are to some degree changing the Jewish perception of Christians. However, the number of Israeli Christians are small which suggest that the interaction Jews have with Christians, except Christian tourist, is limited. The distance between the group may, therefore, still be far apart.

In this section, I have looked at the concept of Messianic believer or Christian in the State of Israel and within the State of Israel. The language used to express identity is influenced by the dynamic between who is considered an insider or an outsider. As mentioned in 1.4.3, when an out-group is created, the is a tendency to overgeneralize the ones that are considered an outsider. The overgeneralization is reflected in how many Israeli Jews view all Christians as Catholic which generates the need among other Christian denomination to demonstrate a difference. It was also interesting to see how the Gentile member in Roe Israel, used language to get closer to the Jewish community by using Jewish terminology. In the next section, I will discuss how Messianic Jews express their identity through language, and the challenges they face with the Messianic terminology.

4.3. Messianic Jew

Through the previous sub-chapter, I have looked at various aspects of defining a Jew and the challenges with the Christian category in relation to Jews. In this section, I will look at who a Messianic Jew is and how they negotiate their identity through language in the State of Israel. The identity of Messianic Jews can be divided into two elements, (1) being a Jew and (2) a follower of Yeshua. At first glance, it might seem like an easy enough explanation, but as seen in previous sections, the question of who a Jew is and challenging and maybe more challenging, how to balance the Jewish identity with Yeshua as Messiah? Is one of the elements more salient than the other?

4.3.1. Who is a Messianic Jew?

In the introduction, a Messianic Jew was portraited as someone that was a Jew and believed in Yeshua. As seen through the use of space and art, there is a diversity in how Jewish believers have interpreted the relationship between their Jewish heritage and faith in Yeshua. When

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[137] Gentile Believer, Roe Israel.

referring the Messianic Judaism in antiquity and the Modern Era, David Rudolph used the definition, "a tradition in which Jews have claimed to follow (Jesus) as the Messiah of Israel while continuing to live within the orbit of Judaism."[138] Pauline Kollontai wrote that: "Messianic Jews accept Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah and they practice a lifestyle which they consider to be within the framework of the Torah."[139] Both use a broad description of how to relate to the Jewish tradition. The description, "Within the orbit of Judaism" and "they practice a lifestyle which they consider to be within the framework of the Torah," gives much room for various interpretation, which highlights the complexity of the Messianic relation to Jewish practices.

During the interviews, all of the informants were asked how they would identify themselves in connection to faith and religion. The answers were diverse which again suggest that there are different ideas on what it means to be a Messianic Jew. Some would say, "follower of Christ," others, "Jewish believers in Jesus." One said:

> Somebody that identifies primarily as Jewish and who has faith in Yeshua and has been born again. This is opposed to a Hebrew Christian, that primarily sees himself as a Christian with a Jewish background. The question, I think it is a bit of an historical question, but I think it is important to distinguish. Today, I think a lot of people who are Hebrew Christians calls themselves Messianic Jews out of convenience.[140]

He differentiates between having a Jewish background and identifying as Jewish. Still, he does not elaborate on what it means to identify as a Jew. The Messianic Jew quoted above attends Jerusalem Assembly, which suggests that even though he feels Jewish, he has not embraced traditional Jewish practices such as prayer service at the synagogue. On the other hand, he views himself different from Hebrew Christians in how they understand the Jewish aspect of their identity. As mentioned in the introduction, Jewish followers of Yeshua, as mentioned earlier, is not a new phenomenon. Through various movement, Jewish Yeshua-

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[138] David Rudolph, "Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and in the Modern Era," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism. Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundation,* ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 21.

[139] Kollontai, *Messianic Jews and Jewish Identity,* 195.

[140] Messianic Jew 3, Jerusalem Assembly.

followers have tried to find a way to balance the Jewish identity with a faith in Yeshua which has been expressed in various forms and ideology, one of them being Hebrew Christianity.

A member of Roe Israel argued that:

> Ideally, a Messianic Jew is someone who embraces their Jewish heritage and identity and lives Jewishly. Unfortunately, many Messianic Jews I have met, especially here in Israel, seems to have been taught not to do that, not to keep the festivals, not to wear a kippa or tzitziot. It breaks my heart. Preferably someone who believes that the Abrahamic covenant is in place and that embraces being part of today's Jewish community. [141]

His definition focuses solemnly on the Jewish aspect if the Messianic identity. He goes even further in the emphasis on the Jewish aspects of the Messianic identity and believes that traditional Jewish practices should be an essential part of a Messianic Jewish identity. The fact that he attends the Messianic synagogues further suggest how he values Jewish traditions. On the other hand, he is a Gentile believer. Other members expressed the value and richness of Jewish practices but did not put as much emphasis on it in their explanation of who a Messianic Jew was, which might indicate the openness that there are various to relate to the Jewish aspect of the Messianic identity.

While both the member of Jerusalem Assembly and Roe Israel, quoted above, focuses on Jewish elements of the Messianic identity, they have interpreted the Jewish aspect of the identity differently, which is emphasized by the congregations they attend. The question of who a Messianic Jew is, in some ways, is as complicated as the question on who a Jew is. As mentioned in 4.1.1., most Messianic Jews consider someone of a Jewish mother or a father Jewish, but there are different understandings of how a Messianic Jew should relate to traditional Jewish practices.

The office manager at Roe Israel, who have grown up in Israel and the congregation, was more relax when it comes to various degree of Jewishness contrary to many of the other members in the congregation. He stated that: "I am a Christian, I am a Jew, I am a Messianic

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[141] Messianic Gentile, Roe Israel.

Jew!"[142] While having grown up in the Messianic synagogue, he now attends a congregation more similar to Jerusalem Assembly but stated that he felt comfortable both places. The office manager answers are intriguing because of the relaxed approach to the question contrary to others. That fact that he is born in Israel and has experience from both types of congregations shows the fluidity of the identity.

4.3.2. Challenges with the terminology of "Messianic Jew"

Not all of the informants were comfortable with using the term "Messianic Jews" and said they would use it but noted that it was not correct terminology. Some reflected on how differently people interpret and practice their Messianic Jewish identity; some even went as far as to say that the use of the term "Messianic Jew" was wrong. The pastor at Jerusalem Assembly said:

> It is theological, not correct. Nothing is good in it in a sense. It is wrong, but that is what it is. That is what people call you. You enter into life, into a world where this is the name. This is what everyone understands, and when you say that, "Ah, you are a Jew, but you are from of those who believe in Jesus, Amen!" [143]

The pastor explained that while he believed that the term was wrong, he used it because it was well-known and therefore difficult to change. He emphasized that even though the name was wrong, as long as people understood the general idea, that was enough for him. Beyond the fact that he disagreed on the name, the pastor focused on what was important in his identity and referred to himself as a "follower of Christ", but he continued to say that he used different ways of expressing his identity in connection to Jews and Christian, see section 4.3.4. One of the Jewish members of Jerusalem Assembly referred to herself as a follower of Jesus. When asked if she could define a Messianic Jew, she said;

> I have a problem with that. To be a Jew is in our blood; it is a people. It is not something you can change. Still, it is intertwined with religion and other identity issues which makes it even more complicated. For example, you have Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, Arab Yazidis, and Arab Bahais and you have all kind of Jews. I think a

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[142] Office manager, Roe Israel.

[143] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

> Messianic Jew is a Jewish person that believes that Jesus is the Messiah. However, there is a stream in Messianic Judaism. It is people that hold on to the Jewish traditions a lot more than me. So, that is why personally for myself, I do not like to use the term Messianic Jew because I do not want to give the wrong impression.[144]

She expresses that even though she is Jewish by blood, she does not embrace traditional Jewish practices. The fact that she does not feel comfortable with the term Messianic Jew because of the different practices within the Messianic movement indicates that she feels the need to separate herself from people that have different understandings of what a Messianic identity entails.

At Roe Israel, a member said: "At first, I did not want to be called a Christian because I did not identify with everything that meant. Now I started to feel that about Messianic Judaism."[145] In this case, both the term "Christian" and "Messianic Jew" is problematic. Because of the many different interpretations and understanding of the word, makes it challenging for some to use. Religious identity in Israel is complicated. One thing is to know who you are, but then how do you express it so that other people understand it. She also refers to the diversity within Messianic Judaism and the fact that while people refer to the Messianic movement as a single entity, the reality is something different. It is like saying that all Christians are the same without taking into account the thousands of different denominations all over the world that are different in terms of aspects such as theology, style, or music. All over the world, Christian use different terms to identify within the Christian tradition, such as Catholic, Protestant, Liberal, Conservative, or "born-again," which expresses the need to clarify to which specific group one belongs to.

Another informant that would not define himself as a "Messianic Jew," was the cantor of the Messianic synagogue. In addition to pointing out that "Messianic" was not a noun," and, therefore, often misused, he talked about the fact that Yeshua never called himself the Messiah and cautiously told his disciples to tell it to others. When defining himself, he talked about how Yeshua never applied labels and that the apostle Paul identified as a Pharisee and a

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[144] Messianic Jew 4, Jerusalem Assembly.

[145] Messianic Jew 2, Roe Israel.

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Jew. While the Pharisees no longer exist, he used the term "Torah-observant Jew" and referred to himself as a "Messianist." He explained;

> … a modern Jewish Messianist is a quasi-hasidic disciple of the ancient Israeli admor haRav Yeshua ben-Yosef, which means that he or she is a Torah-observant Jew, in accordance with principles such as summarized by Rav Yeshua in Mt 5:17-20, Mt 13:52, and Mt 23:2-3. These principles include a strong respect for traditional Jewish study and lifestyle praxis and an absolute insistence upon the unity of HaShem as expressed in "the Shm'a" (Deut.6:4) and in Is. 45, and a view of His Kingship that undergirds the piety of "malchut ha-shamayim" (i.e., the "kingdom of heaven".)[146]

The cantor's answers gave a sense of a close connection to Jewish practice and lifestyle, but also the first followers of Yeshua when Christians were viewed as Jews. His answer focuses mostly on the Jewish component of his identity which emphasizes Torah observant, Jewish study, and the unity of God. While there is a focus on the Jewish aspect, he talks about it by referring to Yeshua and uses text from the New Testament to explain why the Jewish practice is still relevant, which shows how he tries to balance the two components in his identity.

The term "Messianic Jew" is challenging in various ways. Some emphasize on the word itself, such as the pastor at Roe Israel and the cantor at Roe Israel. On the other hand, others focused on diversity and the fact that they did not identify with everyone inside the category. As previously mentioned in this section, the pastor noted that they used different ways of explaining his identity in communication with various groups. In the next section, I will look at how contemporary Jewish Yeshua-followers in Israel express their identity in conversations with the outside group, such as Gentile Christians and non-believing Jews.

4.3.3. In communication with "the other"

Through the interviews, it became clear that most of the Messianic Jews, and even one of the Gentile Christians, used different terminology when interacting with people from various groups. The pastor Jerusalem Assembly explained;

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[146] Email interview with the Cantor, Roe Israel.

If I am speaking with a Gentile "born again" Christian in America or Uganda, he will ask: "Who are you?" I will tell him I am a Christian because that is his vocabulary. To say that I am a born-again Christian will be found in his dictionary and he will know that I am a believer, regardless of being a Jew or Gentile who believes in Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

If I communicate in Hebrew in Israel to a religious person[147] who asks me: "Who are you?" I will tell him I am a Jew who believes Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Jesus will always be the center. However, we live in a world; we live in a context and a culture where different people have different vocabulary and dictionaries.

By knowing what is in one's vocabulary shows that, while to explain to Gentile believer abroad will only take half a second; I am a born-again, believer in Jesus, I am a Christian. In Israel, it will need a short summary of some sort, a one-minute answer, to make people understand.[148]

The extensive answer shows how people adapt in interaction with different people they met. In conversation with Christian, the pastor uses terminology and categories to make people understand that he is a follower of Jesus. When talking to Jews, the explanation becomes more difficult. As mentioned in section 4.2., some Jews view Christians or Yeshua-followers as Catholic. To be able to explain an identity that values the Jewish aspect of their identity, one sometimes has to go outside the Christian vocabulary to present the Messianic identity in a new and somewhat Jewish way.

The pastor's response presents how in the conversation with various people specific part of the identity because more salient to connect to different of the identity of a Messianic Jew. That does not mean that the rest of the identity is essential, but that because Jews and Christians have a different vocabulary, it might require Messianic Jews to attempt their words and explanation in a way that the "other" may understand their point of view.

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[147] In Israel, a *religious* person is often used in reference to religious Jews.

[148] Pastor, Jerusalem Assembly.

4.3.4. Summary

The question of who a Messianic Jew is shows the complexity of the Messianic identity and highlights the diversity within the movement. Through the discussion on how Messianic Jews express and negotiate their identity through language in Israel, there are two aspects of which is essential, how Messianic Jews relates to other Messianic Jews and the challenges with explaining one's identity with outsiders. On the one hand, the fact that Messianic Jews have different relations to traditional Jewish practices makes it difficult for others feel that they belong to the same category. Because Jews and Christians to some degree have different vocabularies, some Messianic Jews use various ways to express their identity through the use of language based on whom they are talking to.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how language is used to express and negotiate a Messianic identity in a modern Jewish state. Language and terminology are challenging in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society. People interpret and use words differently, and sometimes language creates borders that are not there.

As seen in the previous section, two aspects arise when discussing who Messianic identity through language in Modern Israel. While Messianic Jews explained that it was easier to express their identity in conversations with Christians, some noted that Jews needed a longer explanation. As seen in the section on who a Jew is, because there are various ways of looking at the Jewish identity, this creates various challenges. The biggest challenges Messianic face in connection to other Jews is the fact that most Jews view the acceptance of Yeshua as a rejection of one's Jewishness.

The second aspect is connected to the diversity within the Messianic movement. Because Messianic Jews have various ideas and interpretations on who a Messianic Jew is and what religious practices one should conduct, makes it difficult for some to use the term "Messianic Jew." Not only is the Messianic term challenging in connection with other groups. It also challenges the group itself. The use of language and terminology further express the diversity of Messianic identities that are continuously negotiated.

5. Conclusion

The research question of this thesis is *"How do Messianic Jews, through space, art and language, express and negotiate their identity in a modern Jewish state?"* By looking at two Messianic congregations in conversation with members and leaders, I have been able to get access to material that has given insight into the Messianic movement in the State of Israel. Through the three analytical chapters, I have presented various ways in which Messianic identity are being expressed and negotiated, and how the various Messianic identities balance elements from Jewish and Christian traditions. In this last chapter, I will present my main result of this study, locate this research in relations to previous studies and reflect on how my findings could lead to new research areas and studies.

5.1. The main results of the study

Through this research, diversity in Messianic identities has been presented which shows the complexity of the understanding of Messianic identity within the limit modern Israel. Two main aspects arise from the discussion on how a Messianic identity is negotiated in Israel, (1) how Messianic negotiate their identity in relation to Jews, Christians, and the Israeli society, (2) and how Messianic Jews negotiate their identity between themselves. The comparison between the two congregations highlights the diversity of opinions and perspectives on who Messianic Jews are and what Messianic practice should look like, which also is reflected in challenges with terminology.

How Messianic Jews negotiate their identity in relations with Jews, Christians, and the Israeli society is shown through all chapters. By looking at the congregational space and how it has been created for the purpose of the congregations, it becomes clear that the congregational hall to some extent reflects the out-group rather than the identity of the congregation. This is especially reflected in Jerusalem Assembly which has chosen to reject any religious symbolism. Both congregations have created spaces that they believe is acceptable to people in Israel based on the multicultural and multireligious society. Jerusalem Assembly does not use any Jewish symbols, which suggest an attempt to balance the perspectives of Gentiles and Jewish members and the fact that half of the population of Israeli Jews a secular. The congregation hall at Roe Israel, on the other hand, expresses the desire to connect to the Jewish religious community. By creating a space that is close to traditional synagogues, may be seen as an attempt to be accepted into the broader Jewish community.

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In chapter 2, the practices of Shabbat morning services indicate how the congregations relate Jewish or Christian practices. By selecting elements from common Jewish and Christian elements, the congregations negotiate between the Jewish and Christian aspect of their identity. What is interesting is how both congregations relate more to one of the traditions. Jerusalem Assembly resembles Christian practices, and Roe Israel practices Jewish prayer service. However, even though they select more component from one tradition, they both make adjustments to be able to balance the two aspects of their identity.

In chapter 4, the issue of how Messianic identity is negotiated in relation to Jews and Christian becomes apparent in the fact that some Messianic Jews feel the need to use various terminology in conversations with different groups. The constant need to make people understand the dynamic of their identity by trying to connect with both Jews and Christian by the use of words and categories they understand. Through language Messianic Jews in a larger degree are able to adjust their identity within various contexts.

How Messianic Jews negotiate between themselves is shown throughout this research. Through conversations with various members and leaders, both groups had various opinions on who a Messianic Jew was and what a Messianic Jew should practice. Through the use of language, it became even more visible in the fact that many thought the category of "Messianic Jews" was wrong because they did not identify with the "other," which in this case means a Messianic Jew on the other end of the spectrum.

The challenges with balancing a Jewish heritage and a faith in Yeshua are as real today as they have been since the first followers of Yeshua. The two congregations reflect two ways of relating to Jewish and Christian traditions. While Jerusalem Assembly has created a space without any religious symbolism and practices elements that are similar to Christian traditions, Roe Israel has established a space that tries to be as close to traditional Jewish synagogues as possible without compromising their faith in Yeshua. Even though both congregations to some degree focuses elements from one tradition more than the other, both have adapted element to fit into their understanding of a Messianic identity and by that balancing the two aspects of their identity.

Space and art in connection to the practice of Shabbat morning services in the two congregations show various ways of interpreting a Messianic identity. Through the diversity shown in these congregations, I will argue that many various Messianic identities are negotiated side by side. Since there still has not been created a shared understanding of who a Messianic Jew is, the group itself continues to demonstrate various interpretation. When adding the aspect of language, and how Messianic Jews communicate through language, it became clear that the diversity within the category created obstacles for some.

5.2.   Implications

In this thesis, I have discussed the aspects of space, art, and language in the formation of Messianic identity, a topic that has previously been neglected. My findings show the need to study identity formation and expression from various angles in which space and art is an interesting topic.

This research has focused on the geographical area of Jerusalem, Israel. As seen through this thesis, the Messianic movement in Israel is interesting in how it interacts and relates to Israeli society. The secular Jewish aspect of Israel has created a society in which one can keep one's Jewish identity without attending a synagogue, which affects how the Jewish identity is negotiated. The fact that American Messianic Jews and Israeli Jews are somewhat different makes it interesting to understand how a movement, such as the Messianic movement, evolve, adapt, and reconstruct in another society.

Diversity has become an essential part of this project. As Warshawsky's research stated, Messianic Jews belongs to different ends of a Messianic spectrum which is reflected in how much they relate to traditional Jewish identity. This research, in addition to Warshawsky, challenges some of the previous studies in the fact that the expression of Messianic identity is diverse.

Through this process, I have been able to touch upon several areas connected to how Messianic identity is expressed through space, art, and language. The study opens to various areas that would be interesting to analyze further.

As mentioned in the connection to the introduction to the chapter about Shabbat morning services, I was not able to discuss the practice of the Lord's Supper or the use of scripture in

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the Shabbat morning service. A more comprehensive study on the practices of Shabbat morning services that included an analysis of the Messianic adaptions of the siddur could give a deeper understanding of how the Jewish and Christian component is balanced in construction of a Messianic identity.

Another area that has not been mentioned in this study is the practice of festivals. One of the most important festivals in Judaism is Pesach in which a sedar meal is practiced and shared. Messianic Jews have created a Messianic Haggadah which have incorporated Yeshua. By analyzing the Messianic Haggadah next to the Jewish Haggadah and texts connected to the Christian celebration of Easter might give a deeper understanding of how Messianic Jews understand their relations to Jews and Christians.

In this thesis, I have discussed the aspects of space, art, and language in the formation of a Messianic identity, a topic that has previously been neglected. My findings show the need to study identity formation from new perspectives to better understand the dynamics and challenges with the "Messianic" terminology.

In the section about previous research, I mentioned the book "Facts and Myths," a survey that was conducted to map the Messianic movement in Israel. While the book is outdated, Caspari Center is working on an updated version. A new publication with updated information could be of great help in understanding the development of the Messianic movement in the country. In light of this research, in connection to an updated survey may create new perspectives that could lead to valuable and fascinating studies on the development of a Messianic identity in the State of Israel.

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Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER WITH CONSENT FORM:

Are you interested in taking part in the research project "Understanding Messianic Visual Culture"?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to look at how Messianic Jews in Jerusalem, through space and art, express and negotiate their identity. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This project is a master's thesis in Religion and Diversity. The aim of the study is to look at Messianic spaces/congregations in Jerusalem, and how Messianic Jews relate to space and art in their congregation. The research question is:

- How do Messianic Jews in Jerusalem, through space and art, express and negotiate their identity in a modern Jewish state?

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

I have chosen to collect data from two different congregations in Jerusalem. I want to hear reflections from both leaders and members, people of different ages, gender and background. The goal is to have 5-7 people in each congregation.

I have previously worked as a volunteer at Caspari Center, a resource center that works with the Messianic movement in Israel, and they are helping me to get in contact with congregations and participants.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you will be interviewed. It will take approx. 45 minutes. The interview includes questions about how you relate to space and art within your congregation. Your answers will be recorded electronically.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Student and supervisor will have access to the data collected. Your name and contact details will be replaced with a code. The list of names, contact details, and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. I will use a recorder that is not connected to the internet, and the data will be stored on a research server that is password protected.

Personal data that will be used is your age and gender to highlight diversity among the participants.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end June 2019. All data will be anonymized once the project has been completed.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and

- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Oslo, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for

Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in

accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:
- Christine Eidsheim (student), University of Oslo, chreid@student.teologi.uio.no
- Anders Runesson (supervisor), University of Oslo, anders.runesson@teologi.uio.
- Our Data Protection Officer: Maren Magnus Voll, University of Oslo. M.m.voll@admin.uio.no NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader   Student
(supervisor)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project "Understanding Messianic Visual Culture" and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

☐ to participate in an interview
☐ for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised since the Messianic community is relatively small and diverse.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. June 2019

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE LEADERS:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself (age, gender…)
2. Where are you from? (native or immigrant?)
   a. How long have you lived in Israel?
3. How long have you been a follower of Yeshua?
4. How do you identify yourself? (Messianic/Christian/Jewish Christian/Jews??)
5. What is a Messianic Jew?
6. How long have you been a part of this congregation?
7. Why did you choose to be a part of this congregations?
8. What was your first impression of the congregation?
9. Is there something you are missing from the service or the congregation?
10. Why did you choose this building?
11. What was important when making this space for your congregation?
12. What is your experience when entering this room/the congregation hall/meeting room? (seating, decoration, Torah ark…)
    a. Why do you think this is your experience?
    b. Do you feel something is missing from the room?
       i. Why?
    c. Is it different from your experience in other congregations?
       i. How so?
13. Is there an artefact or area in this room that you have a special connection to?
    a. How do you relate to this artefact/area and why?
14. How do you understand this room in connection to the first followers of Yeshua?
    a. Why do you think that is?

Appendix C

Intervjuguide Members:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself (age, gender…)
2. Where are you from? (native or immigrant?)
   a. How long have you lived in Israel?
3. How long have you been a follower of Yeshua?
4. How do you identify yourself? (Messianic/Christian/Jewish Christian/Jews??)
5. What is a Messianic Jew?
6. How long have you been a part of this congregation?
7. Why did you choose to be a part of this congregations?
8. What was your first impression of the congregation?
9. Is there something you are missing from the service or the congregation?
10. What is your experience when entering this room/the congregation hall/meeting room? (seating, decoration, Torah ark…)
    a. Why do you think this is your experience?
    b. Do you feel something is missing from the room?
       i. Why?
    c. Is it different from your experience in other congregations?
       i. How so?
11. Is there an artefact or area in this room that you have a special connection to?
    a. How do you relate to this artefact/area and why?
12. How do you understand this room in connection to the first followers of Yeshua?
    a. Why do you think that is?

Appendix D

	Jerusalem Assembly	**Roe Israel**	**Total**
Leaders	1	2*	3
Jewish members	4	3**	7
Non-Jewish members	1	1	2
Total	**6**	**6**	**12**

* The informants were not pastor but office manager and cantor

** One of the interviews was not transcribed

Figure 18: List of informants.

APPROVAL FROM NSD:

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Understanding Messianic Visual Culture. Aspects of the Interrelation between space, art and identity in contemporary Messianic Judaism in Jerusalem.

Referansenummer

897362

Registrert

10.10.2018 av Christine Eidsheim - chreid@student.teologi.uio.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Oslo / Det teologiske fakultet

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig

ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat) Anders

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22850305

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Christine Eidsheim, chreid@student.teologi.uio.no, tlf: 97020783

Prosjektperiode

10.10.2018 - 30.06.2019

Status

15.12.2018 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

15.12.2018 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den dagens dato med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD ENDRINGER

Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD   ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om etnisitet og religion frem til 30.6.2019.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a), jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen

  - om lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får

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tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter (velg det som passer): åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17),

begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Lasse Raa

Tlf. personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)