

CHAPTER IV : JESUS FROM THE JUDAISM PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Jesus's History and Biography from the Judaism Perspective

Jesus, *Joshua* or *Isaiah* which are other names in the Hebrew language (Ronald Isaac, 2006), was born around 2 BC. He became a central figure of Christianity and is regarded by its adherents as Christ assumed the king Messiah (Greek language), the saviour who was promised in the prophecies of Tanakh (Bridger & Wolk, 1976). According to Brad H. Young (1995), ethnically, Jesus is Jewish. He was born in Bethlehem, the same village as Mary who lived in Bethlehem of Judea (part of Palestine nowadays). Jewish literature is almost completely silent about Jesus. Only a few records describe in detail about his genealogy. Some Jewish scholars who collect based on gospel records (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) say that he was not the genetic progeny of Joseph, Mary's husband who himself was a biological son of David (David, 2007). Whereas, according to Delbert Burkett (2015), Jesus was birthed while Mary was betrothed to Joseph.

Jesus began his learning in a Jewish school and had been trained and spent his childhood by the Essene (School of thought of Jews), a member of a religious sect in Judaism in second century BC (Flint, 2006). In his life, Jesus shared many ideas and practices of the Essene sect but, in some respects he followed his own method in distinction from that of the Essenes or of any other class (Votaw C. 1905).

Flavius Josephus, a well-known Jewish historian wrote in his famous writing "*Testimonium Flavianum*" depicting around Jesus's life, that he is recognised as a

wise man, a worker of amazing deeds and was a teacher of people who accepted the truth with pleasure among Jews and gentiles (Voorst, 2000).

Whereas in the Jerusalem Talmud, Jesus was also identified with other figures such as an Egyptian magician called Ben Stada and Ben Pandira in Rabbinic traditions (Homolka, 2015). Some Jewish people assume Jesus might be a great rabbi or noble revolutionary (Brown 2007). Based on Jewish descriptions, during his life, Jesus's ideology was influenced by John the Baptist who became the forerunner and also the member of the Essene sect (Bridger & Wolk, 1976) and became Jesus's mentor and companion (Gager, 2015). John the Baptist is known as the preacher that preached the imminence of God's Final Judgment and baptised those who repented in self-preparation for it. Among the many people that came to river Jordan to undergo the rites of baptism in response to the call of John, was Jesus himself (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 2021).

4.2 Jesus's Teaching and Mission in the Judaism Perspective

According to Kaufmann Kohler who was also a representative of reformed Jewish scholars or progressive Judaism, Jesus's teaching began after the baptism by John Baptist. His ministry among Jewish people and his followers related repentance and the near approach of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, Kohler also lists that Christian theologians point out that part of his essential teaching is upon the fatherhood of God (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 2021).

4.2.1 Repentance

Repentance in general, according to Merriam-Webster is the act of turning away from sin and dedicating oneself to the amendment of one's life. It should be with regret and change of mind from the past act. Judaism addresses repentance as (*theshuvah*) from the Hebrew word which means "return" (Neusner & Alan, 2004).

Repentance is part of the central moral teaching in Judaism and is related to the atonement of sin. The act of repentance is the acknowledgment of our (Perpetrator) moral failings, repairing relationships with others, reconciliation with God, and our return to the proper path (Newman, 2010).

Amitai and David (1997) quotes the argument of Harvey Cox in "*Repentance and forgiveness a Christian perspective*", in which he stated that repentance has been recognised in Jesus's teaching in canonical gospels. The Mark gospel recorded "*repent, and believe the gospel*". The invitation to repentance that Jesus used shows urgent tones and immediacy because in his teaching, the coming reign of God is beginning. However, Judaism sees the concept of repentance taught by Jesus to be contrary to the concept in Judaism. Jesus believed that in order to get rid of sin, it has to be through him as he was responsible for all humans therefore, he had to choose to sacrifice himself for human redemption. From the Jewish perspective, all sins are self-inflicted and do not involve others to make atonement. It is directly between the human and God and does not burden other people. Therefore, the concept of repentance in Jesus's teaching is radical and alienated from Judaism (Prager & Telishkin, 1986).

According to the Judaism belief, people have to repent after committing an action that contradicts God's commandment. The way Jews repent is to turn away from the sin. According to Michael Lotker (2004), the steps to repent for sins in

Judaism consists of acknowledging and regretting the sin; confessing the sin; and finally, by resolving to avoid from repeating the sin in the future.

On the other hand, Rabbi Amy Scheinerman (2018) explained that according to Maimonides, the greatest Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, more details are clarified in the *Misneh Torah*. The process of *teshuvah* that is stated by Maimonides requires five elements: acknowledgment and regret for having committed the wrong doing; confession and expression of regret to the person wronged and to God; commitment to not repeating the wrong; and a plan of action to ensure it will not be repeated. Atonement means making an effort to reverse the damage done and refraining from committing the sin again.

Whereas in the context for sins against other people, Jews have to sought forgiveness from the other person and redress the wrong done (Ronald, 2004). Sins against humans require reconciliation between people as the condition for repentance and atonement (Lippitt, 2020).

Judaism believes that sinners will be punished after death or otherwise receive forgiveness from God and humans. Each person is responsible for their individual actions and sins without involving others (Rabbi Rudin, 2011). Despite performing the action of repentance, forgiveness from God only follows the individuals sincere regret and pledge to do better (Satlow, 2006).

4.2.2 Kingdom of God

In historical records, one of Jesus's ministries is the Kingdom of God. Judaism believes and sees this term to be taken from the Aramaic language "*Malkut Shaddai*", meaning to establish and perfect a nation (Neumann, 2018). Based on Jewish

literature, this concept was originally from the Judaism belief. This idea makes God king which is an essential fundamental concept in Judaism. Nevertheless, the concept used on this subject extended to the New Testament in Christianity (Doniger, 1991). Over time, Jewish writers used the sentence “the Kingdom of God” to refer to the coming of glorious times in the “latter days” (Kampmeier, 2020).

According to Hugh M. Scott (1893), the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus was a different concept from what is expected of the Jews. Jesus’s teaching regarding the concept of the Kingdom of God teaches people deliverance from sin, the overthrowing of the Kingdom of Satan and the regeneration of humanity.

The Judaism perspective on the Kingdom of God refers to the kingship of kings in the manifestation of a supreme ruler and sovereign over a nation or a territory (Encyclopedia Britannica). The criteria for the Kingdom of God can be recognised when a messianic role corresponds to the three major functions of a future Jewish state in the Book of Zechariah which are the existence of kingship, priesthood and prophecy.

Nevertheless, from the Jewish perspective, Helene (2020) quotes from Zev Garber which highlights that the Kingdom of God must be accepted by the second Judaism temple. In addition, Jesus did not bring harmony, freedom, peace, and amity to Jerusalem during his time.

In the Judaism understanding, the Messiah who corresponds to the Kingdom of God is not divine and does not exceed that of the Torah law. The understanding between Jesus and Jewish religious authorities ultimately led to the severance of belief according to the Torah (Garber, 2015). Despite Jesus preaching the concept of “kingdom” close to how Jews see it which is a holy Jewish nation drawing the gentile

world to God, to the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, there is a difference in mission between Jesus and Judaism (Vermes, 2010).

Other than that, the Kingdom of God relates to prophecy and kingship. The criteria should be materialised. Whereas around Jesus's ministry about the Kingdom of God, he did not bring restoration for the Jewish people in the land of Israel (Lucass, 2011).

According to Hazen (2002), most Jews also believe in the coming of a Messiah. Although Jesus was born a Jew and is regarded as a great teacher and storyteller, Jews do not believe he is the Messiah, or saviour. They believe the Messiah is yet to come. Orthodox Jews believe the Messiah will reward those who have accepted his leadership and obeyed the Law, and that he will punish those who have not.

4.2.3 Fatherhood of God

According to Goshen-Gottstein (2012), to evaluate the concept of the fatherhood of God taught by Jesus, it needs to be looked at in depth. For Gottstein, there are indeed similarities in explaining the concept in general with Judaism. However, what is true and the meaning in between as seen by Jesus himself and the Church of Christianity in understanding the fatherhood of God must be seen. From the perspective of Judaism, Kaiser (1991) explains that the theme of the fatherhood of God has long existed in Judaism as stated in the Hebrew bible, "*Israel is first my born son., let my son go.*" (Exodus. 4:22-23). The concept of the fatherhood of God in Judaism is a metaphor that refers to God as a law giver and life saver. The description of God as Father is a part of religion that gives expression to Israel's feelings toward God and appreciation of Him. It does not intend to determine God as any form

opposite from the true understanding about God. Israel carefully avoids any idea of divine “*sonship*” and it was not a mindless epithet or a poetic indulgence.

In an in-depth perspective of Judaism understanding, God is one and indivisible. Judaism believes that God is the only being who should be worshipped and not to be shared with others. According to Katz (2000), it was prohibited in Judaism to portray God in any shape or form due to God being beyond space and time. God cannot be attributed to resemble man. Likewise, the great Jewish medieval philosopher, Maimonides states in the code of law, “*Whoever he says that god is corporeal and has a form; Likewise one who says that He alone is not the First Cause and Creator of all, and an apostate.*” (Mishneh Torah 3:7). From that understanding, Judaism prohibits the attribution of God as a human concept.

According to Walter (1991), the theme fatherhood of God was extended in Christianity and has been considered as one of the teachings of Jesus according to their understanding. Even so, such understanding of the concept is very different from what Judaism believes about Jesus himself and Christianity. Goshen-Gottstein states that in Jesus’s teaching upon fatherhood of God, if Jesus had a realisation of God to share with his Jewish audience, this was an experiential deepening of their own traditional understanding and obviously did not stand in conflict with it as metaphors do not intend to attribute God to any human being concept. Whereas the Church of Christianity believes that Jesus introduced new uses to the epithet. From the portraits and linguistic usage in the New Testament, it seems likely that Jesus enjoyed a particular relationship with God experienced by him as “The Father” and not as a metaphor as Judaism believed. The New Testament states that Jesus also mentioned living and experiencing God in a direct manner. Thus, when Jesus spoke of God as his Father when he turned to God in prayer and when he made God's presence a centre

point of his teaching, it is likely that it is a product of his personal consciousness encountering God and experiencing God in the form of a Father (Gottstein, 2012).

According to Norman (2007), the concept of relating the fatherhood of God and the Son of God is a concept that emerged after the death of Jesus and was attributed to his teaching. There is a controversy among Christianity adherents in determining the nature and status of Jesus. The disputation has led to a decision that has been set by several beliefs. The emperor Constantine assembled the Gentiles Bishop of the Church at a Council at Nicaea in 325 CE to decide Jesus for his new beliefs which in Jesus the Son of God, "Son" was pronounced equal to the Father. Later in 381 CE, the Holy Spirit was added to become one substance. Consequently, Christian doctrine engages the deity of Jesus and the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons in one Godhead as the mainstream. Nevertheless, Judaism sees that doctrine as a pagan doctrine because God, the Father in Christianity is understood initially and primarily as the father of Jesus. That understanding was equated to human nature. In Judaism, the understanding of God as a divided person is totally rejected as it is incompatible with pure monotheism (Picker, 2005).

4.3 Jesus's Status in the Judaism Perspective

In determining Jesus status from the Judaism perspectives, Judaism examines the qualification of Jesus by several of proof. It also include in discussing the characteristic need as a prophet, Messiah and as a teacher to designating the claim. The proof in support that status must meet and follow the Hebrew bible and the Essence of Judaism scriptures.

4.3.1.1 The Term, Prophet

According to the New Jewish Encyclopedia (2021), the word prophet was derived from the Hebrew word “*Navi*” (plural “*Nevi'im*”). “*Navi*” means “utterer” which applies to a person who brings the word of God to man. Whereas following the Dead Sea Scrolls which is a Jewish heritage, the prophetic designation uses “visionary”, “anointed one” and “man of God” (Jassen, 2007).

4.3.1.2 The Meaning of Prophet

According to Nissinen (2017), a prophet is a person who acts as an intermediary between the divine and humans in communication. Meanwhile, according to Miller (1978), prophets are seers and can be understood as a person who possesses the ability to predict future events.

Those matters are also supported by Petersen (2002), who takes an example from the Torah in giving the meaning of the prophet as a mediator by expressing (Deuteronomy- 2 Kings) the verse, “*warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer*” (2 kings 17:3) attesting that God spoke to Israel through prophets. In general, the easiest way to understand the meaning of the word prophet is according to the Jewish Dictionary which says that a prophet is a messenger of God (Eisenberg, 2008).

4.3.1.3 Roles of Prophets

Jews acknowledge that God chose the prophets to spread the law and transmits the understanding of covenant. According to Berlin (2011), the process of revelation unto Moses at Sinai is the best example to describe the role of the prophets in helping the people of Israel to comprehend the covenant between them and God. Berlin and

Brettler (2004) have the same opinion that prophets are responsible as the intermediary between God and people, and their major function is to convey the message.

Besides the major function of prophets as a messenger, Trepp (2001) clarifies that a special section in the Hebrew Bible named "*Nevi'im*" contains literary records of the prophets which consist of former prophets and latter prophets, speaking out in Judaism. The word of the prophets became the essential proclamation of social justice that continues to shape the Jewish experience and open conscience of humanity in Judaism.

Meanwhile, Dimont (2004) also agreed that the role of prophets in Jewish history concerns preserving the purity of the Jewish religion. God appoints the prophets with a mission to teach the Jewish people to follow the path to righteousness. Rabbi Wayne Dosick (1998) explains the same argument that through the prophets, God gives the commandment (*mizwot*) which provides the moral values and standard behaviour for Jews.

According to Kreisel (2001), prophetic characteristics of the prophets can firstly be observed through the complete veracity of prophetic predictions which is a characteristic that is equally true for all prophets. Secondly are the miracles that occur through the mediation of the prophet although they vary in quality. The third is the degree of desire and drive exhibited by the prophets in calling upon others to serve God. All three characteristics should be stressed to revolve around the view of prophecy as a mission.

The law that is given to the people of Israel comes through Moses and the complete revelation for them is found in the Torah. Judaism in their belief and

engagement of the prophet declares that the laws of the Torah continues to be in effect in the messianic era and after the Messiah appears (Norman, 2007).

4.3.1.4 Jesus is not a Prophet in Judaism

In Judaism, there is a difference between Jesus's teaching and the doctrine of Christianity. Significant disparities in views are visible regarding the concept of determining the nature of God. Jesus himself never claimed the incarnation of God concept as believed in Christianity. The understanding of that belief clearly leads to idolatry which is definitely forbidden in Judaism. The whole Torah containing Five Books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) is the essence of Jewish teaching the orders of God (Jacobs, 1984). According to Maimonides, it is impossible to imagine and represent God's form as He clearly should assume no physical form. Maimonides also points out that God is infinite, beyond space. He cannot be born and cannot die. The action of imagining God in human form makes God small, diminishing both His unity and His divinity (Morris, 2015).

Despite Judaism seeing Jesus's original teaching to be unlike Christianity's belief, his teaching is still not accepted in Judaism. Judaism only acknowledges Jesus as an ordinary figure and not as a prophet for Jews. Every claim, sign and characteristic are required to determine the prophethood of a prophet. This is also supported by Norman (2007) who explains that in the Jewish perspective, claiming Jesus as a prophet is a great contradiction. Specifically, when the New Testament refers to Jesus as the son of man, son of God and as a prophet. The designation of Jesus as a prophet brings implications since he does not have the sign and characteristics that can be observed in a prophet according to Judaism (Kreisel, 2001).

Judaism itself examines the prophecy of a prophet through the Hebrew Bible as the main source in determining the criteria for a valid claim. According to the Judaism observation, Jesus is considered as a common person among whom he lived and worked with. According to Votaw (1905), Jesus himself explained that it was his duty to obey the Mosaic statutes in their current interpretation. In addition, from Judaism records and perspectives, Jesus never tried to exchange the law of Mosaic. Kohler (2021) a Jewish reform representative explained that “The Sermon on the Mount”, if it was ever delivered by him (Jesus), was never intended to supplant the Law of Moses although the compiler of the gospel of Matthew seeks to create that impression. Historical facts from biblical gospels were being misunderstood, modified, and elaborated for fifty years or more in transmission and translation thus, it is hard to recover the exact truth concerning his life (Votaw, 1905).

4.3.2 Jesus is not the Messiah

According to the thesaurus dictionary, the word “messiah” that is accepted into the English language today is believed to have originated from the Greek language (*Messias*). In the Hebrew language itself, it is mentioned as “*māshīach*”, “*mashiah*”, sometimes “*meshiach*” or “*Moshiach*”, or more fully “*Meshiach Nagid*” meaning “Messiah King” or “Messiah Prince”. Whereas in Aramaic, the common language of the Middle East with the decline of the classical Hebrew following the hegemony of the Greeks under Alexander the Great (circa 335-323 BCE), it was mentioned as “*meshiha*”. The word “*Messiah*” is found approximately thirty-nine times in the Tanakh which when interpreted means “The Anointed One”. It is also believed to derive from the verb “*mashach*” meaning to anoint or to consecrate by applying the holy anointing oil to an individual. More commonly, since the return of the Hebrew

exiles from Babylon, circa 536 BCE, the prophecies of a Messiah have been thought to describe a ruler coming from the line of King David (Wieliczko, 2009).

The other term for messiah sometimes was mentioned as "*Mashiah adonai*" which means the anointed of God. According to Schreiber (2003), it is believed to be the title of honour given to Kings of Israel that indicates a specific job. To anoint a king according to the Jewish prophecy, the Messiah ben David (to whom the messiah was designated) must descend from David who was the previous great King of Israel.

The selection of Jewish kings known as "messiah" would normally implement the authentication by a Jewish prophet. Based on records in Judaism history, the recognition of a prophet became the validation for kingship of the messiah. For example, in an important event in the Jewish past, King Saul and King David were both anointed by prophet Samuel as recognition to "*Messiahship*" (Norman, 2007).

Despite the grand and majestic visions the word "anointed" might conjure, the act it describes is actually pretty simple. The process needed is to pour oil onto a person's head which is symbolic. Historically the anointing event is not unique to the Judaism history of practice only. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that in fact, the rite of anointing kings originated in Egypt and was practiced by the Canaanites even before the Israelites entered the Promised Land (Glickman, 2013).

Referring to the kingship of messiahs in the Judaism tradition, it needs to look at previous success from the previous king. For nearly three thousand years the messiah has been linked with the holy land, Zion and Israel. The establishment of King David as the forebearer that united and ruled over land, establishing Jerusalem as an eternal capital of the Jewish people and according to messianic expectation, the return of all Jews to sovereign Israel will inaugurate the reign of the messiah (Glickman, 2013).

Therefore, according to Garber (2010), Jesus did not meet the conditions of the prophetic-rabbinic tradition associated with the coming of the promised Messiah. Kreisel (2001), tend an argument given by Maimonides on the view of the messiah. According to Maimonides, the messiah is an ideal human king that brings world peace and prosperity to all.

Whereas according to Norman (2007), the messiah ben David in the Judaism tradition must fulfil the six criteria: have the correct genealogy by being descended from king David and Solomon, be anointed king of Israel, return the Jewish people to Israel, rebuild the temple in Jerusalem to bring peace to the world and end all wars, and lastly to bring the knowledge of God.

In the Midrashic collection and from the Talmud rabbinic scholars of the period of the second temple, it is elaborated that the themes formulating the eschatological scheme is divided into a series of stages. According to a number of stages, the messianic deliverance era will be brought about by charity, repentance and the observance of the law (Sherbok, 2003). Judaism clearly rejects Jesus as the Messiah because he did not fulfil the task assigned as a redeemer to bring “restoration” or “return” in Judaism (Rabbi Rose, 2013). Believing in Jesus as the Messiah who has fulfilled the messianic promises clearly places a person within Christianity (Jacob, 1987).

Traditionally, Judaism strongly rejects the standard messianic prophethood based solely on “proof text” arguments and also denies anything to do with Jesus (Brown, 2000). Claims without proof have been mistranslated, misquoted, and taken out of context. Based on historical objection, Jesus did not deal in the messianic age to accomplish the purpose and mission of the Messiah.

Other than that, Judaism believes that the mission of the Messiah in all of its forms and manifestations has always been a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly. Its occurrence should take place in the visible world and cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance (Scholem, 1997).

4.3.3 Jesus as a Teacher

According to Rabbi Walter Homolka (2015), Jesus was acknowledged as a teacher (*Rabbi*) among his followers. In the Judaism tradition, the Rabbi terminology is taken from the Hebrew language that means “my teacher” or “my master” which is a person qualified in academic studies of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud to act as a spiritual leader and religious teacher of a Jewish community or congregation (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021).

Jesus’s style of preaching and arguing using parables was received with interest by some Jews and Rabbis early on (Jeffrey, 2006). This also includes the diaspora (Lupovitvh, 2010). Stern (2006), explains that the style of using parables was popular in Jesus’s day, thoroughly Jewish and familiar to Jesus’s audience as a format in which teachers (*Rabbis*) conveyed their ideas. This is not surprising since Jesus himself was born and educated in the environment of a Jewish community therefore, surely understanding the Judaism concept and culture (Flint, 2006).

Nevertheless, according to Rabbi Walter Homolka (2015), there is controversy around his teaching. Jesus represented a new interpretation of the concept of “*halakha*” which is a different method from the religious group parties especially *Pharisee* at the time which is assumed as the expelling in Judaism. Gager, (2015) also gave the same argument about that statement. He clarified that Jesus offers his own

teaching “*halakhot*” in the presence of the master (a capital offense for the Rabbis) among Rabbis.

Specifically in Judaism, “*halakha*” is the totality of laws and ordinances that have evolved since biblical times to regulate religious observances and the daily life and conduct of the Jewish people (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). *Halakha* traditionally was arranged from the interpretation of previous rabbis in the rabbinic tradition where the bulk of Jewish commandments come from the laws prescribed. The interpretations of rabbis are central to the Jewish community, extending to every aspect of life and provides guidance for all Jews when making ritual, ethical, and moral decisions in all generations (Karesh & Hurvitz, 2006).

At the same time, according to Gaeber (2010), Jesus’s attitude towards the rule of rabbis interpreting “*halakha*” ultimately led to the severance of the Jesus party from the Synagogue and caused the separation of Jesus’s followers. In the dispute of interpreting his own understanding, the Talmud accounts Jesus’s teaching to be against the word of the wise. This is also recorded by “*tannaim*” which clarifies that Jesus beguiled and led his disciples astray from the Jewish faith (Klausner, 1979).

Nevertheless, according to Rabbi Stuart Federow (2012), the disputation between Pharisee and Jesus did not humiliate the laws of Pharisee but rather, it was against the fact that the Pharisee themselves did not obey them. This included the hypocrisy and redirection of his followers to obey their laws. This matter was also agreed by Geza Vermes in his book “*Jesus in the Jewish World*” explaining that Jesus only clashed with others in cases conflicting about religious duty (Vermes, 2013).

Additionally, the parables of the fatherhood of God and His Kingdom expressed by Jesus in the sermon of the mountain and the prayer that Jesus taught his

disciples are not foreign in Judaism. In Judaism, these parables and his teaching is a common teaching (Chorin & Cottrol, 2012).

In his teaching, Jesus developed and sought a new way in spiritual Judaism and has a flexible framework for Jewish tradition. Jesus understood that Sadducees abused the temple ritual and blemished the holiness of the temple with intrigues, ambitions, rivalries and corruption. At the same time, Jesus revolted against Sadducees and denounced the hypocritical practice (Garber, 2011).

According to Votaw (1905), Jesus considered himself a true Jew and his mission was meant for Judaism. His purpose was to construct truth and righteousness within the confines of existing Jewish institutions. He did not teach his followers to withdraw from the synagogue service or to forsake the temple worship. Nevertheless, the gospels claim that his authority was equally divine and stood above the authority of the Torah (Garber, 2011).

Rabbi Walter Homolka quotes Geza Vermes in his book “*Jesus the Jew: A historian’s reading of the gospels (1973)*” where he identified that Jesus’s characteristic of being pious and observant together with the fact that he is a charismatic holy Jewish man in Galilee, to be what caught the attention of people (Homolka, 2016). In his preaching, the Talmud recorded that Jesus’s teaching received the interest of some Jews and Rabbis early on (Jeffrey, 2006).

4.3.4 Jesus as a Great Figure but not in the Christianity Movement

Based on history, Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect (governor) of Judaea (26–36 CE) who put the trial on Jesus’s crucifixion sentence in 30 CE (Fichtner, 2000). Crucifixion was distinctively a Roman form of execution and cause of death (Carter, 2003).

Another source also recorded by a Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus in his manuscripts of the book *“Antiquities of the Jews”*, he writes that Pilate Pontius charged Jesus for creating political connotations of rebellion against Rome prior to the Jewish war (Fichtner, 2000). This idea was also agreed by Rabbi Samuel Sandmel who broadly describes that Jesus himself was the Messiah that imminently exacerbated the situation. The action was taken to stop the revolt movement from occurring. Jesus’s claim of messiahship includes (King of Jews) political implications since Palestine had already suffered as a result of the attempted insurrection against the Herodian rulers at the time (The New Jewish Encyclopaedia, 2021).

The crucifixion of Jesus led to the Christianity movement. In the 40s and 50s of first century CE, Paul of Tarsus was the figure responsible to preach the Christianity theology especially beyond Palestine. Even so, a larger number of Judaism scholars regarded Paul of Tarsus to have created his own understanding and was conveying a new faith in Christianity which was taken from Hellenistic ideas that subverted the message of Jesus and brought a new religion into existence (Hagner, 1997). Among the new beliefs that arose after the death of Jesus were two psychic forces that have never before come so strongly into play. First, the great personality of Jesus which had so impressed itself upon the simple people of Galilee as to become a living power to them even after his death. Second, the transcendentalism or other-worldliness in which penance is done and saintly men and women of the common classes in their longing for Godliness, lived (Jewish Encyclopaedia).

Rabbi Stuart Federow (2012) explains that between Jesus and Paul of Tarsus there are differences in the understanding of law in the Judaism tradition. In Paul’s faith, adhering to Jewish law is no longer an obligation that needs to be kept since

Jesus came. Even so, Jesus's statement is the opposite of Paul. Jesus himself respected Jewish law as well as the laws of the Pharisee who are precursors to the rabbi.

For Jews in the Judaism tradition, Daniel R. Langton (2009) in the book *"The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations"* makes a contrast as an impartial reader of the New Testament, *"we (Reform Jews) are able to see clearly to what a great extent that part of Christianity which is opposed to Judaism, which abrogates it, and places it aside, is distinctly apart from the teachings of Jesus and is as distinctly traceable to the effect of the teaching of Paul"*(pg. 42).

On the other hand, Vermes (2010) expresses the Jewish historical perspective of Jesus's life and his teaching and seeks to understand him in the Jewish milieu of his time that later recognises the Christological development to be mythological. It is seen to be significantly different from the origin whereby they make Jesus the object of worship instead of the Father.

4.4 Jesus's Miracles in the Jewish Perspective

In the Hebrew bible there is no word for "miracles". The closest related words are "wonder" (*mofet*) and "sign" (*ot*). The Jewish ancestors usually regard miracles portrayed in the Hebrew bible as literally true and authentic. The Judaism perspective does not differentiate between the natural and the supernatural since it is the one omnipotent God who caused all to be and has set the course of nature according to His will.

According to Rabbi Ronald H. Isaacs (2006), in contradistinction to Judaism's somewhat reserved attitude toward miracles and its rejection of them as affirmations of religious truths, miracles play an important role in Christianity as gospels record the

miracles performed by Jesus. Nevertheless, Judaism refuses to acknowledge miracles as proof of divine authorisation. Therefore, in relating Jesus's miracles, it is only stated in the gospels. For Jews, it is likely that most of them would have no opinion whether or not Jesus's so-called miracles were facts.

4.5 Conclusion

From the Judaism's perspective, Jesus is a normal figure that teaches people to be good in religion and to follow Moses's law. Jesus possesses great behaviour and moral values to make sure his followers follow the true path. Nonetheless, Jesus was not considered as important to Judaism due to his authentication. Judaism considers a person who never exceeds the Torah to be the main authenticating factor which is forever valid.