

A Jewish-Christian Glossary

Dialogue and Project Convened by
Office of The Chief Rabbi and The Church of Scotland

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI



The Church of Scotland

Contents

Foreword from the Chief Rabbi	3
Foreword from Rev Sally Foster-Fulton	4
How to use this 'glossary'	5
Note on References to Judaism, Christianity, Jews, Christians etc.	6
Note on the ecumenical character of Jewish-Christian relations	6
Note on terminology	7
Note on writing styles and authorship	7
Words Chosen and Words Missing from this glossary	7
1. Chosen People	8
2. Covenant	12
3. Exile	16
4. Grace	21
5. Holy Land	25
6. Israel	30
7. Jerusalem	35
8. Justice	40
9. Kingdom of God	45
10. Mission	49
11. Peace	53
12. People of Israel	58
13. Promised Land	61
14. Repentance	65
15. Supersessionism	70
16. The Law	74
17. Zionism	78
Reflections from Rabbi David Mason	83
Reflections from the Very Rev Dr Susan Brown	84

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Foreword

from the Chief Rabbi

In 2014, in the wake of highly strained relations with the Jewish community, I became the first Chief Rabbi to address the Church of Scotland General Assembly. Following the publication of the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report in 2013, I called for "...a deeper appreciation for each other's traditions, leading to greater respect and stronger bonds between our faiths. For a real and meaningful relationship, we need to internalise how the other views itself."

In the fraught aftermath of that report, a deeper appreciation seemed very far off. During that historic visit, I recall it being jovially suggested that there was an urgent need for theologians to be locked in a room until a solution could be found. What might otherwise have appeared to be a humorous comment, has in fact heralded a valuable advance between our respective communities.

Those religious leaders may have been 'locked', for a series of conversations over many months, inside a virtual room, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the positive impact of having done so has been considerable. The result of the process is this glossary of key terms.

While we still have a long road to travel to understand each other more fully, and especially to better comprehend our theological approaches to Land and Covenant, an important step forward has now been taken.

The reader of this glossary should not expect a comprehensive presentation of its various terms, given that countless books and works of academic scholarship have been written on each. Rather, the group of Rabbis and Ministers who were tasked with independently constructing and undertaking this dialogue exercise, have produced a concise introductory summary of them all. This is a conversational document reflective of their process.

I extend my grateful thanks to Rabbi David Mason, Rabbi Moshe Rubin and Rabbi Dr Michael Harris, together with the Very Reverend Dr Susan Brown, Reverend Prof Paul Middleton, Reverend Stuart Fulton and Reverend Dr Frances Henderson, for their enormous collective efforts in deliberating upon and compiling this work.

The design and layout of this glossary seeks to reflect the conversational nature of the process, insofar as the document is representative of conversations that took place over a particular period. Although born out of a deeply challenging time, this resource stands as a testament to the value of meaningful interfaith engagement between members of our two communities, and the relationships created through this undertaking are a welcome by-product.

Just as any one conversation cannot possibly contain everything there is to be said between two people grappling with important and difficult matters, this glossary does not, nor could not, incorporate all that we would wish to say to each other about any one of these vital topics. Many differences remain and more work needs to be done to build on these foundations.

While this endeavour does not seek to be definitive, I certainly hope that the glossary will provide the impetus for a more constructive conversation and relationship between our two faiths in the years ahead.

Foreword

from Rev Sally Foster-Fulton

When there is misunderstanding, tension, disagreement even, in relationships, how we respond is a choice. Too often, in human relationships, we choose to retreat to our familiar corners, defend our position and keep the loop on in our echo chamber. The world we share today needs embodied examples of living another way, and the dialogues that created this seminal work are just that. Following the 2013 Inheritance of Abraham? report, great hurt was caused to the Jewish community, but there was also a gritty determination to move forward together. As then convenor of the council that brought the report to the General Assembly, I am honoured and humbled to write a reflection on this glossary. I am inspired by the bravery and openness from both groups, and recognise it is a big ask to unpack the diverse perspectives of our faiths. Reflecting on the shameful reality of persecution of Jewish communities by Christian communities, it is even braver for our partners in dialogue from the Jewish community to place their beliefs alongside those from the Christian faith. May this contribution to the complex and ever evolving relationship between our two faiths, mark a small steppingstone towards better listening, mutual appreciation and shared respect for the richness our faiths offer. May it also act as a tool to encourage others to step out and into the world of the other's perspective, rather than retreating into familiar territory.

Several things have resonated with me when reading it - the strands linking to chosen-ness, not chosen in the sense of a privileged position, but the obligations that come with choosing to embrace the radical love of God and live a different way. The articulation of this lived call by the Jewish community is beautiful, empowering, and challenging. And it is part of the path that led to these dialogues — we have chosen to find new ways to bring ourselves closer, we have chosen to sit side by side and discuss, not only what unites us, but to engage with what potentially divides. That is a brave outworking of love in real life, and it is being a blessing to the nations. Another lesson I will take with me comes from the conversations recorded that discuss community, ritual, and law. There is a tangible centring that seems to come with daily disciplines done together in community. Arguably, our reformed tradition has thrown the baby out with the bath water, and we have much to learn from this. We human beings crave reflective space, and there is a need for consistent recalibration. It draws us closer to God and what is bigger than us. Finally, I was struck by Rabbi David Mason's reference to the Midrashic text that described when difference entered the world — 'that in Creation, when God separated between the lower and upper waters, 'From there, difference entered the world'. Difference is part of the human condition, and we can choose to see it as an obstacle or as a gift. Yes, there are resultant tensions, but there are also resultant lessons, creative breakthroughs, and glimpses of the Divine. Relationship, engagement and working together to create a world where all can flourish, does not dilute the different faiths we hold; rather, it burns brighter and is a light that guides us home. For all our glorious and challenging differences, we have the world in common.

How to use this 'glossary'

1. As a reflective and incomplete reference tool

Glossaries are primarily created and used as reference tools to provide information for words related to a specific subject matter. While this is what we set out to create in many ways, we hope our version of a glossary may be used and engaged with slightly differently to the one you might find at the back of a textbook or booklet.

This project set out to recognise and address the fact that words are often used with assumed knowledge, different intentions, associations and interpretations depending on the person, their faith and a number of personal and general factors. This can happen within faith traditions and between them. Our project aimed to address how these factors can trigger vastly different reactions from people as well as be a cause for miscommunication and offence. These different relationships to key theological words and terms have a particular impact on Jewish-Christian relations as Christianity has inherited and appropriated so many words and terms that may be familiar to Jewish people but not understood in the same way. Indeed, non-theological words, such as justice, can also communicate different associations and histories for Jews and Christians that are worth exploring and illuminating. Refusing to acknowledge the different relationships and understandings of such terms heightens the risk of assumed knowledge and ultimately aids miscommunication. As a reference tool we hope that this glossary might be used and reflected on before members of either faith declare statements, produce reports, sermons and any written or spoken material that uses the terms we've covered. For those we haven't covered, we hope this tool helps us to become curious about how our words and ideas may be received in different and unpredictable ways.

2. To notice levels of meaning

By mapping the various meanings and levels of meaning alongside one another we hope that these entries might help users view similarities, differences, common roots or different starting points to help inform both our mutual understanding and appreciation of one another. The differences in meaning are not limited to straightforward definitions. We have attempted to dig deeper into the various ways that these terms influence and are shaped by Jewish and Christian identities and histories. The layers of meaning we have attempted to cover include:

1. Different meanings of the word or phrase as it is used and understood
2. Importance of the term to the Jewish or Christian tradition
3. Importance within Jewish or Christian histories
4. Importance to Jewish or Christian identities
5. Aspects of any of the above that the participant thought would be helpful for Jews and Christians to know about that concept
6. Key points and differences that the participants noticed and reflected on in their dialogue and group discussion
7. Jewish and Christian Reflections with the following question in mind: 'how might my community respond to what is presented on the Jewish or Christian side?'

Not all levels of meaning are covered in each entry as the process of dialogue evolved as we went along. For example, the Kingdom of God, Chosen People and Covenant entry do not refer to history as we were focused more on the importance within Jewish and Christian traditions in those dialogues. Sometimes identity and history have been combined due to the way the participants asked or answered the question.

3. As a starting point for future Jewish-Christian dialogue

The co-creators of these entries are rooted in Orthodox Jewish and Church of Scotland Christian perspectives. We therefore invite users to engage with entries as necessarily incomplete and as reflections on words and terms that will provide many factual insights and denomination specific interpretations but also leave a variety of gaps. In this way users can reflect on:

1. What rings true for you from your own tradition?
2. What surprises you (from either your own or the other tradition)?
3. What perspective would you add?
4. How does your identity shape your perception of this term?

The process we adopted of organising dialogue by pairing Jewish and Christian participants to interview each other on the various levels of meaning contained in each term. This process can be used by others to help open up conversations, to learn and to invite further curiosity. Each conversation took off in various directions and helped open each participant up to ideas they hadn't considered both from within the tradition they represented and how members of the other tradition responded to their explanations, which in turn invited much deeper explorations. In essence these entries reflect conversations that we have had but also provide a structure and starting point for your own dialogues.

Note on References to Judaism, Christianity, Jews, Christians etc.

You will notice references to Judaism and Christianity as a whole and Jews and Christians in general alongside more specific references to Church of Scotland members and Orthodox Jews. There might also be references to other groups such as Catholics and Lutherans, or more specific descriptions such as traditional Jews or secular Jews. There are also more general references to denote trends, cultural and theological patterns which will ring true, to some degree, across both Judaism and Christianity and will be referred to in order to contrast or compare between Christianity and Judaism. E.g., There is less emphasis on X within Christianity than in Judaism. Christians are also referred to in the more generic form with the recognition that many identify as Christians without belonging to any particular tradition or group and will hold different beliefs that can be traced to a variety of different denominations or teachings, but all are within the realms of Christian theology in its broadest sense. Similarly, Church of Scotland members will be influenced by other factors beyond the bounds of the denomination.

For background it is important to note some terminology on how the Church, specific denominations, and movements within Christianity have been used and referred to:

The Church - references an institutional and collective representative of Christianity rather than any particular denomination and tradition. This is partly reflective of how it appears from the outside as well as broad trends and developments over time.

Church of Scotland - is a Protestant denomination that has been heavily influenced by Calvinist teachings, a Reformed theologian from Switzerland and Scottish Reformer John Knox who established the Church and its polity as the national Church of Scotland. It sits within the Presbyterian family of Reformed denominations. The Church of Scotland is ruled by ministers and elders through a court system at local, regional and national levels. The General Assembly acts as the highest court and has the authority to make laws determining how the Church of Scotland operates. The 'head' of the Church of Scotland is Christ, and its supreme rule of faith and life is through the teachings of the Bible. The Moderator of the General Assembly is appointed for one year beginning at the General Assembly, during which they moderate discussion and represent the will of the General Assembly during their year in office. The Church of Scotland's status as the national Church in Scotland dates from 1690, when Parliament restored Scottish Presbyterianism, and is guaranteed under the Act of Union of Scotland and England of 1707. In matters of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship, the Church of Scotland is free of State interference, operating under a constitution largely contained in the Articles Declaratory, which were recognised by the UK Parliament in 1921.

Reformed Christians - refers to the cultural and theological similarities between the denominations that have emerged from the Reformation onwards. There are important differences between them, however referring to them is a useful way of explaining movements and beliefs that have gained traction as a result of the Reformation.

Early Church and Christians - refer to the birth of the Christian movement and followers of Jesus, whose identity is tricky to define. Many people who may be referred to as Christian would have identified as Jewish, or something else entirely, well into the second or even third century. Scholarship on the early Church urges caution with referring to Paul and other New Testament writers as anything other than Jewish followers of Jesus. As Gentiles increasingly began to join the Church, much of the discussion about how followers of Jesus should conduct themselves in relation to Jewish law became a matter of debate. This debate did not have clear dividing lines between Jews and Christians given that the latter was not a fixed identity until much later (though arguably that lots of religious identities aren't entirely fixed to make room for difference within a faith). It is better to think of early Christianity as a movement with an emerging belief system spread over and engaging with a varied geography. As it a diverse and varied movement, each community was responding to different questions and issues depending on local events and contexts but with a central belief in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Evangelical Christians/ Christianity - refers to a broad movement within Protestant Churches and is based on the motivation to base teaching pre-eminently on the Gospel, with evangelion coming from the Greek to mean 'according to the teaching of the Gospel or good news'. Evangelism is a worldwide interdenominational movement and can be associated with a variety of different beliefs and practices. As a result, there will be Evangelical members of the Church of Scotland as well as, for example, Evangelical Baptists. The main elements can be a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, personal conversion and the call to spread the good news of the Bible and Jesus as Saviour and Lord of all.

Note on the ecumenical character of Jewish-Christian relations

It is important to state that much of the work and theological writing on Jewish-Christian relations in particular has been done in conversation with other Christian thinkers from within both the vast array of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church. Most importantly all progress in building trust and friendship with Jewish people owes a significant amount to theological development within the Catholic Church and the writing and teaching that have emerged since then. *Nostra Aetate* published in 1965, a document produced by the Second Vatican Council, was hugely important for re-evaluating Christian teaching on Judaism and has helped establish relationships and dialogue after such a painful legacy of Christian persecution and anti-Judaism. It has offered a starting point and a way forward as well as articulating an alternative vision for the Jewish-Christian relationship.

Note on terminology

You might see throughout this document terminology that you are unfamiliar with. All the Hebrew text has been transliterated and translated, and references have been included. The terminology used to refer to Jewish texts reflects its usage in daily Jewish parlance. For ease of reference, we have explained here the meaning of each term.

'Hebrew Bible' is one way of translating the term 'Tanakh', also used, and refers to the canon of texts which are central to Jewish life: the Torah (see below), the Nevi'im (the Prophets) and the Ketuvim (the Writings).

In its most literal sense, 'Torah' refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, also known in Jewish tradition as the Written Torah (Torah She'Bichtav). The Written Torah is distinct from the Oral Torah (Torah She'be'al Peh) which according to Jewish tradition was handed down by God to Moses on Mount Sinai alongside the Written Torah. The Oral Torah comprises the rules of interpretation which are to be used to interpret and apply the Written Torah. The term Oral Torah is also used to refer to the major compilations of the Mishnah and the Gemara (collectively referred to as the Talmud) which encompass the oral traditions and laws that were eventually written down during the early centuries of the common era. The Mishnah being the original Oral law and the Gemara the Rabbinic debates and discussions on the Mishnah.

On the Christian side the Hebrew Bible is usually referred to as the Old Testament as some authors prefer this way of referring to this section of Christian scripture and it is the most widely recognised by Christians. We have used the New Revised Standard Version for all scriptural quotations.

Note on writing styles and authorship

This glossary contains the voices, perspectives and styles of six authors. Instead of attempting to use the editing process to gloss over the differences between these voices and amalgamate them into a singular voice, we have tried to preserve them as much as possible. It is important for any reader to be aware that each entry reflects a conversation and can only really attempt to capture what was said at three stages; the dialogue itself, full group review of each entry and slight amendments at the final review stage. Each author was tasked with attempting to represent views from within their tradition that they hold and also ones that they don't share if important, but some views will be missed due to lack of familiarity or simply because these conversations could not cover everything.

Within entries we have added cross references to other terms when relevant. For example, in the entry on Chosen People we have included a reference to Grace (see Grace).

Words Chosen and Words Missing from this glossary

At the outset of creating this glossary, the participants were gathered for their first meeting to select which words to prioritise over 6-8 dialogue sessions. The aim was to ensure that key theological terms were included, but also some more overtly political terminology that have different associations, reactions, and triggers for Jews and for Christians. We therefore started with an extensive list of words and concepts which were pulled into four distinct stages for our participants to choose from as we went through the project. In the beginning we also considered including figures such as Moses, Abraham, Jesus etc. to address how our faith communities see these figures differently. In the end it was decided that we needed to start with theological and ideological concepts but could continue in the future by doing something on notable figures.

Readers may be puzzled as to why 'antisemitism' is not included given its obvious relevance to the work as a whole. The reason is partly due to the fact that theological terms were prioritised and then, when considering which non-theological terms to include, antisemitism was considered to be something which would be hard to render in the format this glossary has used. For one, it is primarily for the Jewish community to define antisemitism according to their historical and contemporary experiences of it, so a Christian understanding would not have parity with a Jewish understanding. Secondly the Church of Scotland agreed in 2019 that the definition developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance would be its primary reference when considering the meaning and navigation of antisemitism. Thirdly, various reflections about how antisemitism is understood in relation different subjects is well covered in the glossary for it to need an entry on its own.

We did not manage to cover all of these, but it is important to name them here to suggest future topics for dialogue, as well as simply alerting readers to the fact that there may be different approaches to these terms.

Abraham	Bible	Pilgrimage	Old Testament	Prayer
Aliyah	Diaspora	Moses	Orthodoxy	Revelation
Antisemitism	Evangelism	New Testament	Pilgrimage	

1. Chosen People

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

The idea of the Israelites being depicted as the Chosen People occurs several times in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 19:5; Deut. 10:15).

The words *am ha'nivhar* or *am segula* are used interchangeably to mean a "special People" or "chosen People", often in relation to being partners in a Covenant with God.

The idea of being God's chosen people is found very explicitly and in a variety of forms in the Torah. One such term is *behar* in Hebrew meaning "chosen" or "treasured people." It also refers to the fact that Israel has been chosen to be in covenant with God (see Covenant).

The grounds for chosenness are not specified but are clearly linked to the concept of love. The Aramaic translation of Onkelos (Exodus cf.) defines *segula* — "chosen", as *haviv* — meaning "loved". God loves so he chooses.

This idea is basic to the history of Jewish thought, and there are some Jewish thinkers that take it as an essentialist idea, though others, such as the 12th century Jewish scholar Maimonides, have the view that chosenness is a function of human agency. The Jewish people's chosenness was a result of their acceptance of the Torah. Other approaches emphasise being chosen for specific responsibilities, to model an ethical and monotheistic life rather than any intrinsic superiority. This idea is found in the book of Isaiah:

"I the Lord have called unto you in righteousness, and have taken hold of your hand, and submitted you as the people's covenant, as a light unto the nations." - Isaiah 42:6.

A failure to model this is a sign of spiritual failure.

In day-to-day discourse, observant Jewish people do not refer to being the chosen people very often, and there is more emphasis on the obligation to sanctify God's name, which is grounded in the Biblical relationship with God. There is therefore a moral responsibility on the individual in the public arena to sanctify rather than desecrate God's name.

Being chosen does not necessarily relate to things going well for the Jewish People. Persecution is not a challenge to being chosen but can be understood as a result of it.

The corollary is also true in that chosenness does not denote superiority, but a dignity of difference that brings with it responsibilities to the nation of Israel as well as wider society through maintaining a Jewish identity and activity in the world.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

In reference to the Old Testament, the term Chosen People would be read straightforwardly as ancient or Biblical Israel. From the New Testament period onwards, Christians begin to think of themselves as the chosen people of God. Nonetheless, the original meaning of the term to refer to the Israelites or Jews today, is how Christians would recognise a special or particular place for Jews within God's plan of salvation. This understanding also emerges from the recognition that to consider Christianity to have demoted the Jewish people as 'chosen' would be a supersessionist way of applying and understanding this term. The main shift in early Christian understanding which led to the term's appropriation or reimagining was that Israel as a specific people chosen by God had been:

- replaced by Christians and the Church (see Supersessionism)
- expanded to include Christians with Israel remaining as God's special people
- made redundant with the universal salvation through Jesus where all nations and peoples find their divine purpose and destiny.

The idea of chosenness appears early in the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew, for example, places great emphasis on the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies and the lineage of Jesus as being descended from King David and Abraham. This presentation of Jesus as the culmination of Biblical promise is not seen solely as the reestablishment of David's kingdom and the glory of the great nation of Israel, but as the restoration and renewal of the whole of creation. In this way, Christians constitute the New Israel. Events in Jesus' life clearly echo events from the Hebrew Bible, especially the exodus. He fulfils Israel's Old Testament mandate to reveal God's glory, and his disciples are called to take the message of salvation to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20). In light of Matthew's interpretation of scriptural promises, the Church comes to represent the true people of God (e.g. Matthew 21:41), made up of both Jews and Gentiles, who have embraced Jesus as the Messiah.

A more inclusive idea of a chosen people is found in Ephesians (2:11-22) where it is said that God destroys the barrier of enmity between Jews and Gentiles, as foreigners and strangers become fellow citizens. In 1 Peter, the author applies the Hebrews' backstory to the Christian community, calling them "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). Famously, in Romans (9-11), Paul reflects on the place of the Jews in God's plan of salvation. It is possible to read this section in both supersessionist and inclusivist ways, depending on how the agricultural metaphor of grafting in the Gentiles is read (see Supersessionism).

Generally, the New Testament is consistent in disconnecting the concept of chosen people from a particular ethnicity towards a more universal potential. Protestant, specifically Presbyterian thinking muddies the water, but underlying both is an understanding of God's sovereignty in choosing a people for a particular purpose or salvation. God can choose whomever God wants (see Grace) and God's choices and promises are eternal.

1. Chosen People

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

Despite being an important way of understanding God's relationship with the Jewish people, this concept does not seem to be used a great deal in contemporary Jewish discourse nor to be central to Jewish self-consciousness.

To the extent that most contemporary Jews reflect on the concept of chosenness, the notion of responsibility to model an ethical and monotheistic way of life is central. It also puts an emphasis on a sense of collective responsibility to and for other Jews. This involves many collective acts including studying Torah and praying in groups, living in communities with other Jews to observe the Torah and to perform mitzvot ("commandments"). In many ways it is impossible to be an observant Jew in isolation from other Jews as the community is necessary to fulfil so many laws. In this sense the concept of being part of a chosen people is a spiritual calling that connects the Jewish people both to God and to each other which has a direct bearing on individual and collective identity.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

The idea of the Church inheriting the status of chosen people, along with the promises made to Israel, replacing Israel in Salvation History, is known as 'supersessionism' (see Supersessionism). This theological notion is at the root of much Christian anti-Jewish or antisemitic sentiment and actions.

While Christians are now more aware of this idea as problematic, it is found quite explicitly in early Christian theology, and implicitly in contemporary Christian liturgy and hymns, in which modern Christians are portrayed as the sole inheritors of Biblical Israel's status as God's chosen people.

Within Scottish Presbyterianism and as stated in the Scot's confession, the Church is seen as becoming part of Israel rather than replacing it which is not supersessionism.

That said, 'chosen people' is not prominent or commonly used as a self-defining concept for individual Christians. For those that do see the Church as the New Israel (see Israel) and therefore chosen, there is a key distinction with Jewish ideas of chosenness by connecting it to specific beliefs rather than a peoplehood.

Within Presbyterianism the related idea of election, where God has chosen specific people for a specific purpose or destiny unrelated to either their faith or works. This idea is much more focused on individuals, however, than the idea of a people as a recognisable group.

A preoccupation with the idea of chosenness for those who consider justice issues in relation to Israel-Palestine can be discerned from some theological writing. Biblical scholars, like Walter Brueggeman, attempt to argue that Christian support for Israel is based on the fact that Jews are the Chosen People and that Israel's self-understanding, and policies are also influenced by this. What is missing in this approach is any reference to contemporary Jewish perspectives as to whether the 'Chosen People' identity is used this way. The Jewish reflection on this is hugely helpful as it shows that this identity and concept is not used to justify Israeli or Jewish actions but rather reflects the responsibility that comes from being partners in a covenant with God.

1. Chosen People

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Jews see their chosenness not as an end within itself, but rather as a means towards responsible living and being an inspiration to others. The emphasis in Jewish understanding is on moral responsibility, not special treatment or protection.

To the extent that people can convert to Judaism, anyone can take on this notion of chosenness, or responsibility to model this monotheistic ethical responsibility.

This does not always result in positive outcomes, nor does it imply superiority. Persecution is seen sometimes as a result of being chosen and chosenness is seen as an ethical challenge.

Although chosenness is historically a fairly central idea in Judaism, it is not as important to Jewish identity as many might think.

In summary, chosenness is essentially an implicit call to excellence and responsibility through God's love, rather than an explicit sense of separation and entitlement.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

"Chosen people" is not a primary identity marker for Christians. However, Christians would recognise themselves in some sort of theological and liturgical continuity with Biblical Israel as God's people.

This leads to questions of supersessionism or replacement theology with which Christians continue to wrestle with today. It is usually acknowledged that the context of the New Testament writers does not translate on to Jewish-Christian relations today. The New Testament reflects a combination of complex identities as early Christians reflected on their relationships with Second Temple Judaism, especially as the movement spread to Gentiles.

Early Christians believed Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; for them, worship of the God of Israel also demanded devotion to the risen Jesus. Incorporation of Gentiles and developing Christology fundamentally altered the way in which humanity was thought to relate to the God of Israel. These factors eventually led to a 'parting' between Judaism and Christianity, resulting in a complex and painful legacy in Jewish-Christian relations.

This legacy continues to influence Christian understandings of what it means for Jews to be a 'chosen people.' It would therefore be hugely helpful for Christians to reflect on and engage with contemporary Jewish understandings of chosenness.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- While it is not a prominent contemporary identity issue in the sense that is often referenced in day to day Jewish or Christian life, each would view themselves as the chosen people though with different understandings of what this means.
- Chosenness is less focused on a particular peoplehood in Christianity. The idea is defined more by faith and belief.
- How Christian communities define chosenness has a big effect on relations with the Jewish world. An approach which replaces or makes irrelevant Jewish national definition is highly problematic for such relations.
- It is important to note that Jewish polemicists insist on the particularity and permanent nature of chosenness.
- Christians are much more caught up in the issue of whether chosenness can be revoked. For Jews, this idea has never been a matter for debate.
- Some Christians are also focused on the idea that claims of chosenness can be misused for justification of political actions as a Jewish nation in relation to the State of Israel, whereas the Jewish contribution makes clear that the identity of chosenness is not used or understood in this way.
- For Christians it is assumed that they are the heirs of Biblical Israel, this assumption is not shared with Jews.
- Jews see their chosenness not as an end in and of itself but as a means towards responsible living and being an inspiration to others.

1. Chosen People

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Chosen People'

Immediate reflections are that both contributions reflect discomfort with the term and this reflects how misunderstanding about it may have informed attitudes to it. In that vein, the Jewish entry offers a corrective. The Church of Scotland's reaction will hopefully be able to see from the Jewish entry that Jews have been unfairly characterised by these misunderstandings. The notion that being God's chosen people does not mean superiority or freedom from persecution is an interesting and key point raised on the Jewish side. This contrasts with centuries of privilege experienced by Christians and reformed ideas around predestination, which may influence Christian understandings of chosenness. These influences may lead to the idea of God's chosen people being God's favourites or those destined for salvation. The Jewish side clearly explains how this is not the case. This is important for Christians to reflect on, as the idea that Jews have somehow lost their status or fallen from a pedestal as a result of 'rejecting Jesus as son of God' is still live within the Christian tradition, though not as common as it was. The Jewish perspective offered here offers an antidote to the idea that Jews hold a prideful or snobbish idea of their position as chosen. This outline also shows that it is not as important to individual Jewish identity as some Christians may assume. Furthermore, the Jewish side demonstrates that it is not an individualised concept at all, given that it is very much a chosen people as opposed to person. The idea is intrinsically bound together with a collective identity which is one of mutual responsibility and a shared fate. Christian concentration on individual salvation offers a major contrast.

Jewish Reflections on 'Chosen People'

In the Jewish community, there is a distinct worry about the extent of supersessionism emanating from the Church membership. Obviously, the most extreme case, where the Church is understood to replace the People of Israel, is agreed to be highly offensive to Jews and most difficult for Jewish-Christian relations. The persecution of Jews that this approach has given rise to over the centuries is uppermost in our minds in responding to this theology. But even an approach that universalises salvation through Jesus can be problematic. Jewish thinking looks at chosenness through a role the Jewish people play in the world to bring moral and monotheistic thinking to the wider world as a precursor to a redemptive period. This role is also played out through a relationship to the Land of Israel and therefore Jewish sovereignty there. It is critical here to repeat that chosenness, from a historical and theological perspective, is not about superiority, rather about a role of partnership with God in His world.

2. Covenant

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Covenant (*berit*) is a significant relationship between two parties defined by obligation and desire for closeness.

There are multiple covenants between God and the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible, as well as between people on mundane matters. It is a wide-ranging term in Jewish tradition. However, it has specific applications when referring to God's covenant with people, including the following examples:

- a) *The Covenant of the Parts* where God promises that Abraham will have descendants who will become a great nation. Additionally, the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates which would ultimately become the Land of Israel would be given to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12-17) with circumcision being the sign of this everlasting covenant.
- b) *The Giving of the Torah* is a covenant between God and the Jewish nation which becomes an obligation on future Jewish generations to live as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). The Torah recounts God's covenant with Abraham and outlines the teachings and ethics necessary to following God's path;
- c) While these two Covenants are considered to be exclusive to Jews, there is also a more general Noahide covenant with humanity (Genesis 9:11) encompassing seven commandments or areas of obligation. This is a code of universal religious morality which is applicable to all people on earth. Jewish tradition teaches that those who follow the laws of the Noahide covenant will be rewarded with a place in the afterlife (this is one reason that Judaism doesn't actively seek converts, because there are means by which non-Jews can reach the afterlife).

The Land of Israel has a central place in God's covenant with His people, as is expressed in Leviticus 26:42, "I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land." In this context, the miraculous return of the Jewish people to attain sovereignty in the Land of Israel after close to two millennia of exile and immediately after an attempt to annihilate all Jews during the Holocaust, is seen by many Jews as God confirming His covenant with His people through their return to their land.

Circumcision ceremonies are known as *berit*, as are Sabbaths described using the word *berit*. These are seen to be signs of Israel's covenantal relationship with God.

Covenants are initiated by God and are eternal. The notion of a covenant denotes perpetuity — *berit olam* — "an everlasting covenant" and is established in the Hebrew Bible.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

The direct meaning of covenant is a mutual agreement which entails mutual commitments. With a scriptural lens the most important covenants are those made between God and individuals, groups and humanity. God's covenants with humans reveal God's will and ultimate plan for us. Covenants are also made between people.

Christians have reference to the Hebrew word for covenant *berit* which can be translated as 'to bond' and the Greek words *syntheke* which refers to binding together and *diatheke* which can be translated as covenant but can also be understood as testament or testimony.

This is a particularly complicated entry to write for the Christian side. It is complex within the Christian faith as well as having implications for Jewish-Christian relations.

In the New Testament the concept of covenant is reinterpreted through the experiences of the early Christian community. The Church accepted the story of Jesus as a new phase in the covenant story of Israel. They heavily leaned on the book of Jeremiah (chapter 31 in particular) to show that a new covenant had been prophesied. This is of critical importance when it comes to looking to the continuity of faith from the Old Testament through to the New. A hinge point for the Christian faith.

The concept of covenant in the Reformed Christian tradition becomes much more prominent and is sometimes referred to as Covenantal theology. This speaks of one of the principal ways in which God relates to humanity. That is through covenants from those made with Adam, Abraham through to Moses on Sinai and culminating with the covenant made through Jesus' death.

Some strands in Reformed thought understand that covenantal relationship to be singular - albeit with different expressions. This can be seen in the Westminster Confession, which views the covenant that comes through Jesus to be the same one that God has made with Israel, only in a new phase and fuller light.

Others construe covenant in a more sequential fashion: a new covenant is made with humanity following the death of Jesus which includes Gentiles. The problem this raises is: what then happens to the previous covenants in the Hebrew Bible? (See Supersessionism). The New Testament offers several views: the letter to the Hebrews appears to be supersessionist, while Paul's position is debated in scholarship.

2. Covenant

Importance of the term in Jewish history

As mentioned previously, the concept of covenant finds a strong place in Jewish tradition through the commandment to circumcise boys from 8 days old. The Sabbath is a constant reminder of the Covenant, as are Jewish festivals.

Historical persecution of the Jewish people has been challenging for the concept of a covenantal relationship, especially the Holocaust. A theological perspective emerging from the Holocaust is one which strengthens the idea of a covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and God. Sometimes referred to as the 614th commandment (it is understood that there are 613 commandments in the Torah), the philosopher Emil Fackenheim coined this turn of phrase to say that Jews should not grant Hitler a posthumous victory by assimilating and leaving Judaism. The Holocaust in many ways is seen as a reminder that Jews can only truly rely on God for their survival as a people. In other words, the covenant with God is not seen as being abrogated in the face of historical persecution.

Importance of the term in Christian history

For many Reformers in the 16th century, covenant was so important that reformed theology was often referred to as covenantal theology.

This is because the Church Reformers (specifically Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli) saw covenants as key to understanding all aspects of the divine-human relationship with the unfolding of redemptive history in Scripture. They saw each covenant (with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David) as providing a way of understanding progression through scripture. There are other theological covenant ideas such as the Covenant of Works made with Adam as a representative of humanity in Genesis which Adam disobeys (understood by Christians to be the Fall). God then makes a new Covenant of Grace (see Grace) expressed through successive covenants as found in the Old Testament. The role of Christ is to fulfil the original covenant God made with Adam to obtain the promises for humanity that Adam failed to do through disobedience. Others argue that there is just one covenant throughout and this is the Covenant of Grace.

The importance of covenantal theology is illustrated through the language of giving and receiving Communion in the Church of Scotland. In the liturgy, Jesus' presentation of his body and blood (bread and wine) is re-enacted and specifically mentions the covenant when referring to the wine. The Minister recites: 'he took the cup, saying 'this cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in memory of me.' This reference is a way of reminding congregants of God's promise to be with people and the covenantal significance of Jesus' death.

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

Covenant is a central way of understanding the Jewish relationship to God although chosenness is also very important (see Chosen People).

There is a close connection between covenant and the Land of Israel, which is where the relationship between the Jewish people and God ideally plays out. There is an element of contingency in this relationship. Whereas the covenant between God and the Jewish people is understood to be continuous; the place of the Land of Israel is dependent on the Jewish people's fidelity to the covenant with God. It has, however, always been understood that there will be a return of the Jews to the Land of Israel, which is their homeland. In this context, ever since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Jews have anticipated their return to their land with numerous prayers which have reflected this expectation, such as their Heavenward cry three times a day, "May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy" and the wish expressed by all Jews on Passover and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

'Covenant' is part of the liturgical language and theological furniture of Reformed traditions in comparison to Catholic and Eastern Orthodox denominations of Christianity.

The idea of covenant is important in the Church of Scotland's understanding of God. The Covenanters were a 17th century movement that perceived there to be a covenant between people and God. That covenant was one made up of equal partnership between Church and State, each with their own distinct identities and provenance. The Covenanters' aim was to ensure that the monarch did not become the head of the Church. In this way the Church could safeguard its obedience to God, whose will could be discerned through the collective views of the Church's membership and state. This is still a central idea within the Church of Scotland.

Though it is mentioned in liturgy and is clearly important theologically during the Reformation and for many denominations, on average Church of Scotland members are less actively engaged with this topic and the word may not evoke the passionate significance it has in the past. For this reason, it may not feature as a prominent concept when describing their individual or humanity's relationship with God.

2. Covenant

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Christian claims or ideas that the covenants with Abraham and Moses are somehow incorporated into understanding of their own “religious history” are problematic. In Judaism, God makes no demands on Gentiles in these two covenants. Only in the more general Noahide covenant are there expectations for wider humanity.

The idea that with the Destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the covenant between the Jewish People and God was broken is not recognised in Jewish thought. God “goes into Exile” with the Jewish People, which is expressed in the Name of God “I am that I am” (Exodus 3:14, commentaries).

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Christians see the moral laws of the Sinai Covenant as applying equally to them as God’s Chosen People, though not the legal (and, in some strands of thought, also ceremonial) elements of the Sinai Covenant which are viewed as being mandated only for their time.

Specific rites of passage such as the sacraments of Baptism and Communion are seen to impart grace (see Grace) and as a sign and a seal of the covenant of Grace made by God, through Jesus and extended to us. The reason the Church of Scotland practices infant baptism, is a sign that it is God who chooses us, we have no power to claim this covenant for ourselves. In many ways the meaning behind this ritual could well be compared with circumcision as a sign of inclusion into a communal covenant.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Particularity of the covenants differ in that there are very different understandings around the Sinai covenant.
- There is less emphasis in Judaism about the ‘new covenant’ of Jeremiah 31 than there is in Christianity.
- Concern about the continued validity of God’s covenant with Israel is solely Christian.
- There appears to be a more detailed covenantal theology emerging from Presbyterianism.

2. Covenant

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Covenant'

This section is perhaps starker in the differences between Jewish thought and Christian thought, especially considering reformed theology, than other sections. Those reflecting on this section were struck in some ways with the strength expressed on Jewish side in terms of how the covenants do not apply to Christians, as there was no burden on the Gentiles to adhere to the covenants. This, perhaps, is something Christians and Jews need to agree to disagree on, as Christians obviously do believe they are bound by some of the covenants albeit in different ways and with different understandings.

Something that will stand out for many Church members is the fact that the covenantal relationship with God is not dependent on Jews living in the Promised land, along with the idea of God in exile with the People of Israel. This will offer a correction to perceptions that may be held with regards to the destruction of the Second Temple and theological implications of this somehow breaking the covenant. Similarly, the existence of many different covenants will be new information to many though technically this is not so different from perspectives within Christianity. The idea of ranking as lower or even considering the Jewish covenantal relationship with God to be obsolete is something that Christians will have to continue to grapple with as this is a direct venture into supersessionism with significant implications for Jewish-Christian relations.

It is interesting how for the Christian side, whilst there are some really influential aspects of covenant there is less practical application. The only practice on the Christian side is that of communion whilst on the Jewish side the effects of covenants have many more actions or rites associated — in this sense the covenant has more practical application in Judaism than it does in Christianity where it becomes more bound up in theology and denominational relationships with secular society.

One of the most important reflections for this section has to be on the reference on the Jewish side to the 614th commandment that has emerged as a result of the impact and painful legacy of the Holocaust. This will be something that is worth Church members pausing to reflect deeply upon in order to begin to appreciate the impact that the Holocaust has had on a core component of the Jewish people's self-understanding: their covenantal relationship to God. This reference offers a stark reminder of the seismic consequences of the incarceration and the systematic murder of six million people and the centuries of persecution that preceded it. That alone is something Church members will need to return to repeatedly. Especially those who are less aware of the history of Jewish persecution in light of Scotland's historically different Jewish history.

Jewish Reflections on 'Covenant'

There are similar trends in the references to Covenant that are found in understanding supersessionism. It is clear the covenantal theology is highly important for Church of Scotland historical and religious understanding, but the question may need to be asked as to what room does that leave for Church of Scotland understanding of Jewish covenantal understanding which is radically different. As mentioned, for a Jewish understanding, the Sinai covenant is seen as critical to Jewish identity with the revelation of the Torah and its consequent obligations for the nation of Israel. This covenant of Sinai is most fully realised in the Land of Israel but is not dependent on it and was kept through the periods of exile for a final return to the Land. Some within the community talk of the Torah of Israel, the People of Israel and the Land of Israel. For religious Jews, this is an aspiration for a redemptive period, and some hold the view that the modern State of Israel is the beginning of our redemption. For non-traditional or non-observant Jews, the strong connection between the people and the Land is still held on to. In other words, if a Christian covenantal theology understands Jewish covenants as being relegated, or even replaced; Jews will look at this as religious supersessionism. In addition, any religious perspective that directly or impliedly appears to question or weaken the connection between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel this will also raise serious concerns relating to anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

3. Exile

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

At the very dawn of Jewish life, God commanded Abraham, "The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1). From that earliest moment onwards, it was clear that the existence of the Jewish people would always be Land of Israel centric. God went on to promise Abraham, "And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:8). The exile of the Jewish people from the land God had promised them would be theirs, has therefore been a most harrowing historic national trauma.

Exile as a geographical dislocation of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel is a central concept given the importance of the land and the Jewish people's relationship to it. The importance of the land is exemplified by the fact that it is impossible to examine the covenant of Israel with God if no account is taken of the land. In the Tanakh (Jewish Bible) possession of the land of Israel was an indispensable condition of self-fulfilment both for the individual and for the community.

Exile for the Jewish religion, is therefore synonymous with dispossession and powerlessness and is thought of as a physical exile from the Promised Land. There is also a traditional idea of the exile of the Shekinah, God's presence. There is an idea that the Presence of God so to speak goes into Exile with the Jewish People and returns to the Promised Land with the Israelites. God's presence is potent in the Temple and is thus thought to have returned when that was rebuilt. In Ezekiel you find the description of God leaving just before its destruction (Ezekiel chapters 9-11).

The response to the exile by the Romans (i.e. the current exile) has consisted of hope in divine restoration and the idea that God was also exiled with His people as well as the idea that exile is a result of divine punishment.

In traditional Jewish understanding, the Jewish people is currently in a state of exile (at least partially) which prompts interesting debates in contemporary Judaism.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Exile is seen as a condition found in the Old Testament describing the divine punishments on individuals or groups. The most prominent is the exile of the Israelites as well as Moses' punishment with the result that he never reached the Promised Land and died in exile. An important exile for Christians is the one experienced when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. For many this expulsion ends or will end through the coming of Jesus. Mortality in many ways can be experienced as an eternal exile from God, with the faithful striving to return to God.

Another way to understand exile is the one described as 'the way of the exile.' Christians look to Jesus and the prophet Daniel who was exiled in Babylon to determine how they are to relate to earthly rulers, kingdoms, and nations. Presented with the moral dilemma of either resisting or assimilating into the occupying powers, beliefs and customs, the way of the exile presents an alternative engagement. This is one where one wishes the rulers well, and even prays for their success, but maintains true loyalty to God. The most important aspect of this is maintaining faith that the true Kingdom of God will ultimately prevail. This idea can be drawn from Jesus speaking to God about the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion:

"They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in their truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself so they also may be sanctified in truth." - John 17:16-19.

Early Christians, and many Christians today see themselves in this state of exile as they await the Kingdom of God. In 1 Peter, his letter to fellow believers is addressed to:

"...the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood." - 1 Peter 1:1-2.

This gives Christians a sense that there is a divine purpose behind this exile and that they are called to live in the tension between support and subversion of contemporary rulers. In addition to understanding exile as a condition for all of humanity, Christians have historically associated it with the fate of the Jewish people.

The traditional Christian reason for this state of exile is divine punishment. This reading demands a conflation of the Babylonian and Roman exiles. The first, Babylonian exile, was seen as due to disobedience to God, the second is due to denying Jesus as the Messiah. This association with exile may still be very present for some Christians, but it is not one that has been embraced explicitly within the contemporary Church of Scotland. This may be because the tradition of Calvinism from which the Church of Scotland emerged, focused so much on the general state of humanity's exile, to focus on this specific interpretation of Jewish divine punishment. Calvin even referred to Biblical Jews as exemplars of prayer, faith, and perseverance when considering their response to exile in Babylon, from whom Christians and the Church could learn. This is in marked contrast with theological approaches of contemporary Church Reformers.

3. Exile

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Jewish history is comprised of a series of periods of exile which are foreshadowed in Genesis with Abraham and Jacob journeying to Egypt.

The first exile is to Egypt with redemption re-enacted at the festival of Pesach, Passover. The second is the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE. There is then a 70-year exile before the Jewish people return to a portion of the land in order to rebuild the Second Temple. From the year 70 CE begins the Roman exile which for most observant Jews is still ongoing.

The existence of the modern State of Israel throws up challenges to the present idea of exile. Does the State's existence end the exile or not? This is a question deliberated upon by many in the religious Zionist world.

The portion of Orthodoxy which is more Zionist and more mainstream says that Jews are still in exile as the Temple has not yet been rebuilt; however, the State of Israel has religious significance on its own, and the right of return represents the beginning of redemption from exile. One of the understood conditions of the ending of exile is the ingathering of Jewish people to the Land of Israel.

Importance of the term in Christian history

The early Church fathers heavily supported the interpretation of the Jews being exiled from the land because they refused to accept Jesus as Messiah. This led to the establishment of some of the early anti-Jewish myths of the perpetually homeless, wandering Jew, proof of God's people losing divine favour and witnessing to Christian truth as Christianity became more dominant as the state religion of the Roman Empire. Ambrose, for example, wrote about the need to forbid Jews from re-building a synagogue that had been attacked to prevent the perception that Jews had won some kind of victory over Christians. This petty ruling shows the lengths some early Christians went to ensure that Christian superiority was reflected in all areas of life.

For Christian Zionists and Christian supporters of Israel, the creation of Israel as a state was seen to bring the Jewish exile to an end.

For many Christians who lived in the period of the Holocaust, the State of Israel seemed to be a necessary place of sanctuary after so much Jewish suffering and persecution. Christians also saw the Holocaust as presenting a moral argument that pointed to the role of Christian teaching building the foundations of modern antisemitism by emphasising divine punishment passed on from generation to generation, to explain and justify Jewish history and anti-Jewish policies. The establishment of Israel was therefore a moment of reckoning with this theological tradition that sought revelation regarding Christian truth claims from the fortune and misfortune of the Jewish people.

Christian Zionists who are more interested in the end-times and premillennial dispensationalist ideas, saw the end of Jewish exile in Israel as a precursor and a necessity to bring about the final judgement. This has inspired the proliferation of Christian charities funding migration of Jews to Israel as well as donations to settlements in the West Bank.

It is not a central preoccupation for Church of Scotland members as to whether Jews are currently in exile or not. However, the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report in 2013 certainly picked up the idea that the Jewish right to sovereignty over the land is conditional, and that the ideal situation looks much more like a universal belonging for all people. The conclusion of this report stated that 'Christians should not be supporting any claims by any people to an exclusive or even privileged divine right to possess particular territory.' This perspective has been influenced by Palestinian liberation theology. This theology has developed a Biblical hermeneutic which emphasises peace and justice. It universalises the themes of election, exile, and promise of land in order to counter an alternative Christian theology which ratifies modern Zionism to such a degree that it completely disregards Palestinian rights and the claims of the Palestinian people.

Since the publication of the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report there has been an effort made to listen to Jewish concerns within it whilst also maintaining our respect and engagement with Palestinian Christian interpretations and experiences. At the same time there does need to be recognition that a universal vision for the land occupied by many peoples, and a general desire for peace does not require Christians to ignore or refute Jewish attachment to this land.

3. Exile

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

For many Jewish people across the varied communities, exile expresses itself in want-ing to be in Israel, whether to live or simply to visit. Many have family members there or friends — and feel a sense of home when they visit it. This may accompany a strong sense of identity where they live (e.g. British identity).

For religious Jewish people, there is a con-sciousness of a transition between exile and a state of redemption especially as this is understood as the final exile.

Despite enduring multiple exiles, it is im-portant to note that Jews believe that God's love for His people is steadfast. Rashi (an important medieval Jewish thinker and exe-gete) emphasises that Israel will experience 'exile after exile' but God will always love them. This offers an answer to the Christian notion that God had abandoned His people which would have been a dominant Christian perspective in that period. Exile is not con-sidered an end to God's covenant with the Jewish nation.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

The idea that the condition of humanity is one of spiritual exile from the Kingdom of God due to original sin, has had an impact on the Church of Scotland's theological identity and is outlined in the Scot's confession of 1560. Within this idea the faithful are likened to Abraham wandering alone in a strange land or to the Israelites stranded in Babylon, longing to return. The faithful today are strangers in any land, this being the condition of mortality and life on earth and an interpretation that Babylon as an empire is metaphorically embodied in any human institution demanding complete loyalty and a redefinition of good and evil according to idolatrous human ideals, not God. Christians are therefore urged to put their hope and trust in the life to come rather than the world they are in now:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." - Romans 8:18.

Within Calvinism there is also a tradition of seeing suffering and exile as integral parts of faith and mission. There has therefore been an identification with Biblical exile and contemporary exile as experienced by Jews as having a connection with divine purpose rather than punishment.

3. Exile

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Exile is understood as an abnormal reality for the Jewish people, in that the ideal is a Jewish national existence in the Land of Israel. Indeed, there are many commandments (mitzvot) that are specific to the Land of Israel, and therefore cannot be fulfilled in exile, especially those which relate to agriculture. The present reality is not according to many an end of the exile, even though it could be understood as the beginning of the end.

But we have seen that how we understand exile and how it ends, impacts also on the understanding of the role the State of Israel plays regarding exile and the end of exile.

Exile from a Jewish perspective is about shortcomings in proper behaviour and service of God. The notion of personal responsibility for having been exiled by God leads to a sense of agency and aspiration to improve and not a sense of victimhood at an unfair judgement.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

As a religion with no singular territorial connection but plenty of territorial privilege, it is hard for many Christians to understand why the State of Israel should be such an important and sensitive subject for many Jews.

The idea of exile being a condition of faithful Christians navigating a world of secular authorities and rulers which may clash with the principle of their faith is not a universal belief system amongst Christians.

For many Christians, the Kingdom of God on earth is one where there are no borders or need for nationality. Exile, therefore, would be impossible given humanity should feel equally at home everywhere. This influences many Christian approaches to politics in Israel. The universal ownership of the land is also emphasised as an attempt to counter Christian Zionist heavily biased support of Israel and object denial of Palestinian claims.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Jews believe that God gave them the land as an eternal inheritance. Traumatic exiles are followed by a return to the homeland masterminded by God.
- Christian self-understanding has had an influence on Christian interpretation of Jewish exile. i.e., that it is directly caused by rejection of Jesus and stereotypes of the eternal 'Wandering Jew'.
- Jewish history consists of a series of exiles and is therefore a major interpretive lens through which to see politics and history.
- Land and exile for Judaism are viewed in part through the lens of the potential for fulfilment of Biblical commandments — the Torah cannot be fully observed outside the Land of Israel.
- Christian ideas of humanity's permanent exile as part of the mortal condition are in marked contrast to Jewish understandings of exile.

3. Exile

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Exile'

It is important for Christians to hear how central the idea of exile is and how central it is to Jewish understandings of its history and vulnerability and how land plays an important part of the fulfilment of many aspects of the Jewish religion. Their reaction may well be informed by their lack of direct experience or ability to relate to this idea. It is certainly clear from the differences between these two entries that Christian understanding has become highly spiritualised in comparison to the Jewish experience and understanding.

Contemporary thinking among Western Christians has begun actively, to distance itself from attachment to a particular land. This does not mean that Christians are not patriotic members of their countries but rather there is a decline in thinking that the UK, for instance, should be a Christian nation. The changing character of Christian thinking on this has been hugely privileged by dominating so many countries for so long. Christian nations are not seen as a necessity due to persecution, as a result many Christians will find it hard to relate to ideas of exile. It is important to reflect that Christians who live as religious minorities may feel distinctly differently to those in the Global North and West. The Christian perspective from the UK leads to a complicated relationship with Palestinian liberation theology, which offers a vision of universal land ownership, with no single religious or ethnic group in a privileged position in relation to sovereignty and autonomy. This vision will sound threatening to many Jewish people who view this as denial of Israel's right to exist whilst remaining a genuine aspiration for a minority faith living in the country. Western Christians engaging with perspectives on this issue should consider the reality of the differences in power between the lives of White Christians in the UK, Jews in the UK and diaspora and the lives of Palestinian Christians and how these power differentials can make the attempts of White Christians to channel the views of Palestinians sound hypocritical to those from the Jewish community. This is a crudely simplified way of saying that advocacy by Western Christians for Palestinians is complicated given the different histories and contexts in which they each operate in.

Jewish Reflections on 'Exile'

It seems critical here to note a fundamental difference between Jewish and Christian approaches to the concept of exile where the former applies a geographical frame to exile and for Christianity, Jesus brought about a more universal and borderless approach to salvation. This may derive from the fact that for Judaism, the messianic figure is still to come to our world, and so we live in a world of difference and identity. Within that, the ingathering of the Jewish exile is part of a wider world direction to belief in God and a moral way.

It is also interesting that the Christian side does not reflect on the Holocaust, and the role that persecution has understandably played in the Jewish desire to end their exile and re-establish a Jewish State as a necessary safe haven for Jewish people.

4. Grace

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

There are two words in Tanakh which represent the English 'grace'. They are 'hesed' and 'hen'.

'Hesed', which comes from the same root as 'piety', suggests that showing grace is a pious form of conduct.

Significantly, the Torah is described as being 'Torat hesed' — a law of kindness, in Proverbs 31:26. This highlights the nature of Torah law and halakha — the Jewish day to day implementation of law, which embodies kindness, compassion and empathy.

The second word for grace in Hebrew is hen. In the Priestly blessing found in Numbers you find reference to grace as 'may God turn his face to you and be gracious to you' (Numbers 6:25). As a verb, as it is found in several Psalms, this word is paralleled with such ideas as healing, help, being lifted up, finding refuge, strength and salvation (literally rescue).

The use of the term to emphasise God's choice can be found in Exodus 33 'I'll be gracious to whom I'm gracious' which is a mysterious verse.

Interpersonal (non-divine) uses of grace are found in Genesis but translated as 'favour', for example Jacob asks not to be buried in Egypt 47:29 (if I found favour in your eyes).

Understandings of why Jews were chosen by God come close to ideas of grace. This is because many explain that the emphasis is on God's choice alone rather than a specific quality of the Jewish people.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Grace refers to unmerited favour by God, it points to God's goodness. For Christians it very specifically refers to God's welcome of sinners. New Testament writers translated the Hebrew hen (favour) as *charis* (a gracious gift). A gift of grace is not one which is deserved of the person, rather offered from the love and willingness of the giver. In most cases this is God, the most gracious but the behaviour of graciousness is also found between people. Whilst this may seem simple, Christian theologians have grappled with the concept for centuries. Theological questions arise such as how does God's graciousness not compromise God's pure nature? How does grace operate on people? What part do they play in the reception of grace? Just as Jews and Christians may use the same word in different ways, Christians themselves will hear and understand selected words in very different ways and grace is one such example. For some grace will mean God's understanding, readiness to forgive and acceptance. For others it will be a more technical term triggering a whole raft of specific theological thinking. Original sin and grace are intrinsically linked. Grace is the means by which humanity is liberated from the sin of Adam, which is at the root of our broken relationship with God and the world. The sin we have inherited from Adam's disobedience is a twist of human desire which yearns for the wrong things, e.g., wealth, power, idols etc. Because our willpower is so hardwired towards sin, we cannot kick the pattern by ourselves. Here enters God's intervention. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, an act of grace, humanity can be reconciled with God. Jesus is described as God's gift of grace in John's gospel. This is God's choice; Jesus' self-sacrificial death enables us to be in relationship with God not because humans asked for it but because God chose to do so.

The idea that law and grace sit in opposition with each other, is an interpretation that has been inferred from New Testament references such as this one: "The law was given through Moses: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." - John 1:17.

In Paul's letter to the Romans this opposition is expressed through law's association with sin and death, whereas grace is connected to the spirit of life in Jesus. "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit." - Romans 7:6.

This polarisation has often characterised Christian portrayals of Judaism as legalistic and overly strict. In more recent theological discourse these texts have been re-examined to show that attitudes to the law, grace and many other things did not constitute such a crude binary contrast. One such re-examination is offered whereby the Apostle Paul was trying to illustrate the scale of sin and the need for original sin to be overcome. The law was intended as a means for humans to be holy, just and good but was not sufficient to defeat the underlying problem of original sin and restore humanity's relationship with God. According to this interpretation Paul was trying to explain that the world in general is full of death and sin, not specifically the Jewish world of obedience to the law. Our worldly instinct to sin can only be overcome through God's intervention in Jesus.

This is one interpretation. In general, historians and Biblical scholars studying both scripture and the wider context of first and second century Christianity, would urge caution about any simplified approach to this subject.

4. Grace

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Grace is arguably connected to the idea of chosenness which suggests implicit significance but not prominence.

In Yiddish parlance, the idea of hen is more akin to charm; a form of attractiveness that is almost elusive in definition but subsumes a person and makes them appealing; in a very innocent, charismatic way.

Grace is not a central Jewish theological concept. However, there may be some resonance with the idea of God bestowing prophecy on those that he chooses. It is not only the merits of the prophet that bring about prophecy — it is the decision or 'grace' of God that does this.

So with Moses, God explains that 'I will give grace to whom I will grace'.

There is also a connection with the concept of Mercy. God overlooks the possibility of sin through mercy in order to be gracious to someone and grant them prophecy.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Grace is not a prominent term in Judaism, but it is not irrelevant. It is one way of understanding that God is autonomous, and His choice cannot always be understood by humanity. It is also a way of understanding the nature of God's covenant with the Jewish people.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

While there is a literal and historical tendency to see Christianity as polarising law and grace by placing them in opposition, there is much more to understanding the implication of both terms, which has been outlined above. It is important for Christians to understand this as much as Jews.

The debates about law, grace, faith and works often mask that the basic meaning of this word 'unmerited favour' is shared by both Judaism and Christianity.

Importance of the term in Christian history

Grace is a central Christian concept. It did not, however, receive much attention until the 5th century and then again following the Reformation. Its prominence came through Augustine and the concept of 'original sin.' There are two aspects of grace that have become particularly important in Christian history.

Firstly, the idea of predestination; the decision of God as to who will be saved and who will be damned as pre-ordained by an absolute decree. This idea is partly based on the argument that for salvation to be determined by anything other than the will of God, contradicts the nature of God's omniscience and omnipotence. This idea is strongly associated with Presbyterianism however it should be noted that other influences in modern theology have interacted with this belief in such a way that it is a commonly held belief that God's grace is readily available to all. Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian writing in the 1960s, was adamant that to believe in an absolutist decision on the salvation of some over others contradicted God's radical intervention and act of salvation through Jesus Christ. Luther revisited grace when considering the way in which humans were motivated to do good and hate sin. In thinking through this, Luther developed an idea of grace as God's favour rather than a divine substance - it is God's attitude towards us.

The other belief which relates to ideas of predestination is one that focuses on one of the big debates of the reformation; faith versus works. Calvin and Luther saw predestination as protecting the doctrine of justification by grace alone. They understood Christians to be people who have received the undeserved gift of faith from God, and who by this faith can confess their gratitude that God has chosen them to be among the people of God.

Within Calvinist thinking grace and predestination often became embroiled, with the one seeming to counteract the other. Many of the theologians within the Reformed tradition taught that grace is very much in God's domain - and spoke strongly of the very nature of God, who, through Christ, offers life to all and love beyond our understanding. Both Calvin and Luther saw predestination as relieving the great late medieval anxiety about salvation; there was no reason for Christians to devote their energies to pious acts intended to improve their status in God's eyes. Because of the confidence Christians experience in faith, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, Christians can rejoice in God's gift of grace and in thanksgiving turn their energies toward serving the needs of their neighbours.

Debates within the Reformation, particularly within Lutheranism, have further entrenched the polarisation of grace and the law. The emphasis on God's favour and salvation as entirely unmerited, as opposed to resting upon the actions of humans, presented a new line of difference between Protestant and Catholic interpretations. Broadly speaking though, anti-Catholic teaching within the Protestant Churches on this subject resulted in renewed anti-Jewish thinking, as perceptions of Jewish legalism were tarred with the same brush as suspicion of religions of 'work'. While this polarisation has had a varying degree of influence on the different Protestant denominations which emerged after the Reformation, it has undoubtedly had a long-lasting impact on Jewish-Christian relations.

4. Grace

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Many Christians might answer this question by saying that the joy of receiving faith by the grace of God is one which they are motivated to share with others and enjoy exploring in fellowship with fellow Christians. This becomes a cornerstone of how some Christians might explain and share their faith as something through which they found the unconditional love, forgiveness and closeness of God. This newfound discovery of personal relationship with God is one which they would wish others to know too.

A passage that may convey this experience of being given this gift of faith by God's grace is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

"For by grace, you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast." - Ephesians 2:8-9.

The concept of grace is evoked as the elements (bread and wine) are uncovered at Communion and the minister says, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." The invitation to sit at the table is then open to all those who love God a little and want to love God more.

One idea which relates to understandings of grace that can tangibly shape Christian identity is through the gifts God gives to believers. These gifts are not limited to faith alone but what can be referred to as 'the gifts of the spirit' explained by Paul to the Corinthians here:

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit..." - 1 Corinthians 12: 4-8.

This idea is that the gifts of God's grace, through the Holy Spirit, are given to all believers throughout the Church. In that sense talent for music, preaching, leadership can all be understood as originating in God's will. These talents are bestowed, rather than earned. It can extend to talents which have a secular focus such as business or science or advocacy work which can then be directed towards services to the Church of humanity. Some Christians will describe their work as a calling or a vocation such as 'I felt called to work with refugees.'

Many in the Church would discern these talents to be for the good of the Church and fellow humans, not for a special elite and would expect that they are for the service of God's mission on Earth. One's talents are often core to one's identity, so this has a particular bearing on Christian sense of self.

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

As was explained above, grace is understood to be a characteristic of both God and people and is referred to through the Hebrew word 'hen'. At the same time Grace is not a significant theological concept within Judaism. This may be because the relationship between a Jewish person and God is understood through free will and reward and punishment as set out a number of times in the Torah. Free will gives the individual agency to either respond affirmatively to God's command or to reject it. Reward or punishment is the response to that.

Therefore, the idea of being blessed with God's grace unconditionally, without reference to merit is less understood in Jewish religious identity.

So, rather than acting in a moral way being in the context of grace, for Judaism, acting is a fulfilment of Divine obligation which is carried out through knowledge of the Law. In fact, it is understood by some that the studying of the Law brings one into a radical closeness with God.

So we can see here that the concept of grace for Jewish people, intertwines with chosenness. Being chosen for a specific mission is a decision by God in the face of human fallibility. In fact, when God communicates this chosenness to Abraham, he worries that his future sins will break the covenant of chosenness. God then reassures him.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- The meaning of the word grace and the Hebrew hen are remarkably similar but the prominence in Christianity cannot be compared to anything in Judaism.
- Christian concepts of grace and law interpreted as being opposites is important to consider for Jewish-Christian relations.
- The Reformation has characterised a lot of post-biblical ideas of grace and how it impacts on individual believers and Christian identity and salvation.
- Whilst often portrayed as polarised, there is much more to be said about how law and grace are understood in relation to one another in Christianity.

4. Grace

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Grace'

It will be unsurprising for Christian readers that grace has less relevance to Judaism than it does to Christians, but not something many would naturally consider. It is telling that in both entries, grace emanates from God and is not based on human qualities, which underpins the shared spiritual roots of the two traditions. For many the grace entry underpins why Protestant Christians find it hard to see why other religions, or versions of Christianity, should lay such store by 'following rules' since so much of Protestant self-understanding is tied up in the idea that grace set humanity free of such obligations. The Reformation influenced attitudes to perceptions of legalism is deeply connected to debates surrounding whether we are justified by our faith or by our works. The Calvinist position is very much one of justification by faith and a historical tendency to characterise Catholic beliefs and practices as one of justification by works. The challenge lies in reviewing attitudes within the Church of Scotland, recognising how scriptural interpretation has been influenced by unfair stereotypes and a deeply entrenched bias against the law and in re-shaping our attitudes in view of that recognition.

Jewish Reflections on 'Grace'

The observant Jewish community attach a great deal of significance to understanding and carrying out the Law derived from the Revelation at Sinai. They therefore find it difficult to understand the fundamental concept of Grace within Christianity and hear how it plays out in a Presbyterian context. This being such a significant and basic difference between traditional Judaism and Christianity it seems an important place from which understanding can sprout. From a Jewish perspective, it would be important therefore to feel that our Christian friends understand how central Jewish Law is to how we relate to the world. For some it is almost like a scientific toolbox for how to look on at the world. For others it is a wellspring of deriving meaning. It is certainly wide and many faceted rather than being monolithic. With this, religious Jewish communities need also to understand the differences in the nature and centrality of grace as described here to Christian communities.

5. Holy Land

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

While Jews do not naturally refer colloquially to 'the Holy Land', they of course believe the land to be holy and this is recognised as a key feature of the special properties of the State of Israel today, which largely exists on the territory identified by the Bible as being the Promised Land. Zechariah 2:16 refers to "the Holy Land", as do many key Talmudic texts.

For Jews, the imperative given to Abraham to uproot himself from his home in Mesopotamia in order to immigrate to the land that God would show him, (Genesis 12:1) implies that Abraham was going to lead a sacred life on sacred soil. The Bible records features of the holy soil of the Promised Land, including the blessings that would be given to the soil during certain periods of the Sabbatical cycle (Leviticus 25:21).

Throughout the first Five Books of the Bible (the Torah) there are inexorable connections between the holiness of the land and God's promises to the Israelites of their eventual arrival and return to the Land. The phrase "When you will come to the Land..." occurs multiple times from Genesis to Deuteronomy as an introduction to lists of legal, agricultural and societal requirements.

The Land's holiness is drawn from the Torah, which includes specific *mitzvot* ("commandments") that relate only to Jewish people living in the Land of Israel in contrast to living in the diaspora. In modern day parlance, this contrast is drawn between *Eretz Yisrael* "Land of Israel" (or *Medinat Yisrael* "State of Israel") and the diaspora, which is referred to as *hutz la'aretz*; literally "outside the land".

One such example is that the produce of the land is holy because of the commandment about it (cf. *shemittah* "sabbatical" year, where land owned by Jewish people in Israel must be left fallow).

Religious Jews focus on the holiness of the land. The early movement in the late 19th century of religious Jews making *aliyah* (the Hebrew term for emigrating to Israel, lit. 'going up') to Israel were not migrating to the State of Israel, but to the holiness of the land.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Holy Land has had various meanings over the years.

For contemporary members of the Church of Scotland it refers to the historical land promised to the Israelites as recounted in the Old Testament. Its most resonant meaning is as a reference point to where Jesus lived, taught, died, and was resurrected.

The fact that there are Biblical references to Galilee, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem in the Old and New Testaments make the modern towns and cities which still stand there, meaningful, and important for many Christians.

These places, as outlined in the Old Testament, are seen as constituting the Holy Land but this does not necessarily correlate with specific borders or a modern nation today.

Many Christians use the term euphemistically to refer to Israel-Palestine to avoid specifically saying either Israel or Palestine or both. In the same way, it becomes a generic way of referring to a holy land defined as holy in many ways and by different peoples. Holiness itself becomes a useful way of referring to the fact that it is holy for a lot of varied reasons, some shared and others vastly different.

5. Holy Land

Importance of the term in Jewish history

The importance of the Land of Israel as a holy land, set apart for a specific purpose, has roots in the covenant with Abraham (repeated to Isaac and Jacob) in the Torah, and can be traced throughout Jewish history. In Jewish writings, the term 'Zion' is freely used as a description of all of the land. The holiness of Jerusalem (Zion) is perceived to be shared by the whole land, which is revered by Jews as holy soil.

Importance of the term in Christian history

While the earliest Christian community began within the Jewish world of Palestine, as it was known under Roman Occupation, it soon spread to towns and provinces within the Roman Empire. By the second century, the impact of missionary work across the Roman Empire now more detached from a spiritual centre in Jerusalem coupled with the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE gradually established firmer boundaries between Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus and Jewish "non-believers." This led to a tendency from these early Christians to view the People of Israel as a covenantal people with an outdated covenant (see Supersessionism). For them, the new covenant had been transplanted onto new believers in Jesus with them laying claim to the same status as chosen people or Israel (see Chosen People). This covenant was one of a renewed relationship with God which did not refer to the importance of a defined piece of land. Some of the notable leaders in the early Church explicitly played down the significance of that land despite the continued presence of Christians there. Examples include Origen and Eusebius, who were insistent that the Biblical passages outlining promise and restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land now referred to the future Church. This was not understood to mean that the Church would be centred and flourish in the Promised Land but that it would spread and flourish everywhere.

In the Byzantine period the land received more prominence with hundreds of churches being built to mark events and locations of significance to the Gospels. From this point onwards, the term 'Holy Land' came into use, with Jerusalem referred to as the 'Holy City'.

The Crusades (11th to 16th centuries) used the term as a way of framing these military campaigns as a 'holy war' to seek victory over the 'enemies of Christ', especially the early crusades which were focused on reconquering Jerusalem and reclaiming the 'True Cross.'

Most Christians would not have such a vivid connection to these historical meanings and would mostly associate the term with its connection to Christian history primarily and its significance in the Old Testament.

5. Holy Land

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

Religious Zionists, those who see religious meaning in the existence of the State of Israel understand a deep similarity between present day sovereignty in the land and original sovereignty in the times of the Kings.

The motto of Bnei Akiva, a global Religious Zionist youth movement is *am yisrael b'erezt yisrael ve'al pi torat yisrael* ('the people of Israel in the Land of Israel according to the Torah of Israel'). This highlights the integral relationship of people (*am*), land (*erezt*) and Torah rule (*torah*). Religious Jews firmly believe that you cannot have one of these without the others which influences religious Jewish identity.

Key non-religious Zionist thinkers, such as Theodor Herzl, were thinking about national determination in the Land of Israel because of this combined historical and religious significance but were stressing first and foremost a right to national self-determination for the Jewish people. They differed only in strategy as to how to achieve sovereignty.

The impact of antisemitism and the Holocaust have made the State of Israel even more important across the board. It cannot be stressed enough how much the Holocaust has impacted the connection between Jews in the diaspora and in the State itself, to the existence of the State of Israel.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

For those within the Church of Scotland tradition there is not such a great attachment to the Holy Land as a matter of Christian identity. There is no requirement to visit as a place of pilgrimage or for any festivals. There are however pilgrim groups that go as a matter of interest. They usually visit all the sites connected to Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

More recently the Church of Scotland has encouraged pilgrims to visit 'living stones' rather than the material sites of ancient Christianity. These 'living stones' are Palestinian Christian partners who can tell Scottish visitors about their life in this land today. Many of these partners are farmers like the Tent of Nations, Nasser family who harvest their olives in the hills overlooking Bethlehem. Their trees are regularly attacked by settlers looking to expand onto their farmland. Such settlements are also being built closer and closer to their property. Their story is regularly used by visitors when they return to their Churches at home as an example of non-violent resistance given their sign outside which reads 'we refuse to be enemies'. The stories and perspectives of families, organisations, and individuals like the Nasser family, are heard alongside other formal partners including Israeli Jews and Muslim Palestinians. Amidst the wealth of contacts and longstanding relationships in the region, it is seen as particularly important for Church of Scotland members to have contact and communion with Palestinian Christians. As a minority within a minority, they risk being overlooked as well as being talked about rather than with. Members need to see and understand their lived reality as well as engaging with others in the region.

Many members of the Church of Scotland will associate the phrase from Sunday school or the pages at the back of the average Bible found in pews. The impact of this is that the idea of it as a historical landscape for the Old and New Testaments is the primary association, not a real place. In that sense it is removed from the modern world and for this reason many are struck when they visit on the surreal nature of visiting so many places that they've only seen on a map. The experience has been described as simultaneously unreal and familiar. Many members of Churches report feeling disappointed when they visit when they find commercialised tourism at the holy sites as well as being excited to see modern road signs for Jericho and Bethlehem.

Another aspect to the less than straightforward relationship many Church members have to the Holy Land will be the fact that many will reach for texts like this one: "...The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." - John 4:21.

This quote is from Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman is offered as an answer to her reference to the dispute between the Samaritan site of worship (Mount Gerizim) and the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. For many readers, Jesus appears to suggest that location of worship does not matter and emphasises that true worship was a matter of spirit and right attitude to God. This text does not necessarily negate the importance of Jerusalem within the context of the passage, but it can be read in this way today, given how far Protestant Christianity has moved from having either a geographical spiritual centre or Church buildings as the 'correct' locations for worship. There will be more emphasis on God being anywhere and everywhere and will have an impact on many Christians perceptions of other faiths who do emphasise the importance of certain locations.

5. Holy Land

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Christians need to be more mindful of the diverse ways 'Holy Land' has been used in Christian history, particularly the colonial violence that saw it as an object to 'recover' during the Crusades. Most Christians see the Holy Land as a shorthand for a land that is special because of its religious significance.

Christian relationships to sovereignty and ideas of a 'holy land' in any context are complicated when it comes to the Global North and West. For some, religion has a natural part to play in state formation which allows for nations to be shaped and informed by the majority faith — whatever that faith is. Others, however, are more critical of Christians expressing support for a national sovereignty as defined by a particular faith, since such ethnically and religiously defined state identities could be seen as a code for 'colonial aspirations' or as a tool to suppress others. For example, violence against Christians and Muslims in India or against LGBT people in Poland.

Concern for how Christians engage with this complicated political and religious landscape is partly rooted in a renewed recognition of the problematic aspects of Christian history. There is growing awareness of how 18th-20th century Christian missionaries relied upon imperial dominance and an ideology of White Supremacism to spread Christianity as they understood it. Recognition of this colonial history and its legacy has inspired many Christians to learn from and try to correct the harm caused. There needs to be recognition that other faith traditions and also Christians outside of the Global North do not share this history or relationship to it. As a result, members of other faiths and Christians from the Global Majority will have a different approach to post-colonial thinking in general. Furthermore, there will be a wide variety of approaches as to how Christians apply the desire to correct historic mistakes made by the British Mandate in Palestine in particular.

Despite the lack of a spiritual centre, contemporary events occurring within the lands that encompass the 'Holy Land' will stand out for many Church of Scotland members. This is partly for practical reasons, as those attending the General Assembly read reports updating them on the various properties and businesses that are run there, in the name of the Church of Scotland. This physical presence also fosters a more intense fellowship with partners in the region, these are chiefly Christians but also Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Muslims. Two Ministers live there, tend to congregations, and nourish further connections as well as writing blogs about their experiences which reach interested members at home in Scotland. A cumulative effect of the Church of Scotland's presence and multifarious relationships in this region is that there is greater opportunity to get close to glimpsing what 'real life' looks like from a variety of different perspectives and there is a strong perception these need to be shared with those in Scotland. Despite the obvious limitations of these insights which do not encompass the entire population, it is much harder to get as close to comparable post-colonial conflict zones such as Kashmir, Lebanon, and Myanmar not least because many of them are inaccessible or we do not have a comparable presence. When messages are received from partner Churches in other regions, with news from the ground, the Church endeavours to respond and share these messages locally but it is important to reflect that there are many tangible differences between the Churches various partners and how they are engaged with.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

For Jewish people, the term 'Holy Land' speaks to a perceived Christian relationship to the land. Jewish people would typically refer to it as the Land of Israel, the Promised Land, or the State of Israel (see Israel; Promised Land, People of Israel).

Furthermore, for religious Jews, it is important to understand that the holiness of the land is due to the connection of the people and the Torah to the specific land where these commandments can be kept.

The unity between people and place is very important and constitutes an essential relationship from a Biblical and contemporary religious perspective.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Holy Land as a title to the Land of Israel or Promised Land is not shared by Jews and Christians.
- For Christians it largely refers to the biblical Land of Israel and place that is special due to its religious and historical significance for Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- For Jews, while we do not usually refer to 'the Holy Land', the land is, of course, considered to be holy and this is an important component in our view of its special nature and our historic connection to it. The specific borders of the Holy Land mentioned in the Bible correspond broadly, but not exactly, to the modern-day State of Israel.
- For Jews, the holiness of the Promised Land is deeply connected to its relationship to its people and them to the land.

5. Holy Land

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Holy Land'

It is immediately noteworthy that the Christian side has so little to say about the exact definition of the Holy Land in comparison to the Jewish entry. This partly points to the missing perspective of Palestinian Christian theologies which would undoubtedly have more to say on this subject. Those reflecting on this section thought that it may also reflect how this phrase has become embedded as a reference point, or even a euphemism, to describe what is now the State of Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories. As a result, the meaning has become Brigadoonised and deeply romanticised. One person reflected that the strongest association with this term was in finding a 'map of the Holy Land' at the back of our pew Bible and sometimes a similar map displayed on the wall. This has run the danger of the land becoming not much more than a backdrop to the events described in Scripture, and for many the Holy Land does not feel like a 'real' place until they either visit or encounter the modern State of Israel and Palestinian territories in some way. It might also be true that for some, notions of the Holy Land will contain echoes of the crusades. This is all in stark contrast to the material description of the land as refuge and to the dynamic understanding of the land's holiness in relation to the Jewish people, found in the Jewish entry. Many Christians will potentially find it surprising that this is not a shared term, and that Jews appear to have less to say on this topic than might have been expected.

For Christians it is hard to determine and agree on how the land of Israel can be holy in and of itself and what the relationship, is between the land and Christians more generally. For many Protestants there is even less of a script for how to behave when there. Many visiting from Scotland encounter very different forms of Christianity, let alone expressions of Judaism, which can be both eye opening and, at times, unsettling when they see pilgrims kissing the ground and engaging with different religious sites in ways that contrast with Protestant Christianity in Scotland which has become so dislocated from attachment to place.

Jewish Reflections on 'Holy Land'

The impression is given that there are distinct Christian worries as to how the understanding of Jewish sovereignty in the Land - the concept of a Jewish nation state, plays out. An important element of Jewish faith is the strong relationship between Jewish religion, Jewish law and a defined piece of land given to us for eternity by God, over which we are blessed once again to have sovereignty. Jewish people would vehemently object to the idea that the concept of a Jewish state is colonialist. There will be internal differences relating to how the politics of the State have played out, just as in any democratic State, but looking at Zionist aspirations as 'colonialist' would be considered a misreading of Jewish history and an affront to Judaism.

When the Church of Scotland side references 'living stones', it would be useful to better understand the variety of people they are encouraging their pilgrims to visit, in particular, the extent of engagement with mainstream Jewish groups within the State of Israel and its own ancient communities, for instance those in Jerusalem, Tzfat and Tiberias, which appears to be minimal. It is worth acknowledging as well that Israel is the only country in the Middle East where the Christian population is increasing in size. Thus, there is another narrative of Christian life which is often not explored by visiting groups, resulting in the presentation of only one dimension of the multi-faceted story that is the relationship between religious groups. The Church of Scotland's interest in Israel, given the stationing of two ministers there is important to note, but the fact that Israel is often a topic brought up in their General Assembly will leave some Jews feeling concerned, irrespective of their presence in the country. This is because of the resemblance to the unfair levels of attention being paid to Israel over other countries in a range of global forums.

It is interesting to note the Christian reflections on seeing national sovereignty as code for colonial aspirations and very important for Christian traditions to recognise that its own history has led to this perception. This is then compounded by a largely European perspective, reflecting on recent European colonialism and 'Empire' which can lead to a fundamentally flawed perception of the Jewish return to its ancient land as framed through the prism of colonialism and 'Empire'. For Jews this is deeply disturbing and upsetting. Re-establishing sovereignty in the land of our forefathers, as promised to us by God is a returning home for the Jewish people. Any suggestion of colonialism is to claim that we have no claim and no right to the Land of Israel.

6. Israel

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

The biblical term 'Israel' is used most commonly in reference to the nation of Israel, descended from Jacob. The nation of Israel is attached to a specific place, the Promised Land, as well as the modern nation state today. The Bible presents a history of the ancient land and gives Jews the parameters to understand its borders and religious observance.

The Hebrew word "Israel" has multiple meanings in the Bible. It can mean "to retain God" or "to be a receptacle for God." In the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 32:29), the name refers to Jacob who wrestled with an angel and was given the name as an indicator of having struggled with God and prevailed (*isra* - struggle + *el* - God), and the name of the country derives from this story.

Israel also refers to a people of Israel (*Am Yisrael*) descended from Jacob and the Children of Israel (*B'nei Yisrael*) are those that came out of Egypt. (see Exodus 12:51).

The Jewish People are seldom referred to as the Children of Jacob, but rather as the Children of Israel. Again, this refers to their archetypal capacity to "wrestle with God, but prevail".

The term 'Israel' is not only related to the Jewish people, but also to the Land of Israel. For example, it is impossible to examine the covenant of Israel with God if no account is taken of the importance of the land. In the Bible, possession of the Land of Israel was an indispensable condition of self-fulfilment, both for the individual and for the community. When dispossession and powerlessness arose as a result of the destruction of the Temple in 70CE, the Jewish response consisted of both hope of divine restoration and of the mystical idea that God was also exiled with his people (see Exile).

The modern-day State of Israel is central to Jewish faith and Jewish consciousness. This finds its expression in numerous Jewish prayers, many commandments of the Torah that can only be performed there and the spiritual connection that Jews have to the Holy Land.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

There are a mixture of meanings and associations of the word Israel. Some people will think of the modern State of Israel and some will think of the ancient people of God, and then the two can often be conflated. The land that is now modern Israel, Gaza and the West Bank are often referred to as the 'Holy Land' (see Holy Land).

The dominant understanding within Christian thinking is to see Israel as an ancient people. The emphasis is on the people as, no matter where they were, they were the Israelites whether living in the Promised Land or in Egypt or exile (see Exile).

When thinking of the land, Christians almost automatically see it as the Holy Land because it is where Jesus lived, taught, died, and was resurrected. It is also holy because of the significance of the land in the Old Testament and because so many religions see it as significant. The significance of Israel as a place will vary depending on the denomination, but a number of spiritual factors such as the Kingdom of God as something to be built towards anywhere, the promise of heaven at the end of life, and passages from scripture such as John 4:21 which appears to point away from specific locations and towards the importance of spirit and truth has replaced any attachment to a particular territory for modern Protestants (see Kingdom of God and Holy Land).

The story told in Exodus, of the Israelites wandering in the desert seeking entry to the Promised Land, is often interpreted allegorically of humanity in exile until we come home to heaven (see Exile). In that sense Christians are untethered and Protestants, in particular, are not obliged to go on any pilgrimages to Israel, though many do.

6. Israel

Importance of the term in Jewish history

The creation of the State of Israel is viewed by many Jews as an act of momentous Divine providence. After close to two millennia of exile, often endured with much suffering, the answering of our prayers for God “to enable our eyes to witness Your return to Zion” is considered nothing short of miraculous and the fulfilment of God’s covenantal relationship with His people. The fact that the establishment of the State came only three short years after an evil attempt to annihilate all Jews during the Holocaust, during which six million innocent women, men and children were mercilessly murdered for the sin of being Jewish, has made the significance of the miracle all the greater.

There are religious Zionists who view Israel as a providential tool and a clear symbol of the coming of a Messianic redemptive period. This can be seen in the official prayer for the State by its former Chief Rabbi, Isaac Halevy Herzog, which describes Israel as the flowering of redemption.

Included in the account in Genesis for the name ‘Israel’ being given to Jacob, is the statement “for you have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). Being called the People of Israel is therefore a constant reminder of the miraculous survival of the Jewish people against all odds. Jews attribute their extraordinary continuity to God’s blessing and His honouring of His covenantal commitment. In addition, the name of the modern-day Jewish State, Israel, similarly bears testament to God honouring His pledge in Leviticus 26:42, “I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.”

Importance of the term in Christian history

From the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the early Church leaders consistently used this destruction and the exile of Jews from their land as proof that God had rejected the Jews because of their rejection of Jesus, going so far as charging them with deicide (murdering God). As long as the Temple lay in ruins, it appeared to these early followers of Jesus that they were correct in claiming that Judaism had lost its legitimacy and were now in perpetual exile as a sign of rejection.

There was a notable lack of Christian comment in response to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 as indeed, for years and even decades, to the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe. Some argue that this was due to it presenting a challenge to the stereotype of the Jews as a suffering and persecuted minority. The new State transformed victim to victor. There was a small minority who reflected on what the impact of a Jewish state would mean for Palestinians and for global politics more generally.

Christian commentary in publications at the time also reflected a genuine moral crisis as to what reckoning with the Church’s culpability in laying the cultural groundwork that led to the atrocities of the Final Solution would look like. This reckoning was not formalised into a post-Holocaust theology for decades, but it was certainly recognised by many in the immediate aftermath of the war’s end. The most obvious and positive outcome of this reflection was the Vatican document *Nostra Aetate*, which did much to revise Christian understandings of Judaism and set a new course for Jewish-Christian relations.

From the 1980s some Churches began to make statements on the theological significance of the Jewish return to Israel as ‘signs of the faithfulness of God towards His people’ (RhineLand Synod 1980). Some Churches within Evangelical traditions have gone further and declared that the State of Israel is the fulfilment of prophecy with detailed attention to events such as wars and policies as further proof of prophetic significance. Isaiah 11:10-14, for example, has been referred to as predicting the Six-Day War in 1967 and Luke 21:24 as prophesying the return of Jerusalem to Jewish control.

With the rise in prominence of indigenous Palestinian Christian thinkers and their connection to Western Churches, there has been more exposure to theology that is more critical of Zionism in general and Christian Zionism in particular.

6. Israel

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

Given the importance of the land for Jews, with so many commandments directly connected to living in and having autonomy over the Promised Land (e.g., the Sabbatical year), the land of Israel and the question of Jewish return to it has been a significant issue for many Jews. How and when Jews will return and regain autonomy in the Land was fiercely debated in the early twentieth century. Some religious Jewish groups argued that it could only happen with the coming of the Messiah.

Religious Jews have romanticised their relationship with the land, with accounts of Rabbis rolling in the dust upon their arrival in the early twentieth century.

Given that Jews pray in the direction of Jerusalem there is an intention of directing one's prayer to God via Jerusalem. The land (Jerusalem specifically) is therefore a means or a tool by which Jews focus on God. If you don't know the direction of Jerusalem, then Jews are instructed to 'intend their hearts to God.'

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

The issue that many Christians grapple with in relation to both the modern State of Israel and passages describing the military conquest of the land in the Old Testament, is that of any claim to exclusive possession of a land. There is a sense shared by many in the Church of Scotland that the land belongs to everyone and thus no one. Dismay is often expressed by some Christians when encountering an emphasis on the sovereignty of any one people or religious group given the diversity of people laying claim to the same land.

There is a reflection that while Christians claim to be untethered to a land, they have gained enormous power as a religion from the day the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as a state religion to its spread to the global North and West. With its subsequent dominance there and the global dominance of the North and West since the Industrial Revolution and colonialism, Christianity has never required sovereignty to survive whilst simultaneously benefitting enormously from its dominance in so many powerful countries.

Christians in the West have grappled with reflecting on the relative power of being a Christian in the Global North whilst listening and responding to theology developed by Palestinian Christians which urges all Christians to address Christian theological justification for Israeli policies and the occupation. Some strands of Palestinian Christian theology, rooted in the everyday experience of Palestinian Christians living in Israel and the West Bank since 1948, have increasingly been able to develop a united voice between the denominations under the banner of Palestinian Liberation Theology. While not representing all Palestinian Christian thought, this theological movement of Palestinian Liberation Theology, has given an outlet to express the theological crisis experienced by some Palestinian Christians since Israel was established. The source of this crisis is the perception that the Bible has been used as a Zionist proof text and therefore that their own scripture has been used to justify Palestinian disinheritance. Naim Ateek argued that 'before the creation of the state, the Old Testament was considered an essential part of Christian scripture...Since the creation of the State, some Jewish and Christian interpreters have read the Old Testament largely as a Zionist text' (Justice and Only Justice, 77). How Christians in the West grapple with this theological response to an experience of occupation, requires a careful and empathetic ear. On the one hand, the lived experience of Palestinian Christians will inform a particular view of Zionism which is worthy of engagement. As part of this engagement, Christians also need to be aware that this kind of comment, as quoted above, is concerning from a Jew-ish perspective. This is partly because it seems to ignore the scriptural connection with the land so central to their faith. It also implies that Jewish Zionists use their scripture to find Zionist proof texts to support a secular and modern ideology, this is an idea that many religious Orthodox Jewish thinkers would strongly reject. It is one thing to critique Christian reading of Christian Zionism into the scriptures, critiquing Jewish readings has more problematic ramifications. It helps when reading about another faith's engagement with their scripture, to be honest, open and aware that Christians will not be the experts.

Overall many people within the Church of Scotland will not have a specific view on this subject. It is very likely that many Christians will be unaware of how the land is understood and experienced by Jews in relation to their history and identity.

6. Israel

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Many Christians hope for and strive for an era when all borders are abolished, they see this as a way in which the Kingdom of God (see Kingdom of God) is being realised here on Earth. Many will see their political actions and decisions as reflective of that hope. This will influence how many Christians in the Church relate to issues of security and autonomy in the modern State of Israel and other nations. While this view is held by some, it is not a universal one.

Because of Jesus' association with the land there will always be a deep connection with Israel, Gaza and the West Bank and concern for all peoples living there, but particularly Palestinian Christians due to strong links of faith and communion.

There is potentially a cultural instinct amongst Scottish Christians to be preoccupied by issues of justice and defence of the underdog, Palestinians, particularly those in Gaza and the West Bank, are often perceived to occupy the position of underdog in this conflict.

Many Christians will find it hard to relate to an attachment to a specific land as it is not part of Christian self-understanding or tradition.

Heightened interest in Israel and Israeli policies are influenced by a historical interest (given that Britain had a key role in the lead up to Israeli independence), a religious interest and a relational interest, due to Christians actively and formally requesting for our political and theological action and resistance to Israeli policies. It is commonplace for the Church of Scotland to receive requests for action, support, prayer, and other expressions of solidarity from Christian groups living elsewhere in the world. Palestinian Christian requests have often been more politically overt than those received from elsewhere, but not always. There are many reasons for this, and each relationship is different, but it is partly because theology and politics are inseparable when it comes to the request to challenge Christian Zionist discourse and influence given that interpretation of scripture and how it is applied to modern politics and advocacy is at the centre of this issue. International partners elsewhere have been more cautious about requesting political statements for various reasons, with each set of reasons particular to each scenario and relationship.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism are not the same. Modern day Zionism, which for some is political in nature, is rooted in Jewish history and consciousness, as reflected in numerous Biblical passages. The State of Israel is considered by many Jews to constitute a significant step towards a redemptive state.

Observation of many Biblical laws, including numerous laws based in agriculture, are impossible without reference to the land and the people of Israel living there.

Israel, whether this refers to the Modern State or the Biblical land that it sits on, has a strong emotional, spiritual and historical connection to Jews across the political and religious spectrum. The reasons for this connection cannot be assumed or defined based on Christian engagements with the subject. (See section(s) on Zionism, Holy Land, People of Israel).

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- The Land and State of Israel are intricately related to several concepts discussed in this glossary e.g., covenant and redemption.
- Christianity and Judaism have had very different histories when it comes to attachment and relationship to land. Christianity has gained power and dominance as it spread and detached itself from the land of its origin. Judaism has survived and flourished as a minority in many different lands over millennia whilst maintaining the aspiration and hope for redemption through return to the Promised Land.
- The Holocaust and other periods of persecution and vulnerability have had a profound impact on Jewish relationships to land and sovereignty.
- The creation of a Jewish State of Israel in the biblical land is hugely significant to Jewish people, because of the centrality of Israel to Jewish history, faith, and identity.
- Christian relationships to the State of Israel specifically are diverse, with some more dominated by a prophetic interpretation of Israel's theological significance for the end-times and those highlighting the justice issues for Palestinians. There are numerous views and theologies between these which have been influenced by individual encounters as well as political and theological perspectives.

6. Israel

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Israel'

This entry provides important insights on Jewish attitudes and beliefs with regards to Israel and how these influence specific rituals and practices. Many Church members will be unaware that some practices within Judaism are adapted or deemed to be impossible depending on whether a person is in Israel or not. This may be jarring for some Christians who may automatically see this as overly constrained and inhibiting. This entry outlines that this is not necessarily experienced as constraining for religious Jews who see the specificity of Israel and commandments which relate to it as guidance on what will draw them closer to God.

It was interesting to read about the tendency to conflate the actions and needs of God's will for the Jewish people with God's will for Jewish possession of the territory. It would be good to know more about that.

Christians need to empathise and listen more to Jewish connections with the land and the complex and deep ways that this subject connects to Jewish history, emotion, identity, autonomy, safety etc. whilst staying in touch with and pursuing issues of justice and peace and multiple claims of belonging to this land.

Addressing Christian Zionism does not require conflating it with Jewish forms of Zionism. Christians need to reflect more on that. Alongside this is an important recognition of the secular and political factors which influence the actions of the State of Israel as well as the spiritual influences and teachings of Judaism. Israeli governments and politicians are both religious and secular and will have as complicated a relationship with faith and leadership as many other countries.

Jewish Reflections on 'Israel'

Reading the entries above expresses more clearly how a classic Jewish theology of land differs from Christian theologies expressed here. Where the former is a bounded connection to a piece of land, realised in sovereignty there, the latter considers a more 'untethered' relation to land. This may also explain a difference between a Christian universalism explained here in terms of the 'Kingdom of God' and a Jewish universalism which was described by the late Chief Rabbi Sacks as a 'dignity of difference'. This is a recurrent difference that is causing great misunderstanding between the two communities and great mistrust. If there is no place in Christian theology, and more specifically here Church of Scotland theology to understand a Jewish connection to the Land of Israel, this approach will quickly be connected with other approaches against Zionism that are understood to be sometimes antisemitic. In other words, a theology, or rather, as conveyed within this section, a political interpretation of the situation, that is untethered completely from borders, will find most result in Jews who relate to the State of Israel, whether from a religious or cultural identity, or from a historical perspective, being in a position of mistrust of the Church. Many traditional Jews will not understand Jewish sovereignty in the Land as presently rejecting the rights of non-Jews to live there or to be citizens of the State of Israel.

It is deeply troubling to read a quote from Naim Ateek in the Church entry, given his authorship of the highly problematic Kairos document (see Justice), which is just one amongst many examples of his repeated attempts to delegitimise the State of Israel. The quote included here, amongst other things, highlights a deep misunderstanding from the Jewish perspective of what Zionism is. The Tanakh (Jewish Bible) is not being used as a proof text for Zionism, as Ateek suggests. The Jewish Bible and Judaism as a whole are Zionist, in that they are Land of Israel centric and geared towards the Jewish people living in and returning to Israel. It often feels to Jews that it is too convenient to take the term 'Zionism' out of its broader and deep Jewish religious context and use it as though it were a modern invention linked only to the aspirations to establish the modern-day State of Israel in 1948.

Finally, it is helpful for Jewish communities also to understand the position of the Church of Scotland with regards its difficulty with a particularist connection to the Land. Given the already strong links between Church of Scotland members and Palestinian Christians, it appears necessary for closer ties to be built with a greater number of mainstream Israeli Jewish communities and organisations.

7. Jerusalem

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Jerusalem was the Divinely ordained capital of the ancient Kingdom of Israel, as it states, "For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for His dwelling" (Psalm 132:13). No other capital has a total absence of water and has been historically inaccessible. Jerusalem was chosen because of her spiritual properties. Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel and is viewed by Jews around the world as being the eternal capital of our people.

Ve'li'yirushalayim irkha b'rahamim tashuv ("and to Jerusalem your city you shall return with mercy") is a key Jewish prayer in the three daily services. It shows that Jerusalem is a central part of who Jews are, and that there is a longing to return.

Jerusalem is mentioned 669 times in the Hebrew Bible and alluded to variously in the Torah as "the place that Lord will designate to make his Name dwell there" (eight times in Deuteronomy alone).

For Jews, Jerusalem is a very concrete and specific location rather than a metaphor or a spiritual idea. It is where the Temple is, where sacrifices took place and there are three pilgrimages per year which were biblically mandated for anyone who was fit enough to make the journey from within the Land of Israel (Exodus 23 & 24, Deut. 16). These are still known today as the *Shalosh Regalim* "Three Foot Festivals". Jews also face in the direction of Jerusalem when praying, following the example of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 6:11).

No war is supposed to be waged over Jerusalem, so until there is a sign from God, the Temple will not be rebuilt. Instead, it has to be brought about by peace and through prayer. Even though Jews have access to Jerusalem, the ultimate aim is to have the Temple as a Jewish site of worship for the world in the heart of the city.

Jerusalem features in Jewish history from the creation of the world to the time of Abraham and his near sacrifice of his son Isaac to King David longing to build a Temple there. Jewish people believe that the site of the holiest part of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, was built over the location of the Foundation Stone (*even ha'shetyah*), so they see Jerusalem as the centre of the world and the site of Creation.

The Talmud describes the Temple service on the Day of Atonement as taking place on this Stone.

There is also an eschatological belief that the resurrection of the dead, at the time of the Messiah, will begin in Jerusalem. Jews believe that their deeds hinder or help this time to come.

In the Talmud there is the teaching that every generation that doesn't see the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem is considered as if it were the generation that witnessed its destruction - an imperative to make constant positive contributions to humanity.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Although God is seen to be present everywhere, Jerusalem is often used liturgically to describe the 'home' of God. Many hymns are based upon the Psalms, so Church of Scotland members have grown up singing about 'going up' to Jerusalem, entering her gates, and the 'river that makes glad the city of God'. It was an easy imaginative move for this to translate to Christian concepts of heaven, and it is a move made by the writers of the New Testament. Christians would not refer to 'going to heaven' as 'going to Jerusalem', but we might refer to a deceased person as living now in the heavenly city.

Jerusalem also has a 'heaven-on-earth' emphasis. Sometimes we refer to the Church as building a 'new Jerusalem' which is an aspirational peaceful society (William Blake's poem Jerusalem is a good example). Within hymns, Jerusalem (or Zion) carries strong connotations of home and belonging and rest. It is a place both 'now' and 'not yet': a place of beauty and peace and eternal happiness where God walks among the people as he once did in Eden.

In the book of Revelation, we find allegorical and spiritual ideas and visions of Jerusalem:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them; they will be God's peoples, and God will be with them; will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." - Revelation 21:1-5.

In this we see an echo of Ezekiel's prophecy but with an added prophecy of Jerusalem as a 'bride'. In this way Jerusalem is an allegory of the Church with the Bridegroom being Christ to represent a love between the Church and Christ which is pure, joyful, self-giving and self-sacrificing.'

Overall Jerusalem's meaning is more spiritual, allegorical and eschatological (in that it looks towards the end times) and is used to convey a vision for the future of a heaven on earth.

Alongside this more spiritual understanding when referred to in liturgy and worship, Christians see it as a special place given its history and importance to so many faiths including our own. For this reason, Christians of all denominations visit the city either on pilgrimage or self-guided visits.

7. Jerusalem

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Though large numbers of Jews were forced to leave Jerusalem en masse when the Temple was destroyed in 70CE, Jews have had a constant presence in the city from before the reign of King David.

Important Jewish sage Nahmanides (1194- 1270) travelled to Jerusalem in 1267 and established a synagogue which became the second oldest active synagogue in the city.

Under the Ottomans, Jews lived in relative peace, with the city populated by Jews, Christians and Muslims and the city divided into different religious quarters.

Jews began to arrive in greater numbers during the 19th century and, under the control of the British who took over from the Ottomans, the Jewish presence continued to grow.

After the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern State of Israel and its War of Independence, Jerusalem was divided into two halves with the eastern half falling within Jordan.

East Jerusalem was captured in 1967 by the Israeli Defence Forces with administration of the Dome of the Rock given to the Waqf (Islamic Trust). Many Jews see this as a liberation of Jerusalem and Jerusalem Day has become a new annual Jewish religious festival. There continues to be deep sadness in Jewish circles that our holiest site on earth, the Temple Mount, is not governed by Jews.

This is particularly painful for Jews because as a matter of religious principle the State of Israel has permitted access for all faiths at their Holy Sites throughout the Land of Israel, whilst this has not been reciprocated, with Jews being prohibited from praying on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is seen as the capital of the modern State of Israel though this is not recognised internationally.

Importance of the term in Christian history

When the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its official religion, Jerusalem became less important as a centre of spiritual leadership for Western Christians. Eastern Orthodox Christians always maintained one of their five Patriarchs there.

Despite the centre of Western Christianity having moved to the global North and West, Jerusalem became an object of concern for the medieval Crusaders. Their aim was to conquer the land and regain control of the holy sites, in particular the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which marks the locations where Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.

These Crusades have had vast repercussions for Muslim-Christian and Jewish-Christian relations today. Now the Old City of Jerusalem is divided into Quarters, one of which is the Christian Quarter, and one the Armenian.

St Andrew's Church of Scotland (Scots Memorial Church) was built in the 1920s as a memorial to Scottish soldiers who died in Palestine during the First World War. It was felt to be important for the Church of Scotland to have a presence and witness in the Holy City, where the Christian faith began. At the time it was built there was a sizeable British community in the Holy Land to whom the Church ministered. Since then, the British community has mostly disappeared, and the ministry has shifted to a considerable extent towards Palestinian Christians. Part of the aim of having a presence in the city is for the Church of Scotland to work alongside other denominations in promoting peaceful dialogue. The Church also acts as a place of welcome for visitors and pilgrims.

7. Jerusalem

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

In the 13 principles of Jewish faith it is said that our deeds will bring us closer to the day of the Messiah, at the end of this current age. In the age of the Messiah there will be global recognition of one God and Jews will be able to fully practise their faith and belief. There are currently certain practices that Jews can't do without the Temple.

The Western Wall of the Temple courtyard, the Kotel, is one of the only remaining walls of the Temple complex and is as close as Jewish people can get to the holiest site in the religion. It is an extremely important and emotional place for many Jews to visit during their lifetime.

Jerusalem's importance is woven into the fabric of everyday religious life. Our major prayers are recited facing Jerusalem. At every wedding a glass is broken during the marriage ceremony as a reminder of the destruction of the Temples — even in times of great joy, there is still a communal sadness that the Temple does not exist. Jews wash their hands before eating bread, which is reminiscent of the Temple Priests' maintaining their purity, as a practical way of looking forward to when Jewish people will have the Temple again. These constant practices are small reminders which ensure that Jerusalem is ever present in the minds and hearts of the Jewish people.

For thousands of years Jews have recited the words:

"If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy". - Psalm 137:5-6.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Traditionally, the Christian presence in Jerusalem has been of the Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Roman (Latin) Catholic, Armenian, and Coptic communities. However, in the 19th century there was a new interest from Protestant churches in the city and the land. It is uncertain what drove this, but it may have been connected to new forms of Biblical criticism that emphasised the humanity of Christ; and, to an Enlightenment approach to faith that was interested in scientific 'proof' of Biblical stories.

There were also new architectural archaeological discoveries which enabled the connection of Biblical events to specific locations. Dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, Protestant denominations began to build churches in Jerusalem, in particular Lutheran and Anglican churches. Colonial dominance in the wider region, though only in the land itself after 1917, also played a part in emboldening missionaries to set down roots and exert influence through charity work, schools, hospitals etc. With the Western Churches springing up from the mid-19th century one could argue that there was a form of colonial and ecclesial marking of territory. There are some extremist Christian groups who interpret the apocalyptic texts as literal in a quite frightening way. They are sometimes allied with Jewish extremists, especially regarding their support for actively rebuilding the 'Third Temple'. This is despite the fact that the Book of Revelation contains no reference to a Temple in the New Jerusalem, as God in Christ is worshipped everywhere. More mainstream, Catholic and Orthodox groups put a higher importance on relics and holy sites than Protestant groups. Jerusalem is one of the traditional pilgrimage sites that every Eastern Orthodox Christians try, and many Catholic Christians try to visit once in their life.

Eastern Orthodox Christians in particular pay a special visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where they buy a shroud and lay it out on the slab of stone where Jesus' body was supposedly laid. They then take this shroud home to be used for their own eventual burial.

7. Jerusalem

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

The Old City of Jerusalem, the holiest Jewish site was inaccessible to Jews between 1948-1967 which gives it added emotional as well as spiritual significance.

The unity of the city has significance across Jewish beliefs as so many Jews who would be willing to compromise on many other political issues are more concerned about doing so in relation to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem has greater holiness than the rest of the land (see Holy Land), as it includes the site of the Temple. There is a hierarchy in the land of holiness relating to the commandments. This places the Temple at the top, followed by the city of Jerusalem and then the rest of the Land of Israel.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

While Protestant Christianity does not put much emphasis on holy places or relics, nevertheless many will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at some point in their lives. Here they will visit the sites of Jesus' passion: the Garden of Gethsemane, the Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is important to our incarnational theology to remind ourselves that Jesus was born into a particular time and place, and it is a profound religious experience for many to visit the sites where he once walked.

More recently the Church of Scotland has encouraged pilgrims to visit 'living stones' rather than the material sites and ruins of ancient Christianity. These 'living stones' are Palestinian Christian partners who can tell Scottish visitors about their life in this land today. In Jerusalem this involves a mix of this involves Jewish Israeli and Muslim Palestinian partners living and working in or near the city however Palestinian Christian voices are naturally the most important for Christians in Scotland to hear, given our connection to them through faith.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Christianity has often spiritualised the importance of Jerusalem, making it a more allegorical signifier of Jesus' relationship with the Church and the kingdom of heaven.
- For Jews, Jerusalem is very much a physical site. It is fundamental as both the centre of Judaism and, in the age of the Messiah, the world.
- Most Christians will see Jerusalem as a special place, somewhere to visit as a pilgrim and for interest but it is not something one has to do, especially in the Church of Scotland.
- For Jews, a lot of everyday religious life is oriented towards Jerusalem from the direction of prayer to remembering the Temple through specific practices and festivals. There are also three pilgrimage festivals which used to bring Jews to Jerusalem.

7. Jerusalem

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Jerusalem'

It is immediately striking that Jerusalem, as a holy place, cannot be replaced in Judaism. Christianity by contrast is much more malleable. It has grown in its geography, adding many additional holy places as well as some denominations falling out of love with the very idea of a holy place. In that vein, there is a degree to which Protestants in particular can be quite assertive about the idea that Christianity transcends place. This is partly because of the Reformation from which a disdain for Catholic pilgrimage and the entirely functional rather than sanctified understanding of the Church building has grown over generations. A plain fact that is worth reflecting on is that Jerusalem is holy to Jews, something quite apart from the Christian experience and thus something that needs additional work to empathise with.

It is important for Christians to be reminded that there has been a continued presence of Jews in Jerusalem when they were allowed. Christians can often default into thinking that all Jews arrived after the Holocaust. In addition to this there is a lack of awareness amongst Christians that there has been a continued presence of Christians in the land too, with Palestinian Christians encountering Western missionaries who assume that they converted as a result of recent missionary activity — when that was not always the case.

Because Jerusalem has become so metaphorical, it was almost surprising to see Psalm 137 used as such a direct reference to the city and a people's relationship with it. There is a degree to which Christians often visit the Holy Land to be reminded that places like Jerusalem are real places, it has become almost fictionalised in the Christian imagination as we only encounter it through the Bible and nativity plays.

Jewish Reflections on 'Jerusalem'

It is clear from the entries above that Jerusalem has physical importance both to Jewish and Christian worshippers. For the Jewish community, Jerusalem is a physical place that has both Biblical and more recent historical importance. The inaccessibility of the Western Wall after the 1948 war was painful for the Jewish people and the return there in 1967 was a joyous moment. It is clear that for Christianity, Jerusalem is important due to the events there surrounding Jesus' life and that is something important for the Jewish community to take into account. We would hope that, similar to many other religious pilgrims to Israel, the Church of Scotland groups will spend at least one day with Israeli guides and representatives who can present Israel's point of view. This will facilitate a balanced presentation of highly sensitive issues to all pilgrims, who should embrace the opportunity to hear different views from those offered to them.

Translated by many to mean 'City of Peace', we continuously "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6) and yearn for a time when all her inhabitants will coexist together in harmony.

8. Justice

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Three times a day, Jews pray for justice:

“Remove from us sorrow and sighing, and reign over us, You alone, Lord, with kindness and compassion, with righteousness and justice. Blessed are You, Lord, The King who loves righteousness and justice.”

Hebrew uses multiple words which can be translated as “justice” when conveyed in English.

Tzedek is one root which approximates “justice” but is also connected to the idea of charity (*tzedakah*) which indicates that charity is a form of justice; a matter of obligation and duty rather than good will. It is also connected with righteousness: *tzaddik* is the Hebrew word for ‘righteous one’.

The strong exhortation found in Deuteronomy 16:20 ‘Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...’ uses *tzedek* and equates it with a lifelong pursuit.

The other Hebrew word that is closely related to justice is *mishpat* which is often used alongside *tzedek*. Both are forms of justice but *mishpat* often refers to the rule of law accepted by society and binding for all members.

Another word associated with justice is *din*. This refers to judgement and is prominently used in the context of the *Beth Din* - House of Judgement which is a religious court. Another way of referring to Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, is *Yom HaDin*: The Day of Judgement. This term can refer to judgement at the end of days and also at the end of one’s life when a person faces individual judgement from God.

The employment of these three terms: *tzedek*, *mishpat* and *din* illustrate the nuanced but comprehensive view of the correct application of behaviour in all fields of being.

A debate amongst Jewish scholars and ethicists relates to Genesis where Abraham asks: ‘Will the Judge of all the universe do unjustly?’ Some interpret this as both a challenge to God and a suggestion that there is a concept of justice that God is bound by. This raises the issue of whether something is just simply because God says it is just and therefore justice comes from God, or whether God and humans alike are subject to justice as an independent standard. Each alternative has its proponents in the history of Jewish thought.

There are also multiple examples in the prophetic tradition in which justice features heavily. One of the most important is Isaiah 58:6 as it indicates that sacrifices alone are worth nothing without social justice:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?” - Isaiah 58:6.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Christian tradition would widely agree on the idea that God is the originator of justice. Christians understand justice as something that reflects God’s ideal way of being in relation to one another — just treatment is supposed to reflect the image of God. The word itself, from Latin, conveys a rather legalistic meaning which relates to an authority giving either award or punishment to a person or group. The other words for justice used in the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew words in the Old Testament convey multiple meanings which can be drawn upon in different ways. In some ways, without mentioning justice, Jesus’ teachings seemed to upend contemporary ideas of justice as retribution and the rule of moral law. Examples such as:

“But I say to you: Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” - Matthew 5:39.

Jesus’ parables on the kingdom of God are used to help Christians understand what just society might look like and to emphasise that evidence of loving service to God is found through service to others. In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), a holistic description of the actions that bring about a just life is given ‘visiting the sick, feeding the poor’ etc. Alongside faith in Jesus, this list of actions is used as a standard by which to judge if someone has lived a truly Christian life.

For some, these examples of actions in relation to the poor constitute a Christian call to social justice and the need to challenge structural inequalities that create poverty, racism, sexism etc. For others there has been less emphasis on these actions and more on faith itself to guarantee salvation. This has resulted in different traditions within the Church that see the social justice interpretation as too worldly and non-spiritual. Christians also refer to the prophetic tradition of Amos, Isaiah and other prophets which often puts an emphasis on socio-economic and political elements. One that is often quoted in Church of Scotland reports is from Micah:

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” - Micah 6:8.

The terms justice and peace go together very often with the aspiration that you cannot have one without the other. In that sense peace is more than simply the absence of violence, it involves justice for those whose rights have been denied and wellbeing for all. In that sense the phrase ‘justice and peace’ comes to be a vision for society as a whole. Martin Luther King Jr wrote and spoke a great deal about peace, justice and nonviolence and the need to build a beloved community. His beliefs on this subject have become a school of thought in their own right, this quote is one of many indications of how he envisaged the relationship between peace and justice and the Kingdom of God:

“I come not to bring this old peace which is merely the absence of tension; I come to bring a positive peace which is the presence of justice and the Kingdom of God. Peace is not merely the absence of something, but it’s the presence of something.” Martin Luther King in a speech in Montgomery, Alabama 1957.

8. Justice

Importance of the term in Jewish history

An understanding of the need for widespread universal justice can be agreed on by most Jews. This has resulted in a strong moral tradition within Judaism that has spoken out and acted at important moments in history. Many rabbis joined Martin Luther King in Selma and the march to Washington during the civil rights era in the United States and many Jews both in South Africa and around the world were active in the effort to end apartheid.

The Hebrew Bible emphasises care in several places for “the stranger, the orphan and the widow” as a super-definition of the most vulnerable in society and predicates good practice with ensuring that the marginalised and powerless are represented and supported.

Jeremiah 29:7 offers a powerful imperative to engage in social justice everywhere as the Exiles are taken to Babylon after the Destruction of the First Temple, by exhorting the people to “seek the welfare of the city to which you are being exiled; for in its prosperity, you will prosper”.

Importance of the term in Christian history

Different movements within Christianity have emerged which draw from the prophetic call and descriptions found in Matthew 25 to do justice as outlined above. The Christian leaders of the abolition movement of the transatlantic slave trade drew on such ideas to encourage Christian support and to equate slavery with a moral sin. This strong language was needed given that scripture had been used to justify slavery for so long. Martin Luther King’s letter to clergy from a jail in Birmingham drew from the prophets and Paul to equate his mission within the civil rights movement alongside those of the Biblical figures. More recently support for the end to Apartheid and the Kairos moment that was called for from the Church in South Africa. Kairos, from New Testament Greek, refers to a moment for decision or action. It firmly states that God sides with the oppressed, no matter who they are and who their oppressor is.

A Kairos document was put together in 2009 as a direct message to Christians in the West from Palestinian Christians. The document was composed with the Churches in Europe and North America intended as the primary audience. The purpose was to request these Churches not to forget the Palestinian people and to direct attention to Palestinian Christian resistance to occupation. This document also attempts to provide Christian theological arguments to push against the influence of Christian Zionism and a reminder to many Churches that there is a Christian community within the Palestinian population and to appeal for their support in communion and faith. The engagement with Zionism and the Old Testament in the document reflected Christian Palestinian Liberation Theology which uses a Biblical interpretation to emphasise justice and peace and universalises themes of election and the promise of land. Western Churches were then asked to endorse the letter and encourage their congregations to study it, which the Church of Scotland did in 2011.

How Kairos is engaged within Churches today will vary and there are those who would consider it to be a problematic text, whilst others will support it wholeheartedly. Dialogue with Jewish communities has shed light on how it is seen as a document which reasserts elements of supersessionism and disregards the security needs of the State of Israel alongside a number of other issues. There are many within the Church who would agree with this perspective. Whether the text itself is used or not, relationships with both Jews and Palestinian Christians need to continue with room to navigate multiple layers of complexity. The Church owes its Palestinian partners time, energy and commitment which means hearing directly from them as to what solidarity looks like, as well as offering critical engagement with all theological views. This cannot be done in isolation from relationships with Jews in the UK. Jewish concerns too, have to be taken seriously and shaped by respectful and open engagement.

More recently, the justice issues that the Church finds itself involved in are a diverse litany of topics. Justice for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers has been a key priority, justice in relation to societal inequalities e.g., tackling racism, sexism, poverty, both within and beyond the Church. Internationally and nationally the Church is involved with climate justice as well as other campaigns such as against the blasphemy law in Pakistan to name a few. The Church attempts to ensure that it responds to consultations regarding bills proposed through devolved and UK governments with core values of justice, love, and peace along with Church policy to guide responses.

8. Justice

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

The examples from history above indicate that many Jews have put matters of justice at the centre of their lives and their understanding of Judaism. This can be seen in the various Jewish human rights charities and campaigning organisations. These include such organisations as Rabbis for Human Rights, an Israeli organisation that promotes social and economic justice within Israel. Another includes René Cassin, a UK based human rights charity which is inspired by Jewish values and experience.

For some Jews, religious or not, there is an idea that justice is a central aspect of their identity. Ruth Bader Ginsburg spoke of her Jewish identity by saying:

“The demand for justice runs through the entirety of the Jewish tradition. I hope, in my years on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States, I will have the strength and courage to remain constant in the service of that demand.” - Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *Remarks for Jewish Council for Public Affairs in appreciation for the Albert D. Chernin Award*, February 18, 2002.

A Pew Research Centre study from 2013 found that a majority of Jews say that working for justice and equality in society is essential to being Jewish.

Additionally, justice is a huge component of Jewish ethics, and a guiding force behind the plethora of Jewish charities that operate outside of the community and strive to achieve justice in various areas. Indeed, Chief Rabbi Mirvis has made social responsibility — the belief that every human being is created in the image of God, and therefore Jewish people have a responsibility to care for all people on earth — a central tenet of his work and has supported charities and established programmes which endeavour to promote this concept.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Many Christians have approached their Christian faith as one which puts the values of the Kingdom and God’s desire for justice front and centre. In this way Christians can actively engage in justice issues through their political alignments, advocating for the oppressed and viewing poverty as a form of injustice. This approach can partly be seen in the Christian development organisations Christian Aid and Tearfund. In recent decades both have opted to challenge the policies and structures of inequality, in addition to providing direct aid, and offered theological as well as strategic reasons for doing so.

As a majority faith, Christianity in Scotland often finds itself advocating for justice relating to issues faced by communities which are not necessarily their own. How justice is seen in relation to one’s identity as Christians, will therefore vary greatly. Many religious Christians (who are a far smaller subset of those who label themselves Christian on the census), might identify with being a minority speaking truth to power, or as prophets in the wilderness, and do not feel aligned with the state. They therefore express their views, ground in Christian values and theology on this basis. Similarly, for Black and minority ethnic, LGBT+ and disabled Christians there is a growing movement for justice within the Church and a desire for the Church to reflect on its internal complicity and problematic policies and actions. In the midst of this, there also needs to be the awareness that as the majority faith in Scotland, The Church of Scotland is seen as the ‘power’ to many other faiths and communities. As a result, these groups have a right to speak their truth to the Church. Whether the Church can come to an agreement with whichever group is approaching them or not, it shows humility and empathy to listen to the concerns levied. In relation to the relative power the Church has in comparison to others, seeking to have a prophetic voice can also seem contentious or hypocritical depending on how and when the Church uses its voice.

On an individual level some Christians in the UK have chosen to take part in EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) which accompanies Palestinians going through to Israel or other sections of the West Bank via checkpoints to witness to human rights violations and abuse and to try and prevent them through their presence. Their slogan is “With continuous presence and just peace at heart.”

More generally though there will be Christians who consider justice to be just one of many values important to them. They will potentially put more store in the status quo than the Christians who put justice as a call to movement and theology in action. They will also see pursuit of justice as one which needs to be balanced with needs of security and stability.

8. Justice

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

The importance of justice in Judaism cannot be overstated but justice is also prominent for Jews because of the lived experience of injustice and discrimination. This is both reflective of contemporary individual experience, as antisemitic attacks are shown to have increased, and collective historical memory of the Shoah and the pogroms etc.

The call for justice from Christians or anyone commenting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can often feel threatening and tone deaf to the needs of Israelis and Jews to live in safety and with some form of sovereignty. This is especially the case when hearing calls from Christians who only seem to be demanding justice for Palestinians and not for all.

There also appears to be a disproportionate amount of attention, to the exclusion of other justice and human rights issues, on Israel, Gaza and the West Bank which can feel antisemitic.

For many Jews, the tendency to label the Jewish presence in Israel as settler colonialism and some other charges that Christian supporters of justice for Palestinians level can result in a gross oversimplification of the situation. It can often portray Israel and Jews to be the sole aggressors and Palestinians solely as a people to whom injustice is done.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

As a majority faith that has become a dominant influence in European and North American history, a cornerstone for many empires, elements of Christian faith have been used as justification for the institution of slavery and colonialism. For many, much of current Christian life today is spent repenting, responding, and attempting to extricate the Christian faith from this legacy. For many Christians this has meant calling for justice where Christians see inequality and that has been seen in many places.

When it comes to Christians focusing their energies on advocacy for Palestinians, they can often forget that Jews live as a vulnerable minority outside Israel and within Israel still live with numerous security concerns and lived experience of terrorism. In our universal message of justice and peace we can sometimes ignore the humanity of Jews and Israelis in order to emphasise the humanity and needs of Palestinians. This is often done to detract from Christian Zionist claims that Palestinian identity matters less given what they think is a Christian duty to support Israel no matter what.

Christians can often feel frustrated when they share stories from what they see and hear about life in the West Bank or Gaza in order to point out injustices, be they attacks from settlers or the lack of freedom of movement, to find they are accused of antisemitism simply by pointing to the example.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- There is often more emphasis from Christians on the minor prophets when looking to find scriptural support for the importance of justice.
- Christians are still a majority faith in Europe and North America and, Christians, from this position of dominance, don't have to protect themselves in the same way that Jews do. This influences their relationship to justice, truth and power. Likewise, Christians in other parts of the world such as Nigeria, Myanmar and Pakistan will be influenced by their relative vulnerability and thus impacting their own understanding.
- For many Jews, the need for justice is deeply connected to what God intends for them as a people and for their conduct and relations with other peoples.
- On the whole justice is important to both faiths; however, the political reality of what that looks like will differ within both Judaism and Christianity and according to individual views influenced by experience, political views, location etc.

8. Justice

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Justice'

Many Church of Scotland readers will see that the essence of justice is shared between the two traditions with the Jewish one being more wide-reaching given the multiple translations in Hebrew. It is interesting to note how the different traditions reach for different texts to extrapolate on their meanings of justice within what we call the Old Testament. Also, interesting to note the many references to American Jewish culture whereas many Christians have distanced themselves from American expressions of Christianity in recent years.

It is interesting to reflect that both traditions fall back on a more 'secular' definition in terms of its application in the world. This could be because so-called 'secular' understanding has been influenced by concepts which are rooted in Old Testament teaching, shared by both communities. Alternatively, it could be simply because the examples from the contemporary world feel far removed from the Biblical examples of charity to widows and orphans and feeding the poor.

There may be frustration from Christian readers with the critique that Christians overly emphasise issues of justice in Israel-Palestine. Attempting to prove that concerns are balanced with a number of other issues from around the world, risks distracting from the issue itself since actively diverting attention from an issue risks complicity for the sake of appearance of balance. At the same time, it is important for Church members to hear this point, as it recurs frequently as an issue and is worth engaging with empathetically. Jews certainly should not feel singled out or, most importantly made to feel accountable for what is happening in Israel, in the same way that any one individual should not be held accountable for the actions of any state or institution.

Overall, an important reflection for this section is that we all need to be free to explore every side of an exceptionally complicated situation. While there are disparities in power between Palestinians and Israelis, it is far from being a simple situation, and perspectives of justice and who is more 'deserving' can become a distraction from struggling to hold two very different realities. In addition, to this the Church of Scotland holds the power as the majority faith in Scotland, so discussion of events unfolding in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories and Gaza in the Scottish context needs to bear this fact in mind. This reflection should not be seen as discouragement from bringing attention to such issues, but more an encouragement to Church members to be mindful of this fact when discussing or promoting the subject. As statistics have proven, antisemitic attacks tend to increase when violence increases in Israel and Palestinian territories. The fear and worry that this causes Jewish communities is all too real and offers a very different experience and engagement with what is happening abroad in addition to worry for family and friends living there.

Jewish Reflections on 'Justice'

It is clear that many within the Church of Scotland value the need for justice in respect of the victim and the underdog. This is clearly an important theological strand for the Church, relating to an original Christian call to social justice. Of course, when this is projected onto the conflict that exists between Israel and the Palestinians, it has the effect of placing a wedge between the Church of Scotland and Jewish communities in Israel and outside. Jewish communities here would want the Church to look at the history of the modern State of Israel and its genesis through the lens of justice and to draw conclusions about contemporary issues after a fair and balanced examination of the wider context and the relevant circumstances of both Israeli and Palestinian experience. The State of Israel followed the crimes and tragedies of the Holocaust as well as centuries of vulnerable European Jewish existence. It is itself a response to Jewish victimhood and need for historic stability. This should not come at the expense of the rights of others. A majority of British Jewish community members would be in favour of a two-state solution including a sovereign body for Palestinians, as long as the aspirations of the creators of such a sovereign body were peaceful and Israel's long-term security was assured. It is therefore understood that since the EAPPI programme and the Kairos document relate to the present predicament of the Palestinian people and are often seen to demonise Israel and Zionism, their glaring lack of balance with Israeli and Jewish voices, alienates Jewish communities and does considerable damage to relationships. The Kairos document is regarded as deeply flawed in its presentation of Zionism and because of the antisemitic imagery it invokes in places and does not reflect the primacy of Zionism's place in Judaism since the very dawn of our faith. Ensuring an understanding of the argument of justice behind the existence and sustaining of the State of Israel is vital.

As such, Jews perceive that the Church takes a one-sided view of the modern-day conflict between Israel and Palestinians, by not being open to the existence, never mind an understanding, of different perspectives, and lived experiences of the conflict, as well as the extent of focus it receives compared to other places where the Church of Scotland could comment on issues of conflict. This is then compounded by a deliberate attempt to give theological support and underpinning to a perspective that seeks to deny and undermine any Jewish narrative or perspective which gives legitimacy to a Jewish connection to the Land of Israel. This is very painful for Jews and is seen as unjust.

9. Kingdom of God

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Malkhut Sha-ddai — Kingdom of God is a term describing God's sovereignty and rule over Israel and, by extension, other nations. The phrase itself appears in the Aleinu prayer which concludes all three of the daily services.

Jewish scripture regularly refers to God as King of Israel or as a ruler (Deuteronomy 33:5; Judges 8:23 and Isaiah 43:15 to name a few).

The reign or sovereignty of God is contrast-ed with the kingdom of the worldly powers - this is particularly the case for the example from Judges. The hope that God will be King over all the earth, when all idolatry will be banished , is expressed in prophecy and song. For example:

"And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one." - Zechariah 14:9.

In 1 Chronicles 17:14, with reference to King David, God declares, 'I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.'

The Psalms hail God as king over the nations (Psalms 22:28; 47:2,7-18).

God's reign is referred to as both a present reality (93:95) and future promise connected to judgement (Psalms 96:13; 98:9).

God's rule as characterised by values of justice and peace is referred to by prophets (for example Jeremiah 30:9 and Ezekiel 37:24-26).

In Judaism, the phrase "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven" — *Oi Malkhut Shamayim* — is more prevalent and signifies the burden of responsibility to act properly in the service of God and mankind, and is seen as a daily imperative, as said in the morning prayers, by Orthodox Jews in the proper orientation of their action in the world.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

There are multiple meanings and versions of this term used in the Christian tradition:

Jesus refers to the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven within the gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew and each gospel offers a series of both shared and alternative presentations of what the Kingdom of God might refer to and when it will be revealed. The most important scriptural reference is in the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2) which Christians use to pray for the coming of the kingdom and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) which refers to the moral actions and attributes of those who will enter the Kingdom. There are numerous parables and mentions in addition to this.

For some Christians it refers to a spiritual kingdom to come — i.e., God's reign on Earth will come with the Day of Judgement. Entry into the Kingdom of God is conditional on either faith, repentance from sin, and/or good works. There is disagreement as to which of these is most important, so it is best to include them all. This Kingdom is one where God's authority is clear.

To many Christians the Kingdom of God is already present in the lives of people who believe and is revealed through the teachings and example of Jesus and can be seen through examples of justice and transformation in the world today. Many believe that the Kingdom starts small (individual acts) and will grow to eventually include the whole of society.

The belief that the Kingdom of God is established at creation is an important aspect for many. The result of this belief is that the Fall i.e., Adam and Eve's disobedience and subsequent knowledge and sin prevents us from being in the Kingdom is key to what Jesus's death reverses — Jesus' life and resurrection is what will bring us back to God and Kingdom.

It is referred to throughout this entry with a capital K as, although there are different meanings, it is widely understood to refer to a specific promise and idea.

9. Kingdom of God

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Though the concept of God's kingship is important in what it refers to and what it reflects in relation to Jewish beliefs, the term itself is not as central to Judaism. It did receive more prominence during the post-exile period, there is textual evidence of Jews longing for God's coming to gain relief from their oppressors (either Roman or Hellenic). Philo of Alexandria uses the phrase, and it appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Jewish Encyclopaedia also refers to the need for human recognition in order for the Kingdom of God to be realised on Earth:

"The Kingdom of God, however, in order to be established on earth, requires recognition by man; that is, to use the Hasidæan phrase borrowed from Babylonia or Persia, man must "take upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of God" (Ol Malkut Shamayim; "Heaven" is a synonym of "God"; see Heaven)".

The Jewish Encyclopaedia (Malkut de Adonai/The Kingdom of God entry by Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler)

The word "Malkhut" is more akin to the notion of Majesty or Monarchy than to a Kingdom, per se.

Importance of the term in Christian history

The Kingdom of God is indisputably key to Christianity. It binds together concepts of final judgement, a vision of heaven, concepts of how the Church must emulate the example and life of Jesus, of hope in future reward and of an alternative societal model to the ones we see around us (such as political and human made structures). God's justice will transcend all of that to offer us a return to a pre-fall creation. For some Christians, the Kingdom is particularly important in a time of suffering and persecution — it offers hope and reward. For some, it is an important way to make sure your faith is reflected in everyday life — ideas around offering shelter, visiting the sick, feeding the poor etc. are supposed to be evident in your life as a faithful Christian and will ensure entry into the Kingdom.

For Christian Zionists — the return of Jews to what they refer to as the Holy Land (modern State of Israel plus the West Bank aka ancient Judea and Samaria) is pivotal for bringing about the Kingdom of God and the Second Coming of Christ as a prelude to the Day of Judgement. For this reason, they see modern Zionism as a means to an end and thus put a great deal of energy and money into supporting it. While Jews are still considered the Chosen People, their entry into the Kingdom of God is still conditional on their ultimate acceptance of Jesus as their saviour.

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

The phrase appears in the core silent prayer, the *Amidah*, and the mourner's prayer, the *Kaddish*, which are important prayers in Judaism.

The reference to the Kingdom of God as God's authority on earth as revealed in specific ways to His chosen people, is the closest equivalent parallel understanding of this concept for Jews. In the way that the concept of chosenness and revelation through Torah on Mount Sinai is central to the tenets of the Jewish faith, Jews have been Chosen to bring others closer to God — a light unto the nations.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote on Ch 19 Exodus — just before Sinai — Jewish people have come close to God to bring everyone else to God. "You shall be to Me as a Kingdom of Priests and holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) is the vision that is revealed.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Christians may see their community involvement, service to the Church or political support of specific causes relating to justice, peace, poverty relief etc. as a way of revealing the Kingdom of God as demonstration of specific values such as humility, truth, purity, love.

For others who see the Kingdom of God as something to come with Judgement Day, the importance of this concept to their identity is bound up in their sense of being saved from sin by faith and through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Their identity as a Christian and as a person with guaranteed entry into the Kingdom of God (though beliefs around how guaranteed will vary as well), need to reflect their salvation through their lifestyle and moral choices. This will emphasise different things to different Christians, for some it will mean abstaining from 'worldly pleasures' such as sex outside of marriage, alcohol, gambling etc. For others it will refer to a specific calling such as peacebuilding, working with those experiencing homelessness etc. For many it will be all or a combination of these things. All of this has become highly individualised and is complicated by the plethora of writings, teaching and interpretations of the Kingdom of God, combined with the diversity of Christian beliefs on different moral issues, political affiliations and has resulted in numerous answers to the same question.

9. Kingdom of God

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

The basic meaning has clear Jewish origins and parallels — God's authority, the day of judgement, a reign of peace and justice etc.

There are similar elements of the Kingdom being a present reality (a recognition that God is ruler of all) and also something to come about.

Chosenness as a state where God has set Jews apart from other nations to receive the Torah and thus have a unique insight into God's will can be viewed as a similar idea to Christians having a unique insight into the Kingdom of God. The difference is that Jews don't need others to believe in this idea for them to be observing Torah, and Jews do not need all others to become Jewish in order to bring about the Coming of the Messiah and eschatological vision. Hence Judaism is a non-proselytising religion.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

The Kingdom of God is not a geographical location despite the language that surrounds it of those who may 'enter'. It is a highly spiritual concept.

There are many different understandings of its meaning and application in daily life so it's important to ask rather than presume that there is a common understanding.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- The concept has similar roots and direct meanings but its importance in Jesus' teaching has made it develop into a central Christian concept to refer to God's will for humanity on earth today and a promise of God's reign on earth to come. The personhood of Jesus and understandings of faith, sin and salvation are all bound up in this concept along with many other ideas.
- There are significant disagreements about what the Kingdom of God will look like and who gets in and why with more exclusivist attitudes putting all the emphasis on faith in Jesus and the most progressive seeing the kingdom as something we are all moving towards.
- For Judaism, the Kingdom of God, signifying God's presence in the world works through the Jewish people in the present and then spreads out through the nations of the world in the messianic period. The Kingdom of God is also understood on an individual level as the taking on oneself the yoke of Heaven in fulfilling the commandments.
- Judaism does not look towards a vision where other nations will imitate its own theology of God. Hence Judaism is not a religion that looks to proselytise. Its version of what Christians understand as the Kingdom of God would be a redemptive future where all nations each in their own way, turn to the one God.

9. Kingdom of God

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Kingdom of God'

The two entries contrast quite starkly. The Jewish side gives a much more concrete and prescriptive understanding as opposed to the multifarious Christian ideas. In some ways though the core concepts offer a shared foundation in some respects with an outline of the day of judgement and the references to the Kingdom being realised on Earth as a revelation of God's will. The major differences worth reflecting on centre on the ideas around the Kingdom and its connectedness to concepts of chosenness, with Jews chosen to have a unique insight into God's will for humanity through Torah. It will be quite striking for many Christians to read that the rest of humanity does not need these insights for the Messiah to come and in that sense the Jewish religion demands little of everyone except the Jews. Many Christians will want to know more about the Jewish vision for the end-times.

Jewish Reflections on 'Kingdom of God'

It is noted here that a Christian Zionist approach is referred to above as one that may strongly support the State of Israel in the present but may not have a place for Jewish people in the future 'Kingdom of God' leaving it as a highly problematic allegiance for Jewish people, which creates ongoing suspicion of the motives of those involved. But equally, there seems a utilisation of this admittedly central Christian concept which does not leave a place for a Jewish connection to land, in this case the Land of Israel. There is a clear difference here between a Christian approach which extends universally the concept of Kingdom of God and a Jewish approach which focuses more on Jewish commitment to commandments as bringing the 'Kingship of God' down into our lives and paving the way to a redeemed future where all peoples separately believe in the one God. There needs to be reflection on how to bridge this large gap, as it has caused horrific suffering in the past, especially of Jewish people understood as 'unsaved'. But there also needs to be reflection on how Jewish sovereignty is part of a positive Jewish model that brings values of justice and morality to the world.

10. Mission

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

While there is no equivalent term for 'mission' in the Jewish tradition, the idea of mission or historic task which the Jewish people are called on to fulfil is to bring God down into this world through the *mitzvot* ("commandments"). This is an eternal mission. These are the 'dos' and 'don'ts'. For Jewish people, their way of living is their mission. This is extended through being a light unto the nations and as witnesses to the One God. There is no intermediary in the course of administering this mission and Judaism believes that its mission is through Jews' exemplary behaviour and adherence to the word of God and is specifically non-proselytising.

God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai so that the world could see and be guided by this mission, whilst at the same time appreciating that all peoples of the world have their own particular mission. There is an understanding that the righteous of all nations will have a share in the World to Come if they keep the Noahide laws.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

The word 'mission' is derived from Latin *missio* which means sending. It is a translation from the New Testament Greek *apostelo*, which has the same meaning but with an intensified element. The verb *stello* means 'to send', adding *apo* to the verb puts an emphasis on the one sending which establishes a strong bond between the sender and the one being sent out to perform a task. In that vein Jesus uses this form of the verb to describe being 'sent by God' (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:7; Luke 10:16). *Apostelo* is also used in passages describing the commission to believers who have been 'sent out' and to tell others of the Gospel.

Since 'faith comes by hearing' (Romans 10:17), the task of the Church is to preach this good news. Jesus himself instructed the disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19).

Mission does not always have to come in the form of preaching, it is also about sacrificial service which models itself on Jesus' love and care for others.

Mission takes many forms:

- It may take the form of proselytising, aka attempting to convince others individually or collectively of Christian truth with words or signs.
- It may take the form of an individual reflecting their faith by pursuing a morally perfect life, one that seeks to show God's will for human lives.
- It may take the form of social action, so that the world may be a better place.
- It may take the form of building friendships and allowing dialogue to flow from that. In words often attributed to St Francis, Christians should "preach the Gospel at all times, using words if necessary." In that sense they are called to live out their faith rather than talk about it.

Christianity understands its mission as God-given. It is seen as a privilege to share in the work of Christ in this way.

Terms that are often used in conjunction with mission include: 'evangelism', 'conversion', 'witness' and 'proselytism.'

10. Mission

Importance of the term in Jewish history

The task today is about translating this sense of mission into today's world and issues, taking it and making it relevant whilst not changing the mission. Each era necessitates a focus on different elements.

From the time when God created Adam, the first moment in human history, this mission has existed. With that responsibility, passed through Abraham, has come persecution. Abraham therefore recognised something that had been there since the first moment of history.

The mission of the Jewish people has been to stand against the notion of absolute power, which only belongs to God, with branches of Jewish leadership specifically separated into Priesthood, Prophets and Monarchs.

Throughout Jewish history, when the independence of these branches has been compromised, corruption and deterioration of societal structures has ensued. The Prophets traditionally railed against these transgressions and attempts to consolidate power. The Jewish People see themselves as being a 'light unto the nations.' This is understood as a Jewish mission. Not to convert others to Judaism, but to transform the world over time to monotheism. It is understood in Judaism that one can be redeemed as a person without the need to be Jewish.

It may be relevant to add that for some groups in orthodox traditional Judaism there is a sense of mission and responsibility to less religious Jews, and they use the Hebrew word 'shlihut' (mission) to describe their activities. This mission in the sense of 'sending' would involve building programmes that bring others closer to a Torah-defined Judaism. This is just one example of Jewish initiatives which send emissaries to Jewish communities around the world to help enhance the Jewish communal experience there.

Importance of the term in Christian history

The term carries significant baggage, both historical and theological.

In thinking about how it relates to a Jewish audience it is key that Christians are mindful of how much this term has been used and abused in relation to Christian treatment of Jewish people. We need to recognise what has gone before and when we have conducted ourselves with cruelty in the name of mission.

The first few hundred years of Christian history were of course a period of intense missionary activity, as Christianity spread from Jerusalem to the British Isles in the 6th century.

Catholic led colonialism by European nations in South America and Africa (16th century) brought about a missionary rebirth as new gains were sought to counteract the losses in Northern and Western Europe to Protestantism.

The 18th and 19th centuries were then particularly active for the Protestant Churches in perceiving mission as the duty to propagate the Christian faith. From the Reformation in the 16th century, Scottish and other Protestant international missionary zeal was blunted by the Calvinist belief in predestination and Lutheran belief that it was interference in God's work as well as the need to establish these new Churches.

The Evangelical Revival in England fostered a spiritual fervour to evangelisation and the creation of missionary societies on a global scale. A useful account of the different phases of missionary activity across denominations is found in the Oxford Dictionary of the Church edited by E.L Cross.

Today the Church of Scotland still places a great deal of importance on the aim of spreading the good news of Jesus but also on the holistic call to tell people about God so that they can come to God themselves, called by the Holy Spirit. In this way the Church has come to reflect that applying pressure or force is neither helpful nor moral. Sometimes mission isn't about telling but demonstrating a new way of living and being and in that sense trying to emulate God.

10. Mission

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

As a religious Jewish person, this mission would be seen to be central i.e., to live and help others live life according to the commandments. Judaism doesn't, however, encourage converts. In fact, they are actively discouraged, due to the tremendous responsibility that can be felt in taking on the full gamut of Jewish practice and dedication. However, where persistent and demonstrating commitment, converts are welcomed into the faith through conversion.

The idea of dedicating oneself to a life according to the commandments can, and has throughout history, involved speaking out about societal issues, such as climate change.

Chief Rabbi Mirvis describes this as social responsibility, and has said: "Within Jewish thought and tradition, we speak about our responsibility to God, and part of that is a responsibility to our fellow human beings. Our responsibility towards others, our awareness and empathy for them, the need to reach out and assist them, is an integral part of our service of God."

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Whatever form it takes, mission is indispensable to Christian identity. It defines so much of Christian action, self-understanding, community relationships, community outreach as well as relationships with non-Christians. That said, how mission defines each of these will differ greatly and potentially be hotly contested.

On an individual level, the language around mission, particularly within the Church of Scotland, includes references to a sense of 'calling'. While one can feel called to one's mission, 'calling' and 'mission' are different. A calling is more a sense of God drawing you where your talents are and where you are meant to be according to God's plan for you. If one feels called to a particular mission then that can look like several different things — it can look like working with refugees, or advocacy on a justice issue or like promotion of the Christian faith.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

There is a spectrum of thought in Jewish communities regarding what mission is.

The history of Christendom and the specific notion of mission has had terrible consequences for Jews across the world as persecutions, expulsions and murder have been the alternatives presented to conversion to Christianity.

Sensitivity and honesty must be expressed when engaging with these traumatic histories, but interfaith engagements have begun to allow these conversations to take place in a spirit of a search for understanding and compassion.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Christians have always understood mission as an act of love and generosity towards the world. Many Christians have a strong belief in hell, so that their compassionate desire is to save people from eternal suffering. Or, in other words and with a slightly different emphasis, a Christian whose life has been transformed through relationship with God in Jesus Christ would naturally want to share this with others.

While some Christians hold an inclusivist or pluralist position, that there can indeed be salvation outside Christianity, the exclusivist position has been the dominant tradition. Missionary work can lead to real tension in relations with other religions, particularly when the activity has become so tied to western imperialism. The churches have undergone a great deal of repentance and self-examination over this imperialist heritage, though there is still much to do in this respect.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- The main difference will always be that Christianity, on the whole, actively seeks converts. The mandate to seek converts can be traced from the Bible to missionary societies springing up in the 19th century until today.
- The only way that Jewish mission relates more directly to non-Jews is through being a 'light unto the nations' but this never entails the invitation to become Jewish but rather a demonstration of Jewish ethics, community and faith.

10. Mission

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Mission'

Those reflecting on this entry were struck by the thoughtful and generous reflections from the Jewish side which offers a variety of insights into some of the ways Judaism has concepts which can be related to mission. In many ways Judaism and Christianity share the concept that they have a message to share with the world, but Judaism is different in not requiring others to believe in the same message as them.

Something which many Christians may find surprising is the idea that Jews have a mission to stand against absolute power, given that this belongs to God. Christians do not have this responsibility so clearly articulated and it would be worth us reflecting on this and learning more from the Jewish side.

It will be very important for Christians to take in the reflections of Jewish collective memory of targeted Christian missionary activity. Many will have an automatically positive association with mission, so it is important to note how it might be and has been received negatively and that the word itself may carry strong negative associations for Jews.

It would be good to know if there is ever any intra-Jewish missionary work i.e., efforts to encourage non-religious Jews more observant. This is now something Christians are increasingly doing as missionary work is more oriented towards those who may be nominal Christians but who do not attend Church rather than something we are sent out to do internationally.

Jewish Reflections on 'Mission'

It is noted and understood here that for Christian communities, and for the Church of Scotland, mission is critical and important to identity. With that, it is noted that an approach taken by the Church of Scotland is to prioritise educating others towards Christian belief rather than pressuring and worse. This is critical for Church-Jewish relations. At the same time, there needs to be a monitoring of this reality so as to ensure that mission does not slip into more aggressive evangelism to Jews. This activity towards Jews remains an important obstacle to the furtherance of better relations between Christians and Jews, which have come a long way in recent decades, given the denial of the Jewish right to self-identification that evangelism entails.

11. Peace

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

In our daily prayers we extol the virtues of God, who “makes peace and creates everything”. Our Sages explain this to mean that peace means everything to us, and its absence makes the creation of the world to be of no value. For this reason, every major prayer in our liturgy ends with a prayer for peace.

One of God’s names is Shalom, meaning peace. This is the reason why Hebrew is the only language in which one says ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ with the same word, ‘shalom’. In this way, when one meets someone and when one departs from their presence, we convey the prayer that God will bless them with His peace.

Peace or shalom refers to completeness and harmony. It refers to both a tranquillity and non-belligerency i.e., the absence of war or conflict. There is a strong sense that there can be no flourishing without peace.

Peace sits alongside truth and justice as a core value of Judaism. There is an obligation to strive for peace. This means it is not just valued but actively sought. A famous Talmudic sage, Hillel, states that we should ‘be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace.’

War is something which is given a legal framework within scripture, though there is no such thing as a holy war. There is an understanding that war can be commanded by God under certain conditions. There is therefore a tension between the scripture which points to and describes a Messianic era where all nations worship God and there is universal peace through a new holy order (as depicted in Isaiah 45:20-25) and the practical aspects of sovereignty over a land, which in the Bible, involves both conquering it and protecting it through war. War is therefore seen as acceptable under certain conditions, and at times an inevitable tool of foreign policy.

Jewish tradition accepts that sometimes peace may be broken for the sake of upholding peace. In this context, Exodus (15:3) refers to God as ‘Man of War’ and in Deuteronomy the Israelites are told: ‘For the Lord, your God, is He Who goes with you. To fight against your enemies, to save you.’ (Deuteronomy 20:4). War is seen as a necessary evil that should never be glorified. Many rabbis have carefully addressed the texts above to ensure that they are not misused. The late Chief Rabbi Sacks gives a helpful overview of this Rabbinic critique in his book *Not in God’s Name*.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Peace is understood as lying at the heart of everything. On an individual level it involves oneness with God, creation, others and yourself. Given that it runs through so many things, it can often be hard to grasp onto a singular concrete meaning. The emphasis that gets to the heart of what peace means on all levels (between God and humanity, between countries and individuals and within oneself) can be conveyed with a sense of mutual flourishing.

Peace in English comes from the Latin *pax* which has a social meaning - a pact of friendship and a lack of war. The Greek word *eirene* is the New Testament Greek word for peace and refers more to binding or bringing together. This overlaps with the Hebrew *shalom* in many ways in the sense of conjuring an idea of wholeness, but *shalom* is broader in its meaning. All three of these roots play a part in Christian understandings.

There is attention given in Christianity to the relationship between righteousness and peace, with the idea that peace would be disturbed if one did not live before God and others in righteousness. There can therefore be no God for those who are considered wicked.

Peace is seen as coming through the Messiah as described in Isaiah and Micah. The departure from Jewish understandings is that Jesus is understood to be the Messiah, with God’s relationship with humanity restored through Jesus’ death and resurrection. This interpretation points to the Greek idea of binding and bringing together to make whole. This is why the passages from Isaiah heralding the ‘prince of peace’ are used in worship at Christmas along with other prophetic texts to indicate what the incarnation of God would bring.

In the Gospel of John 14:27 Jesus says, “my peace I give to you all” and from Paul in Romans 5:1 “we have made peace with God through our Lord Jesus.” Both texts point to Jesus as our ‘peace’ given that he restores to completeness our relationship with God. In that sense he brings *shalom* in restoring what was broken to make it whole again.

Working for peace is similarly commended in the New Testament: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”. - Matthew 5:9. This is one of the most used phrases to underline the importance of active peace-making and the idea of mutual flourishing within Christianity alongside this instruction:

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” - Matthew 5:44. For many both of these offer examples of the more radical pursuit of peace modelled in the Christian message and Good News (see Mission).

The commandment to be peacemakers also translates into understanding the importance of maintaining unity through the bond of peace, which requires humility, love and patience. This is meant to be channelled into how Christians conduct themselves and view the world. In other words, the Christian message is meant to restore brokenness as we see it in our world through poverty, broken relationships, conflict etc. Peace therefore becomes a message of wholeness as well as simply the absence of war.

11. Peace

Importance of the term in Jewish history

While there is an ethical and legal framework found in the Torah for how and when to wage war, there is a long historical gap from the era in which Jews were sovereign over their own land and the modern era of sovereignty in Israel. In addition, the modern State of Israel is not a theocratic state so it's hard to translate the legal frameworks found in the Bible onto a modern military.

Religious Jews would see any war of self-defence (so, e.g., 1948, 1967 and 1973) as a Torah obligation. There are those on the religious right who would go further than this and interpret the Six Day War in 1967 to be one in which Israel was guided by God due to the territorial gains under utterly improbable odds in such a short time; together with the success of managing to capture East Jerusalem, including gaining sovereignty over the Old City of Jerusalem without firing a single shot (see Jerusalem).

The influence of history and how it converges with ethics and spirituality can be seen through the work of Israel's first Chief Rabbi and his son who went on to become a key figure in religious Zionism. Rabbi Abraham Israel HaCohen Kook who was Chief Rabbi in the 1930s expressed a mystical and universalist vision for Israel and an era of peace where Zionism would no longer be necessary. His son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook wrote after the Holocaust and is distinctly more distrustful of the non-Jewish world and thus the need to conquer and protect is found in his writings. In that sense the pursuit of peace is seen as a luxury which is much further, out of reach, given the political reality on the ground.

Importance of the term in Christian history

As a faith which calls for a specific acceptance of Jesus as God and saviour, Christian leaders and theologians have found some difficulty in dealing with differences of religion and belief.

This is both within Christianity and between religions as Christians throughout history have seen Christian victory over others as a sign of God's favour and Christianity as the one true faith. This has resulted in a fear of dissent and different views and can be seen in the actions and events of the Crusades and the concept that war could be holy. It can also be seen in the violent persecution during the Spanish Inquisition and witch trials. It has led to periods of national crisis when other nations were seen to be more powerful than Protestant Christian nations e.g., English horror at Spain's dominance in South America and the rise of the Ottoman Empire to name a few. Their dominance seemed to dent the idea that Protestantism was the one true faith which received God's favour.

It has been argued by some historians that Christianity is a religion which developed from a vulnerable and diverse minority in the midst of the Roman Empire with the mindset and scriptures of a small and varied set of groups that became the official state religion. This dramatic shift in circumstances has led to a complicated reckoning with suddenly becoming the state religion and receiving the power and authority of an empire, whilst holding on to the identity and scripture of an embattled minority. Early anxiety to prove itself and Christian claims about the world and God, could suddenly hold a lot more influence as an imperial religion. Certainly, more influence than Church fathers writing to local communities to bolster their confidence during disputes with local synagogues and fellow subjects of the Roman Empire. Christian truth claims could now be exerted through power and authority rather than through the more radical message of peace contained in the gospel message.

One way to understand this transformation of Christianity, is the way in which power comes to corrupt and distract the Christian calling to be peacemakers, given that pursuit of power opposes any campaign for humility, love and patience. This is one interpretation of how Christian identity has developed, however, so this view should be taken with that in mind.

11. Peace

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

There is a widespread perception amongst Jews that many have an unfair, disproportionate preoccupation with both Israel and Jews across the world. This can be evidenced, for example, by the percentage of United Nations Human Rights Council motions regarding the State of Israel, versus all other countries combined (45.9% of all resolutions since its establishment in 2006 concern Israel, despite there being 46 other member nations within the UNHRC).

In Israel, while there may be a day-to-day absence of conflict, this is not a real peace, because the security measures and policies of the state have a negative impact on the lives of others. There is also a strong sense of vulnerability felt by Jewish civilians in any part of Israel given the lived experience of terrorist attacks which impact upon everyday life. This leads to uncomfortable but necessary conversations about peace and how to ensure that all peoples can flourish.

British Jews, especially expressed through the democratically elected Board of Deputies, are passionately pro peace when it comes to the conflict with the Palestinians. They pray daily for peace and look to a time when there will hopefully be a political solution and an end to violence.

British Jews have enthusiastically supported Israel's courageous efforts to achieve peace, even when there have been significant risks, such as the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982 as part of a peace pact with Egypt and her unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005. But perhaps nothing can eclipse the spirit of celebration throughout the Jewish world when Anwar Sadat visited Jerusalem just four years after he led Egypt into the Yom Kippur War, seeking to destroy the Jewish State. There was a passionate readiness to welcome such a significant foe, given the opportunity for the establishment of a genuine, lasting peace.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

There is a strong pacifist tradition within Christianity, and many would see this to be part and parcel of living out one's faith. For most mainstream Christians, however, war is seen as a last but often necessary resort.

Peace is then something aspirational for humanity and achievable with God and in individual relationships.

Many Christians tend to slide into a way of thinking that sees peace as the absence of conflict. This then results in a vision that doesn't help lead towards lasting and real peace of human flourishing. It also doesn't help to address differing views as it can result in conflict avoidance and the desire for one view to simply be 'right' and win.

Culturally one can find a tendency to see suffering and persecution as a part of what it means to be right, which then results in an idealised sense of martyrdom. This is perhaps rooted in the theology of exile (see entry on Exile) but also in the early history of Christian martyrs who were canonised and glorified. This is in addition to the fact that Christians worship a God who was tortured and crucified. This cultural tendency, rooted in historical legacy, has an overall effect of the idealisation of victims, with Christians seeking to identify the victim in any situation. This has definitely influenced how Christians may view the conflict in Israel and Palestine as many Christians automatically identify more with the Palestinian cause given the asymmetry of power which seems straightforward to so many. At the same time many Christians would draw from the same cultural instincts to see Israel as the obvious victim given its size in relation to larger and more volatile and powerful Muslim majority countries.

Remembrance Sunday is a difficult day on the national and Christian calendar. There is a tension between those more inclined to criticise all warfare and those who either served or saw it as a practical if not noble duty. It becomes a difficult day for ministers as they write the service with words carefully chosen in order not to glorify war but also respect the experiences and views of those wishing to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

11. Peace

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

There is a definite obligation to pursue peace in Judaism, which is an active commitment.

We are told in one of our sacred texts, Ethics of the Fathers, to be like the 'pupils of Aharon, loving peace, pursuing peace'. Peace, which is 'shalom' in Hebrew comes from the word for 'completeness' which implies a sense that we are completed as a people through having a whole and healthy relationship with others, which is an important goal for Jewish people. This does not equal the rejection of war when there is a need for defence, but it does mean that whereas war is rarely an obligatory value, peace indeed is.

Many Jews take exception to what seems often to be an overly simplistic Christian view that Jews who were once as victims have now become inexcusable perpetrators.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Christianity has had a lot of experience of balancing sovereignty over nations and peoples with Christian beliefs. This has resulted in adaptations of ideals and grafting concepts such as 'holy war' onto the scriptures.

Christians have looked back on the wars waged in the name of Christianity and there has been a renewed emphasis on the need to pursue peace and reconciliation as both a Biblical commandment and a moral duty. There is also a practical call to pursue peace by addressing poverty, injustice etc. as more structural reasons for conflicts and war.

A reflection from one of the glossary authors in the dialogue was that it is perhaps easier for Christians to see problematic religious influences on nation building and warfare for countries that are non-Christian. In some ways we are living out seeing the speck in our brother's eye and ignoring the log in our own.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Jews and Judaism sees peace as one of the core values but something that is promised as an absolute global reality only in a Messianic age; this therefore means that war is still, under certain strict conditions, viewed as a sometimes necessary, though deeply regrettable, part of life and sovereignty.
- Christianity sees Jesus as the Messiah bringing peace to the world and restoring God's relationship with humanity.
- Jews have suffered at the hands of other nations and peoples which has resulted in more defensive instincts when it comes to sovereignty in Israel and protecting that sovereignty. The State of Israel needs to be understood within the context of Jewish history and its vulnerability for Jewish people in the diaspora. The State is of great importance to Jewish identity and stability across the world.
- Christian understandings of peace are influenced by a history of problematic and unjust uses of violence and war in the name of religion to push for peace in the world today. There is more of an emphasis on righting the wrongs of the past.

11. Peace

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Peace'

Historically speaking, the Jewish tradition is often rooted in a minority position and in a position to compromise. Christianity on the other hand, has for a long time been in a position where we can determine 'truth' with authority and shape society and indeed whole empires with Christian values and beliefs — even although those truths might change e.g., views on slavery. The gap in time between Israel as a Biblical kingdom to Israel as a modern secular state, provided much food for thought too, since it means that for two thousand years ethics surrounding war and conquest have been largely theoretical for many Jews leading to a complicated navigation of sovereignty as well as the competing influences of secular and religious perspectives in contemporary Israel. With that as context, those reflecting on this section noted a consistent blurring of the boundary between secular and religious meanings of events in Israel. This points to the complexity of how many Jews will approach this subject and is worthy of future dialogue. Kook's idea of peace as a luxury is important to read in light of the Holocaust which is so far from Christian experience. This is, perhaps, truer in the world more generally than Christians like to think of, given that Christian majority countries are rarely put in a similar position, nor do we carry with us such an enormous collective trauma. Members of the Church need to approach with humility when we preach about the sacrifices taken for security over peace.

There is perhaps more reflection required on the Jewish side in 'what is important for Christians to know' section on Christian attitudes to borders and policing. While for many Christians the Kingdom of God conjures a vision of society that has no need of borders or police, there is not a naivety about their necessity in countries today. Where there will be opposition and protest from many within Christianity, this is not necessarily because the Christian faith automatically calls its followers to oppose all borders, but because of an understanding that no protection of borders and policing should be unequal or discriminatory in any country, including our own. In relation to Israel and Palestinian territories, many Christians will speak out on reports of punitive and unequal policing of Palestinians rather than an overarching rejection of the idea that Israel and Israelis deserve to live in peace and security. Given that many Christians will have supported the last two wars waged by Britain in the name of security, it is important to reflect that within Christianity there is no monolithic approach to these moral issues.

Jewish Reflections on 'Peace'

Despite living under the pressures of an ongoing existential threat to the State, Israel has taken significant risks for peace and continuously prioritises the goals of peace. It is easy to see a connection within Christian thought between Peace and Justice. Peace is understood as being achieved in supporting a victim against a perpetrator. As is explained, in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people, this is reflected in adopting the Palestinians wholly as the victim that suffers. While there is a difference in outward military strength between the two sides, it should be noted here that many Jews in the UK would support and desire a political solution which would contain two States for two peoples, Israel and Palestine within secure borders. There also needs to be a Christian reckoning with Israel in the context of Jewish history and within the modern context of wars fought to extinguish it by neighbouring countries. The Church's perspective of viewing this through the overly simplistic prism of victim and perpetrator, means that a search for peace then becomes an alignment with one side and a demonising of the other. This makes peace more difficult to achieve. Furthermore, a demonising of Israel is then able to slip both knowingly or unknowingly into antisemitic tropes. Israel is of course not perfect as of course are the leadership institutions of the Palestinian people. Peace will mean both fully recognising each other's national aspirations. The idea of peace being represented by the word 'shalom' is a sense of wholeness or completion, not excluding any of the narratives.

12. People of Israel

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

This concept of *Am Yisrael*, People of Israel, is based on the belief in the people founded by the revelation of, and subsequent relationship to the Torah. This was a development from the idea that the People of Israel are simply descended from Jacob (known as Israel) via his direct antecedents, Abraham and Isaac respectively.

The term “People of Israel” does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. The collective term is usually “Children of Israel” (*B’nei Yisrael*) or the “House of Israel” (*Beit Yisrael*) or the “Children of Jacob” (*Bnei Ya’akov*) or the “House of Jacob” (*Beit Ya’akov*). The word *am* (“people”) is used in other definitions, such as the Chosen People “*Am Segula*” (see Chosen People; Deut. 14:2).

The term *am* is used in the Torah in the definitive: The People (*Ha’Am*).

The Talmud employs the additional term *Knesset Yisrael* — meaning the Assembly of Israel — to define the sum total of the Jewish people from a peoplehood standpoint.

Within this theological understanding the people are formed under religious law and not through ethnic or genetic specification.

The title of Israel, People of God is intrinsic to this understanding. It can be derived from the so-called ‘covenant formula’ (see Covenant and Chosen People):

“I will be your God and you will be my people”
- Exod 6:2-8; Lev 26:12.

The basis of the covenant is God’s election of Israel as his people. With this election came duties that were commensurate with this role; a responsibility to live in ways appropriate for the people of God.

The ‘am’ is not a race but a religious nationhood that transcends borders. That said, it is important to say that the concept of religion and a people defined by religion is not something that appears in the Torah. Instead the peoplehood, its connection to a territory and a collective responsibility for keeping God’s commandments is foundational to Jewish understanding.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

The early Church claimed the title ‘Israel, people of God’ very early which led to the production of a number of texts and polemical writings, arguing that the Church has become the ‘New Israel’, replacing the Old. For some the old and new are relative terms, with Christians constituting a ‘newer’ Israel that builds on the legacies of the ‘older’. For others it means taking over from where God’s people ‘left off.’

Whilst perhaps not using the precise term ‘Israel, people of God’ many Christians would describe themselves as being part of the more general ‘people of God’, a term that denoted Christian adoption, through faith, into God’s family. For some this means Christians are included into this family, alongside, and in addition to, the ‘traditional’ people of Israel. For others the non-recognition of Jesus as Messiah, means that those of Jesus’ own faith have forfeited their right to exclusive use of the term. This would not be an understanding taught by the Church of Scotland (see Supersessionism).

The basic understanding of who the People of God are connected to the person of Abraham and the prophecy in Genesis that his future progeny would be numerous like the sand in the sea. Furthermore, Jesus is seen as carrying on the traditions of Abraham, using the traditional texts that recount Abraham’s life, i.e., the Books of Moses, or the Old Testament as it is known by Christians, therefore Jesus’ messianic role and purpose, carries on the progeny.

There are also those who simply see the Jews as the People of Israel with Christians being connected but not part of it.

12. People of Israel

Importance of the term in Jewish history

According to Judaism the election of Israel as God's people is not just a matter of an idea or article of faith but a historical phenomenon, as evidenced in scripture across the Torah and the rest of the Hebrew Bible. It is therefore experienced in the solidarity of a group of people in a community of destiny that has been called into being by God.

The term has its importance in the understanding that there is a deep association with being chosen, being selected to be the example of 'being God's' on this earth and in the land (ha'aretz) to which the people were chosen (See Chosen People).

Importance of the term in Christian history

The term is important as it frames the relationship between the person of Jesus and the Old Testament. But it also introduces complication into the relationship between Christianity and Judaism given the competing claim for this title.

There is now a shift towards a Christian recognition that considering themselves to be 'people of God' does not need to mean replacing Jews and Judaism. It is now much less common to claim the title of 'new Israel' given the sparse references in the New Testament.

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

The term Am Yisrael - the People of Israel - is a central idea in Jewish life; more so in the modern era, where the term Children of Israel may have Biblical connotations and connection, but the People of Israel has new resonance with the re-emergence of a nation state of Israel.

There is a popular Jewish folk song, 'Am Yisrael Chai', 'The People of Israel' lives. So, peoplehood for many is borne out of a sense of survival especially in the context of the persecutions of the last century. For many, peoplehood will be a function of a set of values. Whereas for religious Jews, those values will be coincident with the commandments in the Torah; for less observant Jews peoplehood may be expressed through a series of cultural values.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

The concept of People of Israel touches on the issue of spiritual identity for Christians. The notion of God's people is an expansive and open concept which leaves room for anyone who comes to faith to be adopted into it. It is not reliant on heritage or birth - which is why the wider term 'people of God' is more commonly used within the Christian context.

That wider term, which is not linked to the land of Israel, makes room for the continued place of the Jewish people with Christians as an add-on rather than a replacement.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

In Judaism, there is no tradition of this concept of People of Israel being shared with Christians. It is a concept that derives from a revelatory experience shared by Jews and through the commanding voice of God in giving the Torah to the Jewish people. This does not exclude of course the possibility of salvation outside of the Torah for others.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

The inheritance of the Jewish people is seen by many Christians to be concurrent with that of the Christian people. The sharing of scripture, many Christians would see as a uniting and convergent tradition.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Historical antisemitism has drawn hard lines around being "a people".
- There is a connectedness to the physical land of Israel for the Jewish people within that term that is absent from the Christian perspective. This will be further explored in the section on Israel.

12. People of Israel

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'People of Israel'

Christians claim to be recipients of the same covenant blessings made to Israel; Jews disagree. This simplified summary of the entries above highlights an enormous issue between the two faiths and highlights too, the danger we as Christians face, of relegating or worse still, of dismissing the Jewish people and their faith.

This is a danger we have not always been alert to.

There is an unconscious supersessionism within mainstream Christian understandings of the People of Israel. The historical, 'given' and exclusive nature of the term 'People of Israel' from a Jewish perspective, ought not to have been surprising — but until this dialogue the Christian readers and participants had not entirely grasped the level to which the notion is part of Jewish identity — even of their DNA. This renders the appropriation of that phrase by Christians, tough to bear and to hear since, in so doing, it arguably erases what is a fundamental and defining pillar of Jewishness and consequently denies Jews the right to be who they are.

It is important to recognise that Christians cannot continue with the assumption that we are all one people and can be a 'critical friend' when it comes to Israeli politics. A claim of this kind will be much harder to swallow from a Jewish perspective. Christians have adopted the Hebrew Scriptures as the Old Testament and, though many concepts are common to both faiths, this doesn't entail an automatic spiritual kinship. This glossary goes some way to highlight over 2000 years of different interpretations, histories, identities and more. A parallel those offering reflections reached for was the phrase 'people of book' coined by Muslims to explain Jewish and Christian status in relation to adherents of Islam. As Christians do not identify with this identity given to them, it is worth being wary of how we might expect Jews to consider us to be the People of Israel.

Jewish Reflections on 'People of Israel'

The concept of People of Israel has thrown up many serious challenges to Christian- Jewish dialogue over long periods of history. There is a difference between a more intertwined, tethered concept of Christian worshippers being connected in some way to the concept People of Israel; and a Jewish understanding which considers this epithet to attach solely to the Jewish people. Given that our two peoples have trodden very different historical paths, this approach to the People of Israel which sees Christianity as either replacing, or continuing, is difficult for Jewish communities to accept. This may consequently have an effect on attitudes to the State of Israel as an independent development in Jewish history, not impacted on by Christian aspiration and furthermore disappointing Christianity. If a substantive way could be found that gives validity to Jewish continuity of historical religious development and, in particular, through the return of the Jewish People to its land, the State of Israel, this could help repair the tensions and challenges that presently exist between the Jewish community and the Church of Scotland.

13. Promised Land

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

The Promised Land appears in the Torah as 'the land', 'the land of Canaan' or 'the land which I shall show you' (Genesis 12: 13 and Deuteronomy 11).

Multiple references - in Genesis in particular- recur as God reaffirms his original promise to Abraham that "I will give the land to you and to your offspring after you" (Gen. 17:8). See also: Gen 15:18, 26:4, 35:12 and 48:4.

The references to this land are very specific when it comes to physical location. There is no doubt as to where the land is, given the detail provided, the references to names, peoples and borders as contained in the book of Numbers (Chapter 34). This specificity means that the location cannot be changed.

It is also important that this land was promised at the moment of Judaism's inception through the promises made to Abraham when he was still journeying and when Moses is asked to lead the Jews out of Egypt and through the declaration made by God saying 'I have given you the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites' (Exodus 13:5). These references and the crucial moments at which they are found in the Torah indicate both importance and specificity. At every stage of Judaism's development, the Promised Land is central to the relationship between People and God.

While there are detailed accounts of the Israelites going on to conquer the land through military expeditions, it is important to note that the land is not theirs because they have conquered it — it is not a claim based on war — but on God's promise. The fighting was a means to an end rather than the basis of the claim.

If you go back to the Torah and the narrative of Creation, the Foundation Stone in the Temple Mount is the site from which the world was created, so you can see that the Promised Land has roots there, at the very beginning.

As the Promised Land is based on a covenant between Jews and God, this promise cannot be changed or cancelled. It is eternal and absolute, though periods of national sin resulted in temporary exiles (see Exile and Covenant).

Many of the 613 *mitzvot* (commandments of the Torah) cannot be performed outside of the Promised Land, showing its importance to the relationship between the People of Israel and God. The Jewish People are incomplete without the Promised Land as they cannot fully serve God and fulfil all His commandments outside of the Promised Land.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

As a reference point in the Old Testament, the Promised Land is understood in a very similar way to the Jewish meaning. In other words, it refers to a specific piece of land, with specific borders, promised to a specific people by God.

Christian interpretation of Exodus is both figurative and literal. Its more figurative meaning sees it as a story of general liberation from bondage, as redemption from Egypt. The idea of wandering the desert and crossing into the Promised Land has become a way of understanding faith journeys (See Exile). Christians are liberated by Jesus from the bondage of sin, saved from spiritual death and have a long journey to complete with God leading the way. Crossing the Jordan can also become a metaphor for actual physical death as Christians see the dead as entering into the Promised Land as an afterlife.

The earliest Christians would have been rooted to the land and will have taken part in Jewish practices in relation to the Temple in much the same way first century Jews had been. In Acts 2:46 for example, reference is made to early followers of Jesus gathering in the Temple courts.

As Christianity developed and spread throughout the Mediterranean, the writings and correspondence of early leaders made fewer references to the land of Israel. In many ways the idea of a Promised Land was reimagined as something transportable, i.e., wherever a Christian goes, they take the Promised Land with them or spiritualised as a metaphor for salvation or heaven and thus timeless and universal. Somewhere Christians hope to reach through faith or reaching after death.

The term Holy Land (see Holy Land) refers to what is now the State of Israel and seen in scripture as the Promised Land. It did emerge in the era of the early Church because the emphasis was on the permanent transfer of the biblical promises onto followers of Jesus (see Supersessionism). These promises were no longer of land but eternal life and salvation.

Some Christians believe that they are the sole inheritors of this new, spiritualised Promised Land when it refers to salvation or life after death. When it comes to the specific land, which now encompasses the State of Israel and the West Bank, exclusivist or supersessionist beliefs would never result in them laying claim to the physical land of Israel for Christianity. Exclusivist Christians could equally deny or affirm Jewish, and anyone else's, exclusive claim to the land. (See Zionism).

13. Promised Land

Importance of the term in Jewish history

The implications of the Promised Land and exile from it received a lot of attention in rabbinic writing, which reflected different attitudes. Immediately after the destruction of the second Temple, rabbis writing in Babylon saw exile as more positive whereas those who remained in post-Temple Israel were more condemnatory of those who had left.

Rashi, a revered, early medieval Rabbi, saw the Torah as an account of proud Jewish dwelling in the land that would come again. He therefore focused less on exile and more on the promise of return to come.

Other Rabbis saw living in the land as atoning for all sins (*Sifrei Deuteronomy 333*) and a tradition emerged that those buried in Israel would be the first to be resurrected in the End of Days (*Jerusalem Talmud, Kilaim 9:3*).

Focusing on modern history, this term is particularly important when engaging with how to view the modern secular State of Israel in relation to the Promised Land.

While the attachment to Israel for many Jews is rooted in Jewish faith and belief, there are also some for whom Zionism, as an ideology, is connected to learning through history and ancestry in order to find the most appropriate place for Jewish emancipation. For some Jews therefore, Israel relates to Jewish heritage, rather than representing the fulfilment of a religious promise. It can be a mixture of both, depending on the particular relationship the person has with Israel.

For some religious Jews, the creation of the State of Israel can be seen as religiously significant either as a miracle and an end to exile or because the return of the Jews to Israel would bring about the coming of the Messiah.

For Jews settling in the West Bank and previously in the Sinai Peninsula and in Gaza; the whole of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank is seen as promised by God. They therefore see their settlement as an act of return rather than occupation.

As previously discussed, there has been room for pragmatic discussion regarding ceding land for guaranteed peace. The Camp David Peace Accords with Egypt is an example of where this happened. Here, and through the Oslo peace process, the 'land for peace' formula was accepted even though parts of the Promised Land would be ceded, due to reasons of saving life and ceasing violence.

Importance of the term in Christian history

In the 1560s, when the Scots Confession (an important founding document for the Church of Scotland) was written, the Church being established in Scotland was seen very much as a new Israel and a Chosen People with Scotland as a Godly commonwealth. The idea of a light on a hill is very much a parallel one to a 'light unto the nations.' Scotland therefore becomes significant though it is not seen as being the same Promised Land as the one outlined in the Old Testament.

The Promised Land has been used as a metaphor for liberation from slavery and oppression in more recent Christian history. Many African American hymns re-told the story of exodus, Latin American liberation theology in the 1960s did something similar. The liberation of Israel and deliverance to their own land is seen as a political action, an act of breaking away from misery towards a just and fair society. This can apply to any oppressed people and state of justice that they long for.

In viewing the establishment of the State of Israel, there will be many Church of Scotland members who see it as a moral duty to question the equation of State of Israel with the Biblical Promised Land. They see this as necessary to resisting Christian Zionist fervent support of the Israeli State and the active sponsorship of Jewish return, as they see this as theologically, politically and ethically problematic. Those who critique Christian Zionism and Zionism more generally, would recognise Israel's right as a people to exist, with the qualifier that that existence, whatever form it takes, should not undermine other peoples' rights or claims for nationhood.

Events from the 20th century have caused many Christians to read the Old Testament with a new and worried lens concerning the original inhabitants of the land who were killed so that another people could move in. Rightly or wrongly, this has influenced how the modern State of Israel and its military actions are often interpreted.

There will be some Christians and specifically some Church of Scotland members who will see the creation of the State of Israel as something that Christians should naturally equate with a revelation of God working through history to fulfil Biblical prophecy. There will be degrees to which seeing it as the Promised Land will also come with the belief that this is a necessary step towards Messianic age, and those who simply see it as a right belonging to the Jews as a people to claim what is theirs.

13. Promised Land

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

In religious and philosophical terms, the Promised Land and the idea of Chosen People can be seen as a package. If Jews have been chosen by God as a way of teaching non-Jews about monotheism, then the land is required as part of what it means to be a light unto the nations. The land and its people become the beacon on the hill to show the world the truth of the one God

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

There is ambiguity, as well as conflicting emotions and thoughts about the status of the Promised Land for Christians. Christian Zionists will probably give it more natural prominence in their thinking as a concrete and specific location for the revelation of the end-times and God's return and final judgement.

For others, references to the Promised Land will be highly spiritualised with its importance tied to concepts of Heaven, salvation and the Kingdom of God (see Kingdom of God).

Between these polarised positions there is a spectrum of thinking within Christianity, and within the Church of Scotland, between spiritualised and material ideas of the Promised Land.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

It is important for Christians to understand that for Jews the Promised Land is a specific piece of land with specific borders, a land necessary to be able to practice their religion and keep the commandments of the Torah in a more meaningful way. The Promised Land is central to the Jewish faith as well as a place for Jews to call home.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

The idea of the Promised Land for many Church of Scotland members has become deeply spiritualised. It's hard for Christians to relate to the idea of a specific land, in a specific space being so important to our relationship with God.

The land that is now (mostly) the modern State of Israel is referred to as the Holy Land because it refers to Jesus' life there rather than being holy because it was promised. Though for some in the Church this may be part of why it is holy.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Judaism sees the Promised Land as a specific and unchanging piece of land as promised by God to God's people, Israel, through an eternal covenant.
- Christians have spiritualised their understanding of God's promises and de-emphasised the importance of a specific land and shifted the promise onto salvation. The land, as it appears in the Old Testament, comes to be seen as more metaphorical.
- Judaism's equation of the Promised Land and the modern State of Israel is complicated due to Israel being a secular state. Some Jews will see it as the same as the Promised Land and will view Jewish migration there as a return whereas others see it as different.
- The importance of the Promised Land is deeply connected to the practice of the Jewish faith given that so many commandments can only be performed within the land and given that the Torah's vision is clearly of the people of Israel living their faith and its practices on the specific territory of the Promised Land.
- Christianity still sets this land apart and refers to it as the Holy Land though Christians have mostly universalised the importance of all of God's creation over and above the significance of this land to Christian identity and spiritual practice. There is now no claim to own this land nor any spiritual necessity to visit or inhabit it except through interest.

13. Promised Land

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Promised Land'

This section was most easily paralleled with Holy Land and it is helpful to read the two side by side as it points to very different beliefs and approaches to the same place (give or take given ambiguous borders in the Holy Land definition).

There has been an undeniable cost in human terms of the formation, government and protection of this land, for both Israelis and Palestinians. For people of all faiths, loss of life is always a tragedy. The political, ethical, religious and human complexities, tying people so intimately to the land, when they lead to loss of life, are both hard and painful to navigate.

Many Christians will also be uncomfortable with the references to the immutable connection between God, God's people and the land as the strength of this importance and the reference to conquest as a means to an end feeds the perception that there is less room for the pragmatic negotiation which will cede land for peace. Especially as so many settlers will see themselves as returning rather than settling and some have used violence to effect that return. Whilst Zionism as a political ideology and the promised land as a religious concept are distinct, it's hard not to read the Biblical narratives of conquest into the actions of violent settlers and indeed some of the political and religious rhetoric emerging from these groups. This is said because many Christians have been grappling with the texts describing conquest and many other subjects in light of an awareness of how these texts have been used in Western Christian colonialism, justification of slavery, persecution of women accused as witches to name a few. A variety of examples from contemporary politics as well as localised instances of spiritual abuse have shown how Biblical quotes can be twisted and used to any end, so this is still pertinent. Misuse of the Bible has not been consigned to history. It would be interesting to know if Jews also struggle with these texts in relation to modern politics given the additional relevance of having sovereignty over the same piece of land as referenced in some of the Biblical passages. However uncomfortable Christians may feel reading this entry it is important to note that humility is necessary as Christians have neither been sovereign in the West in the same way for some time nor are non-Christians at home or abroad holding Christians account for the actions of their government fringe Christian voices. Belief in the importance of the promised land and ideas of how to be sovereign over it are also not the same and present a variety of additional challenges. It is for this reason that positioning the Church as a 'prophetic voice' on the issues of sovereignty in the promised land can seem hypocritical or contentious given the position of the Church both within Scotland and beyond. In other words, it is rare that the Church's spiritual teachings and core beliefs are challenged because of the Scottish or British State's behaviours, why should the core beliefs of Judaism be challenged on the basis of Israel's?

Jewish Reflections on 'People of Israel'

It is first important to make a differentiation here between the Promised Land as the Land of Israel and the modern State of Israel. Zionism was a nation state movement that delivered the State of Israel for the Jewish people in 1948, but there were many different strains of Zionism itself. The predominant form that became prevalent in delivering the State of Israel was Political Zionism formed by Theodor Herzl in the late 1800's. It was not based on a wholly religious attachment to the land, and therefore the State did not eventually need to coincide with the Land itself. This is why for many Jews across the community, a two-state solution with a Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders is supported. But nevertheless, it is also important that Jewish theology is not perceived to be diminished on account of the need for a sovereign connection with a piece of land. This connection aspired to draw from what the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks states as the role of the Jewish people to inspire a 'dignity of difference' rather than to universalise its religious beliefs. But even from a historical perspective, the State of Israel is vital in understanding that the Jewish people understand themselves as a people and a nation which can be expressed through a national movement and a sovereign body in the Land inherited by Abraham to be given to his future progeny. This is evidenced by the continual Jewish presence in the land, except for in periods of forced exile, a fact which is often forgotten.

There is concern upon reading, "events from the 20th century have caused many Christians to read the Old Testament with a new and worried lens concerning the original inhabitants of the land who were killed so that another people could move in." This presents a highly one-sided interpretation of the history and of violence in Israel, without any acknowledgement of the regular killings of innocent Jewish women, men and children in Israel, within a context of an existential threat to the Jewish State and numerous terrorist attacks.

14. Repentance

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

The word in Hebrew is *teshuvah* which is equivalent to repentance and returning. A person is infused with a soul which is part of God and thus perfect. It cannot be tainted. When Jews repent, they are turning back to this part of them.

The Jewish belief is that we are born, and therefore are by default, perfect although, through personal and historical transgression, we have drifted from closeness to God. The process of repentance — which can be undertaken at any time and is a constant dynamic — is the journey to regain that closeness to God and requires no external intermediary in order to do so.

Repentance has rules as to what guilt consists of and what true repentance is, these rules are based on the Torah and Talmud. God gave humanity freedom of choice, and balanced with this is the need to protect and engage with this soul, to build a connection with God and bring Him into the world.

Sin is universal. In Numbers 20:11, Moses strikes a rock to bring forth water for the people to drink. Moses is punished for not following God's request precisely and is denied entry to the Promised Land.

Maimonides identifies three steps to repentance: verbal confession, regret and resolve to not engage in the practice again. The full process of repentance is fulfilled once the individual has faced a similar challenge and this time does not sin.

In case of transgression against man, as opposed to God, the individual must be approached, and forgiveness requested as a prerequisite for gaining forgiveness from God.

Repentance therefore involves reflecting on one's own actions, changing and reconnecting with their soul. If a person performs the acts of repentance, then they can be forgiven. Acts of penance are meant to be practised by Jews everyday:

“Let the honour of your friend be as dear to you as your own; And be not easily provoked to anger; And repent one day before your death.” - Mishna, Pirkei Avot 2:10

This passage is understood that since one's day of death is unknown, then every day must be lived in penance.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Repentance, for Christians, is a precursor to forgiveness and then redemption. Its very meaning is 'being grieved by one's sins and seeking forgiveness'. It is also closely tied to 'regret' but strengthens the meaning beyond 'simple' regret towards a commitment to changing behaviour. Its etymology refers to turning back to an original state. The larger theological significance of the concept of repentance is its connection to the impact Jesus' death on the cross has. Strong emphasis is made on Jesus' willingness to die, as an act of love, to redeem humanity. In other words, Jesus' death took on the cosmic significance of facilitating humanity's repentance, forgiveness and ultimately to restore its relationship with God. The vision of this self-sacrificial death, and absorbing the enormity of what was behind it, is profound for Christians as they consider the weight of sin and the scale of what was required for humanity to be liberated from it. There are many ways of understanding the death of Jesus in theological terms, and the Church has never defined exactly how his death saves. Nevertheless, the belief that his death saves is common amongst Christians.

While humanity's salvation and collective redemption may come through Jesus's death, on an individual level it also comes from modelling one's behaviour as a Christian on Jesus' life. Christians cannot, nor are they encouraged to believe, that they can justify any actions on the basis of being saved or as being part of an 'elect'. Therefore, redemption occurs throughout one's life as mistakes and sin are still part of the human condition. It is through faith, prayer and moral learning from Bible study and fellowship with other Christians that one can strive to be truly saved.

Conversion and repentance come together. When someone becomes Christian and is baptised, there is a natural emphasis on this being a ritual act of repentance from original sin, from that moment onwards, a person is a member of the Church and called to imitate Jesus as a sign of this repentance. Many Evangelical Churches only perform adult Baptisms as it is seen as necessary that they understand what they are repenting from and being reborn into. For the traditions that perform infant baptisms, (such as the Church of Scotland) there can be a point in the life of an adult or young adult when they actively convert or publicly profess their faith.

Repentance is very much connected to the concept of original sin. This idea can be traced to St Augustine and is based on his reading of the creation narrative. This interpretation is one which describes all humanity as fallen, either through Adam and Eve's sin of eating from the tree of knowledge. The fall of Adam and Eve was humanity turning away from God, and has been described as a destruction, only goodness can build, repair and create. Our natural condition is not to exist, we only exist because God wants us to. When we turn our back on God, we turn our back on our own existence and are running towards an abyss. Repentance is turning around and running towards God instead. One of the major understandings of the death of Jesus is as atonement for sin. Where Temple Judaism might have sacrificed a goat, Jesus is referred to in the New Testament as the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice atoned for our sins. As the ultimate sacrifice, no other sacrifice for sin is needed, and for all time our sins have been atoned for. This does not negate the need for on-going repentance of daily sins, but that repentance happens within the all-sufficient atonement made for us by Jesus.

14. Repentance

Importance of the term in Jewish history

According to the Babylonian Talmud, repentance was among the first things God created; even before God created the physical universe (Nedarim 39b).

When the Temple in Jerusalem was active, a Jew was required to bring various sacrifices for certain types of sins.

Although sacrifices were required, the most essential part was *teshuvah*, the person bringing the sacrifice would confess his sins. Presently, with the Temple destroyed, atonement may nevertheless be granted by doing *teshuvah*.

Importance of the term in Christian history

Arguably much of Jesus' teaching was consistent with similar beliefs regarding penance and repentance found in Jewish practices of the first century. These can be seen in the prodigal son story of Luke. 15:11–32, wherein a change of heart or will (Ezekiel 18:31; Jeremiah 4:4) was needed for repentance. However, by the second century Christian notions of penance had developed radically. Christians focused on penance as restitution to God through Christ for all humankind's offences, with a belief in Christ's own death as their principal reparation.

In recent Christian history there have been many examples of institutional and prominent individuals' repentance from sin. One example is found in John Newton's (former slave owner) hymn Amazing Grace: "I was blind but now I see" which sees repentance as a miraculous healing.

Given how closely conversion and repentance come in Christian understanding, our missionary activity is linked to helping others repent from sin and draw closer to God.

This connects closely to Jewish-Christian relations as historically; Christians saw Jews as having actively turned away from God by denying Jesus's divinity. For most of Christian history, Jesus' death has been attributed directly to the Jews: a false accusation that has led directly to their persecution by Christians.

In some periods of Christian history, where the intent of Christians was to convert Jews, they would first have demanded repentance of their sin in rejecting Jesus.

That Jews continued to reject Jesus was seen by Christians as them wilfully (and inexplicably) refusing to see the truth. Christians understand that the foretelling of Christ was revealed in the Hebrew scriptures, this meant that Jews were seen as particularly blind to the truth, as they did not even have the pagan excuse of ignorance for their rejection of Christ. Many depictions of Judaism in Churches (e.g., Strasbourg Cathedral) were of a blindfolded person, with a drooping head, and the Torah held in their hand. This was contrasted with a figure representing the Church, adorned in a crown, and holding a cup to represent the new covenant in Christ.

Since the Holocaust and the post-Holocaust repentance of the churches, Jews as 'Christ-killers' is not a teaching you are likely to hear in any mainstream church, if a Church member does encounter this kind of rhetoric, then this should be challenged. There has also been considerable and rich ecumenical discussion and recognition of the problematic portrayal of first century Jews as having been 'blind' to God walking among them.

Now the emphasis, when teaching on the crucifixion of Jesus and events leading up to it, is on the collective sin of humanity. This is humanity as represented by any individual sins to the sins of entire empires, which could not bear to look upon the holiness of God in Christ and so sought to destroy the One who is Goodness personified. As far as any of us contribute to the sins of humanity, we are required to repent of the death of Jesus.

14. Repentance

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

For individual religious Jews teshuvah can be performed whenever someone seeks to repent from a sin. The High Holy days are times that are especially conducive to teshuvah. Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is a day of fasting during which judgement for the year is sealed. Therefore, Jews strive their hardest to make certain that they have performed teshuvah before the end of the day.

Viduy (confession) is an integral part of the repentance process. It is not enough to feel remorse and forsake sin, although such feelings are a commendable first step. A penitent must put their feelings into words and essentially say, "I did such-and-such and for that, I am sorry." Excuses for and rationalisations of the sin are not accepted at this stage of the repentance process.

Viduy is slightly different for sins committed against God or oneself than they are for sins committed against another human. Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote, "According to Jewish tradition, even God Himself can only forgive sins committed against Himself, not against man." True repentance requires the penitent to approach the aggrieved party and correct the sin however possible. Thus, unlike in the repentance in Christianity, the Jewish concept of repentance is not simply the renunciation of sin in general, but rather in the specific sin done against a specific person or group of people.

In Jewish practice, girls under 12 and boys under 13 are encouraged to keep the commandments but are not held accountable for their transgressions, in a conceptual sense. The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah transitions at these respective ages (similar to confirmation) are a point at which a child is deemed old enough to take on greater responsibility. Torah and its responsibilities are thus taken on at this age. Until that point, it is the parents' responsibility to educate them, and they are considered to be responsible for the consequences of their children's actions.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Baptism and beliefs around when a person should be baptised has a significant impact on individual Christian identities. Not every tradition baptises infants because they believe it should be a conscious decision. Infants cannot knowingly repent of their sins. For those who do practice infant baptisms, such as the Church of Scotland, some of the reasons offered are as follows. Humans are born into a sinful world, with sinful systems. The world already tells the child what it can be before its born, it limits its potential through inequality, greed, temptation, and many other things. As parents and as a Church there is an effort to shelter and educate children and prepare them for this world however this is difficult and the Church itself is not immune from sin. Baptism is God's way to reach down into the world, lift up the child and tell them they can be whoever they want to be because they are loved and saved through Christ's ultimate sacrifice. It is also a reminder to the congregation that they have a role in helping this child navigate the world and turn away from sin. The Church of Scotland does not have godparents because the community as a whole is seen as performing the role of spiritual guardians. There is a lot of emphasis for Christians on the need to forgive others. This is understood to be a way of modelling God's forgiveness of us. In this way Christians have been taught that forgiveness is an important part of what it means to be Christian. This can be found in the text that is often referred to:

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?' 'No, not seven times,' answered Jesus, 'but seventy times seven...'" - Matthew 18.21-22.

Many Churches have also publicly repented for historic wrongs that were done in the name of Christianity or used Christian justification. These include the role of the Church on the institution and justification for slavery and the persecution of women through labelling and executing them as witches, to name a few that have been publicly considered recently. In the 1960s once the lessons of the Holocaust were slowly being unpacked, many denominations have examined and revised their language in worship, hymns, and teachings to reflect repentance for Christian anti-Jewish teaching's role in stoking antisemitism. Collective apologies and repentance for historic wrongs come with a degree of ethical issues around agency and blame, which the Church of Scotland's theological forum considered last year. The conclusion around why these apologies and collective repentance were important and beneficial resides on the opportunity it offers to reflect on and revise current actions, values and structures which will be impacted by the legacy of thoughts and belief that drove past wrongs. These public and private reflections on historic Christian wrongs have a direct bearing on identity as they shape self-understanding of what it means to be a modern Christian. We carry with us multiple legacies which we had no agency over, nevertheless Christians in the West will have to grapple, in some way, with the impact of these legacies today because they still influence our cultures, theologies, attitudes and behaviours. Acknowledging the past and its role in the present could well be difficult for some given the emphasis within the faith on rebirth and renewal created by Jesus' ultimate act of repentance - there seems to be a contradiction at the heart of what Christians believe and how people have acted and continue to act in the name of that faith. There is also disagreement about how these wrongs are defined and the degree to which they still play a role in our society, particularly in relation to 'race' and gender.

14. Repentance

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

Repentance is connected to renewing your relationship with the person you have wronged and with God.

It is a process which is a constant dynamic in Jewish life given the universality of sin.

Repentance is for Jewish people, the basis of their observance of the commandments handed down in the Torah at Mount Sinai. For many Jewish scholars, repentance is a return to a state of fulfilling the commandments. This in a sense understands teshuvah in a rather democratic way — it is the agency that every person has to decide between fulfilling God's word or not. It is therefore strongly connected to another historical Jewish concept — that of free will.

For Jewish people, repentance is something that is between an individual and God. But the concept of repentance, understood also as 'return' can be also a national return to God, or a national return to the Land of Israel.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Repentance is seen as key to Christian conversion. Becoming Christian is repenting of our sins and turning towards God. Turning towards God is submitting to His will- turning from our own pride and admitting we need His help.

The prayer of confession in Catholicism begins with a hymn of prayer and praise, it proclaims how good and holy God is. By doing this the liturgy is illustrating that as worshippers we do not know we are sinners until the we draw close with the holiness of God. While the liturgy is not shared by all Christians, it is a useful illustration of the Christian idea of repentance and confession of sin.

The death of Jesus is equal to putting to rights everything that was broken in this world. This is a cosmic atonement and shows that Christian beliefs and understanding of repentance relates to God's plan for all humanity as well as individuals.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- In Judaism everyone is born perfect, as we raise the child in a world with an evil inclination, there is something resisting and not allowing a child to connect with their soul. We need to overcome the evil inclination and connect with God and our soul. In Christianity we are born in a world of sin and are sinful by our nature.
- In Judaism it is free will that gives us the opportunity to either draw away from or connect with our soul and God. Repentance from sin happens whenever someone sins and needs to confess it and go through the process of repentance. This process is much more focused on the specific sin and who was affected rather than sin in general.
- Sin in Christianity is understood not just as particular wrong thoughts or deeds, but in a cosmic sense as a rejection of God in Christ, and a prideful determination to be our own masters. Conversion is therefore an important part of repentance. Christians talk about being covered with the righteousness of Jesus, who never had anything to repent. Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate atoning sacrifice, drawing on imagery from the Old Testament. We are forgiven for all time, but in another sense, we are not perfect, we are just working within Christ's perfection.

14. Repentance

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Repentance'

This entry was one which offered a striking insight into the Jewish faith and was a helpful way into a fascinating topic and what an Orthodox Jew might have to say on it.

The most obvious contrast that will be noticeable to Christian readers is how important it is, with the Babylonian Talmud creating it before the universe itself. It is also interesting to note the individual focus on the Jewish side and the more communal account on the Christian side. Given that many Christians will be struck in other entries with how relational and communal Judaism is as a religion, it will be interesting to know more about how repentance works as a community. Is it possible? Many will also be interested in the statement that God cannot forgive on someone's behalf - how does this work when the person one has hurt has died? It is also an interesting idea in that it appears to those offering their reflections, that this is a sharp critique of those who seek redemption by withdrawing from the world into religiosity e.g., becoming a monk or moving away to do 'good works' in some form. A person must face what they have done.

Something many Church members will be struck by is the requirement to name the sin. This is a powerful aspect as it really helps to demonstrate an understanding from the perpetrator of what was wrong about their actions. It orientates the redemptive process towards relationships and addresses specific actions, rather than what can feel like a generalised approach in Christianity. There is a prayer for redemption in most services, whose wording can feel like repenting for who or what you are as a sinful human, rather than directing you towards specific actions. Church members may be intrigued to learn more about holy days where you are expected to call or approach those you have hurt to seek forgiveness.

Jewish Reflections on 'Repentance'

The concept of repentance as set out by our Church of Scotland friends shows some similarities to Jewish understandings but also some fundamental differences which can lead to tension and intolerance. The significant difference that exists is that between a Christian understanding of the role of Jesus in the process of repentance and atonement and a Jewish concept that devolved fully on the individual, with no external theological aid. This should not mean a Jewish ignorance and insensitivity to the important role Jesus played and plays in Christian spiritual life; but it does mean that Jewish people expect to be accepted as equals in the way they worship and seek to draw close to God. There is a Jewish historical memory regarding past persecutions of the Jewish people as a result of a deep intolerance for Jewish religious understanding (as illustrated by the examples given in the Church's entry), and although there has been evolution away from violence and persecution to tolerance, there is an opportunity for mutual respect around how both our communities prioritise the concept of repentance in different ways.

15. Supersessionism

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Supersessionism is often the starting point and the sticking point within Jewish-Christian dialogues as Jews are often worried about how their beliefs, autonomy and rights will be affected by Christian assertions that seek to displace the 'old' with the 'new'. For example, the terms 'Old' and 'New' Testament are often a subject of discussion as many Jews believe that the use of these terms is intended to automatically relegate Jewish scripture to a secondary position with respect to Christian scripture.

There is often a misunderstanding within Christianity that the Children of Israel and Jewish nation of the Bible are an ancient people, resigned to the pages of history; instead of the direct antecedents of the modern Jewish people. There has been no break in the Jewish genealogical line and practice from the Bible through to the present day and the same Jewish nation is on the same journey, under the same unbroken covenant with God, to the present day and into the future.

The term supersessionism is not used by Jews within the Jewish tradition. It comes to the fore in many aspects of Jewish-Christian relations in general and specific issues within the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Christian activism on this subject. For example, the Kairos Palestine document from 2009 (which many Christian Churches signed and promoted, even though other Christian and Jewish groups have rejected it and it has not been adopted by the World Council of Churches) was accused of being supersessionist because it denied a Jewish claim to the land. This was highly problematic for Jews in general, who don't share the belief that their covenant has been replaced.

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Its importance has solely played out in negative terms with the impact on Jewish communities resulting in persecution, Church and state sanctioned violence, murder of millions over two millennia, displacement and anti-Jewish myths and stereotypes. These myths were founded on ideas such as Jews as a rejected and homeless people, stubborn and legalistic.

Supersessionism has been a significant basis for antisemitism across Western history, which continues to this day.

For many Jews it was not until the Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate* (1965), which revised supersessionism, that relations between Catholics and Jews could begin to reconcile.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Supersessionism, also referred to as replacement theology, asserts that the New Covenant through Jesus Christ supersedes the Old Covenant, which was made exclusively with the Jewish people. By implication Christians have supplanted or replaced Jews as God's elect community and become the true Israel. Some theologians such as Justin Martyr wrote of Jewish persistence in their disobedience which culminated in the crucifixion. This version links replacement directly with blame. Others such as Melito of Sardis, wrote on a more technical level, that God had always intended for the covenant with the Jews to be temporary, a foreshadowing of the glory to come.

There is a general lack of awareness of this term amongst Christians as it has primarily emerged as a critique of and a useful way of referring to, Christian thinking which denies the continuing place of Jewish people as a community of faith in the purposes of God. In that way, many Church of Scotland members will be unaware of how their beliefs can be characterised as supersessionist.

However, it cannot be denied that the ethos of supersessionism has influenced Christian theology since the second century in various forms. In fact, the lack of awareness proves how much work is still needed to improve understanding and provided robust theological literacy and tools to help detect and prevent its influence. It was identified as a theological problem after the Holocaust. The question underlying all discussion and debate around supersessionism is: is the covenant between God and the People of Israel still valid considering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

The post-supersessionist discussion that emerges after the Holocaust represents a loose family of theological ideas that interprets the central affirmation of Christian faith without necessarily denying the significance of God's covenant with the Jews at Sinai. In the most general sense, a post-supersessionist Christian believes in the continuing relevance and validity of God's covenant with Israel.

Importance of the term in Christian history

The tension which will always remain is the fact that whatever school of post-supersessionist thinking a Christian adopts, they will always share two thirds of scripture with contemporary Jews and will apply a Christian interpretation. This will vary greatly as well as overlap. Respecting and recognising distinct approaches to the same text is important regardless.

15. Supersessionism

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

As a belief it has existed from the 2nd century CE, then became a staple of Christian belief from around the 3rd century. It was subsequently identified as a theological problem in the 1960s as some theologians reflected on the role Christian beliefs around their exclusive relationship with God through the new covenant in Christ, had played in leading to pernicious anti-Jewish teaching and the events of the holocaust. This, they felt, had to be critically examined and, for some, atoned for.

Augustine's interpretation of supersessionism had a profound and long-lasting impact on historical relations between Jews and Christians. In the distant past Augustine was adamant that Jews should not be directly persecuted (i.e., killed or expelled) by Christians for their rejection of Jesus. Rather his instruction to Christian leaders was "...make them totter by your power and bring them down." That power being a living reinforcement of the claims of Christian truth.

Throughout Christian history this idea of Jews being either rejected or theologically irrelevant (in light of Christian teaching) has played out through treating those of Jewish faith and heritage with 'contempt'. (Jules Isaac uses the phrase 'teaching of contempt' to characterise the church's ancient teaching concerning Jews.) This has sadly and undisputedly resulted in targeted persecution that created and embellished anti-Jewish myths, stereotypes and justified violence played out against Jews. Acts of violence included pogroms from the beginning of the modern era which wiped out Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe and continued into the twentieth century. Historic anti-Jewish thinking in this vein provided the foundation for pseudo-scientific and racist modern antisemitism.

Calvin valued the Old Testament in its own right because of what it tells us of God's relationship with Israel, as well as conveying divine and moral truths for the Church. This approach sets the denominations which inherit his work, on a slightly different trajectory when it comes to supersessionism.

The most recent instance where the Church of Scotland has been made aware of how supersessionism continues to have an influence within contemporary Christian discourse and beliefs is with the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report from 2013, which did use supersessionist claims as well as mischaracterisation of Jewish self-understanding. These include the idea of the New Testament offering a radical alternative to the concepts of Israel, Temple, and land' (page 7 of the report) as well as the idea that Jesus offered a critique of Jewish 'specialness and exclusivism' (page 8). On the one hand, this offers an unhelpful summary of New Testament teaching, which was not clear on any of these subjects, but it also paints Jewish identity using problematic terms. It is worth the reminder that the references to Jews and Jewish identity in the Gospels offers a perspective that comes from internal Jewish discussions at the time and the descriptions of Jewish society found in the New Testament do not offer an insightful critique of Jewish identities today. In other words, portrayals of Jews in the New Testament have as little to do with Jews today, as the lives of Jesus' disciples have with contemporary 'disciples' in the Church of Scotland. This report offers an important opportunity for reflection on current teaching and attitudes within

the Church of Scotland, and for considering too, the harm that the language used can cause

For many Christians there is limited awareness of this term. However, the ideas represented by supersessionism can quite easily be inferred from some mainstream Christian beliefs. Many Christians would hold the view that the new universal covenant made by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross has an impact on God's relationship with all people, including Jews. Others would not see the new covenant in Jesus as invalidating the one with Jewish people but would certainly say that relationship with God in Jesus is new, unique and something they would wish for other people to discover, including Jews. In other words, the importance placed in Jesus' death and resurrection is often understood to be seismic, and impacts understanding of salvation and truth.

Importantly the official Church of Scotland position is not one which positions the new Covenant as one which replaces God's covenant, and this is at the core of the harm caused by supersessionist thinking. It was because of both recognition of supersessionism and Christian antisemitism, that the Church of Scotland ended its mission to the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Second World War. This grew out of the recognition of the continuing place of Jewish people as a community of faith in the purposes of God. This teaching is core to Church of Scotland theology and ministers will be introduced to this idea through their training.

The lack of widespread knowledge of the term and its bearing on Jewish-Christian relationships, proves that it is still a topic that requires vigilance and continuously attempting to improve understanding. This will be for ministers to check sermons and to call it out amongst congregants. The existence of various theological resources produced outside as well as within the Church of Scotland, requires sufficient knowledge of this issue and official Church teaching, to recognise signs of supersessionist thinking. For some theologians across denominations, ridding Christianity of supersessionist beliefs and influences given the harm it causes, is extremely important. There is therefore a significant body of work that has been produced dedicated to re-interpreting Christian teachings, scripture and belief and unpicking both conscious and unconscious supersessionist elements.

One solution, based on scriptural interpretation, uses Paul's words in Romans 9-11 to show how Christianity brings a new covenant for Gentiles to be grafted onto the original covenant with Israel. In that sense Christ has built a second floor onto a single-story house to include non-Jewish believers into the covenantal fold. Everyone is invited in, but it is clear from the eternal promises of God for the Jewish people that Jewish people do not need to join the extension. Most importantly, and putting all metaphors aside, supersessionism must be overcome within Christianity to make clear that all of God's promises are eternal. To make a different claim would be both a major obstacle for reconciliation between Jews and Christians, it would also be theologically wrong. Christians must do more to recognise and respect the unique and separate existence of Judaism's relationship with God both past, present and future.

15. Supersessionism

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

As a non-Jewish term there is little to say with regards to this section in relation to Jewish self-perception.

However, the impact that supersessionism has had as an overt challenge to Jewish identity and the role that supersessionism has played as a reason for Christian antisemitism and persecution of Jews throughout the centuries cannot be overstated. Although most churches have now rejected this theology, supersessionism still appears in documents such as *Kairos Palestine*, and this, given the historic impact of supersessionism on Christian-Jewish relations, is felt to be alarming and a step backwards despite all the positive progress.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Neither faith use this term positively. This meant that supersessionism stood out as a phrase in comparison to others in this glossary.
- The uniqueness of Jewish and Christian scriptural connection, and the fact that Christianity comes second, means that the conclusions that Christians reach has a direct bearing on Jews whereas Jewish conclusions rarely do. This is worth reflecting on, given the power dynamic that has lasted for millennia.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

It comes up most often when Jews perceive Christians as interpreting Jewish text on their behalf — seemingly unaware that Jews will have a different approach and different starting point. This was very clear with the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report from 2013 which seemed to disregard Jewish religious and spiritual connection to Israel, based on a Christian supersessionist interpretation.

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

According to the author of this section, there needs to be some understanding and reflection on Christianity's claims of the church becoming the New Israel, with the original Israel cast to one side as inherently supersessionist. There is no widespread agreement however on what this means regarding how Christians should regard contemporary Jews. Some Christians argue that to truly purge Christianity of supersessionism we should not evangelise to Jews and regard them as saved by virtue of being the chosen people, others argue that we should.

The most important point is that supersessionism is a subject worthy of much greater study and reflection within the Church than it has previously been given. The Church is often reliant on external feedback from Jewish community members to point out examples, whereas the Church should, by now, be robust in its ability to prevent it.

15. Supersessionism

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Supersessionism'

This is not a word most Christians would know about or associate with. Upon reading this there is therefore much to learn on both sides of the entry as many will be surprised and it will potentially feel uncomfortable to learn the origins and impact of this belief. In many ways this entry points to how unique the Christian and Jewish relationship is. In other ways it points to some of the universal difficulty of one belief system emerging from another, which involves a tricky combination of rejection, borrowing, re-interpretation and identity clash with the other tradition. More significantly it also points to the more specific and targeted ramifications of supersessionism, which provided a rod for Christians to blame, shame and persecute Jewish communities for centuries. The fact that elements of this belief can be evidenced in Church of Scotland reports is worthy of even more reflection. Hopefully this entry will help Christians to recognise this tension and the profound problems caused by supersessionism and as well as providing the tools to discuss it honestly.

For many within the Church of Scotland it is worth continuously revisiting the tendency to pitch Old versus New Testament, The Law versus grace and most problematically, that the old covenant was replaced by a new one. This reduction of the Christian movement and message into a crude binary is as much a disservice to the complexity of Christian faith as it is a dismissal of Judaism. It is also worth questioning whether 'old' is automatically less valuable than 'new' so this specific point is worth considering on its own.

At the same time much of what Christians will read on the Jewish side is a frustration with Christians for 'interpreting our scriptures for us.' This is an important frustration to hear, however the fact that Christians refer to the Old Testament means there will always be a degree of viewing it through a Christian lens or putting a Christian spin on it. This is especially the case for those who trace a continuous narrative between Old and New Testaments. Some of the solution lies in ensuring that Christians remember that Jews will read the same texts differently and this is not to be dismissed. An additional point for Christians to dwell upon is that Judaism as a religion has developed independently over the last two thousand years and did not stop in the first century. That involves a recognition that the views and words of the Pharisees or Priests mentioned in Scripture, cannot be seen as conveying the beliefs and attitudes of Jews today.

Some readers may have questions about the accuracy of the statement from the 'key points and differences' section, "conclusions that Christians reach have a direct bearing on Jews whereas Jewish conclusions rarely do." This statement has undoubtedly been true for much of history, however with the emergence of Israel as a state, it is no longer certain how true this perspective remains. The Israeli State exercises control over most of historical Israel, a territory considered to be holy by several other faiths and has influence over who has access to important sites. As a majority Jewish state, this means that Jewish theological arguments as to who has a valid connection to the land can have a direct bearing on policy making, especially given that there is a significant body of religious parties within the Knesset. While Christian theology clearly still has a more overt bearing on other groups through some major faith claims and being a proselytising religion, Jewish theologies of place and belonging are not irrelevant to people of other faiths.

Finally, it is important for Church of Scotland members to consider the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report as a direct example of supersessionist thinking. It will be challenging for many Church members to hear this and many may be defensive of the position this report puts forward. Whatever the viewpoint held, it is important for Church of Scotland members to take stock of both how the report has been received and the very real supersessionist influences on the arguments. More generally, a lesson can be learned for all Christians reflecting on issues of peace, justice and human dignity in Israel and Palestine, to bear in mind the weight of Christian history and its tendency to ignore or even mock Jewish beliefs and practice. Attachment to the land is one such belief which was particularly scorned by Christians, leading to many Jews being perhaps more sensitive to Christian critique than when it comes from other peoples and faiths. Overall, the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report in question is a really important opportunity to learn, reflect and grow for the whole of the Church of Scotland.

Jewish Reflections on 'Supersessionism'

In terms of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, supersessionism as a concept, has been the core source of pain and persecution directed at the Jewish people for two millennia. As noted, this violence has subsided in more recent years although, given the continuing prevalence of these ideas, will always be something Christian denominations will need to wrestle with and reflect upon. A Calvinist approach to supersessionism noted above seems to offer more potential for reconciliation. However, in the 2013 document *Inheritance of Abraham?*, it was understood by the Jewish community that a form of supersessionism was rearing its head regarding the existence of Israel as a Jewish State. The Kairos document was also used often to negate the idea of a Jewish State and pit it against values such as justice, truth, and human dignity. Many Jews want peace and human rights to prevail for all. But they also understand the existence of the State of Israel to be a critical part of the continuum of Jewish history. It has therefore been painful to see the Church of Scotland project onto the Jewish people a sense of exclusivism that may well be borne out of a supersessionist approach. The question therefore is this: can an approach both accept the prophecies of the Torah relating to the promise of the Land of Israel that are so important to Judaism while urging reconciliation and security for all in the situation existing on the ground.

While we appreciate the Church's acknowledgement that they have further work to do on the topic of supersessionism, we would have hoped to see a much stronger repudiation of supersessionism, given the deep pain it has, and continues to cause Jewish people. The fact that the Church of Scotland have now stated that the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report used supersessionist claims is a step forward given the considerable hurt that the report caused the Jewish community ten years ago. However, there is still very significant work to be done in this area, to deepen the understanding of the harm that supersessionism does to their relationship with the Jewish community. It is also necessary to actively and notably reinforce and disseminate their position that 'the new covenant is not one that replaces God's covenant with the Jewish people' across the Church.

16. The Law

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

Concept of Torah, which refers to the five books of Moses, is central to Judaism. It literally means 'teaching' and not 'Law'. Law is the Greek and thus Christian understanding of the word. Halakha is used to refer to the Law in Hebrew and literally means 'walking'.

The term 'Law' is too narrow to characterise Judaism from a Jewish point of view as the Jewish religion is much richer than the word implies. However, as a concept within Judaism, Halakha is certainly central to a traditional Jewish way of life. Most people in the secular West see Law as properly governing only certain aspects of life, but for Jews, laws are present in every part of life, including the private domain, as a framework for living.

Connected to the importance of the Law in Judaism is the possibility of redemption. In other words, through the faithful performance of God's commandments and lifelong study of Torah, Jews can find redemption. Unlike Christianity's emphasis on individual redemption, Judaism also stresses *ge'ulah* (redemption) for the entire Jewish people. Collective redemption finds its paradigm in the biblical Exodus from Egypt but is yet to be fulfilled again.

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

The dominant Christian interpretation of the Law, given to Moses on Sinai, is that while it played a central role in the 'Old' Covenant relationship between God and his people, the death of Jesus is now the principal way in which God establishes a relationship with humanity. This 'New' Covenant replaces or at least substantially diminishes the role of the Law in Christian understanding. Nonetheless, at the same time, many aspects of the Sinai revelation are still valued. Christians extracted the 'moral' aspects of the Law (exemplified in the Ten Commandments) from the ceremonial or ritual elements, even to the extent that references to The [Jewish] Law effectively came to mean only those 'superfluous' elements.

This has led to a characterisation or caricature of Judaism as both legalistic, and — particularly in Reformed Christian traditions — a works-based religion. The New Testament portrayal of the Pharisees came to represent this works-based legalistic form of religion.

It is, therefore, not uncommon for Christians to imagine a contrast between Christianity as a religion of grace with Judaism as a religion of works and the Law. This view can be reinforced by many New Testament texts, such as John 1:17 ("For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ") and in Paul's letters. Paul frequently appears to suggest the Law was a temporary measure until the coming of Christ, and is inadequate for salvation (e.g., Romans 8:3: "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do").

With these texts in mind, many understand that God gave The Law to humans, but their willpower weakened its ability to help turn humanity back to God (See Grace). In this vein something much more powerful was needed for the redemption of humanity, and this is understood to be Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. This approach is a way of detecting a single narrative thread from the fall in Genesis, to the gift of The Law, through to, and culminating in, the death of Jesus.

However, more recently, scholarship has re-emphasised the Jewishness of Jesus, Paul, and indeed, early Christianity. The place of the Law in early Christianity became controversial after the movement spread to Gentiles, raising questions about the extent to which Gentiles had to take on the Jewish Law. Paul's description of a dispute at Antioch (Galatians 2:11–15) and the fact he has to counter the arguments of Christians arguing Gentiles should be circumcised, suggest these debates were not quickly resolved. Indeed, the Gospel of Matthew and the Letter of James may reflect Law-observant forms of Christianity. Ultimately, Paul's position won out, and subsequent readings of Paul resulted in an enduring caricature of the place of the Law in Second Temple Judaism.

16. The Law

Importance of the term in Jewish history

Interestingly, in Jewish tradition Moses is referred to as Moshe rabbenu, our teacher Moses. Whereas in Christianity, Moses is characterised as a lawgiver.

It is important to add that the Law revealed at Sinai included not just the Written Torah but also the Oral Torah, which is the interpretation of the Torah handed down with each generation and collected in the sayings of the Rabbis in the Talmud.

Given the always changing conditions under which Jews have lived down the ages, Rabbis have enacted further rules in keeping with the laws of the Torah, which are immutable. This process of developing, interpreting, and enacting rules of conduct is how the Halakha develops.

The Rabbis of classical Talmudic Judaism developed a system of hermeneutic principles by which to interpret words of the written Torah.

The essence of the Oral Torah was committed to writing in approximately 200 CE (Mishnah) and is the foundational text of Jewish Law. In approximately 425 CE, the Jerusalem Talmud was completed followed by the Babylonian Talmud a century later, written in the Persian Empire. The Talmuds analyse Mishnaic teachings extensively and contain teachings from generations of rabbis on issues of Jewish Law as well as wider theological and moral issues. In its halakhic discussions, the Talmud frequently does not specify which opinion in the debate is authoritative in practice, and this becomes a central focus of centuries of subsequent halakhic literature.

Over the centuries, rabbis have emerged who became widely renowned experts in halakha. Individuals, usually other Rabbis, would send them questions on various halakhic matters and many of these questions and the responses to them from the experts have been preserved down the ages. This is known as the Responsa Literature. It includes writings by major halakhists including Maimonides in the 12th century and Nahmanides in the 13th century and continues down to the present day.

Modernity has brought with it challenges and reform which have resulted in different denominations and groups in Judaism. Approach to Halakha is a central factor in differentiating Jewish religious movements.

Importance of the term in Christian history

Early Christianity was originally one of many movements within Second Temple Judaism. However, as the movement spread among Gentiles, there was considerable debate about the extent to which non-Jewish followers of Jesus had to take on the demands of the Law, especially regarding food laws and circumcision. While there seems to have been a powerful Law-observant form of Christianity based in Jerusalem, and perhaps Antioch, following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, non-Law observant Christianity developed by Paul became dominant.

While some groups of Law-observant Christians can be found well into the fourth century, at the other extreme, thinkers, such as Marcion saw no connection between Christianity and Judaism. Marcion, who was the first to propose a Christian Canon, excised the Hebrew Bible, and all but the Gospel of Luke and Paul's letters. While Marcion's approach was rejected, the caricature of Judaism as a works-based religion was exacerbated by Luther's reading of Paul. Luther projected his Roman Catholic opponents onto the Judaising groups opposed by Paul.

In the twentieth century the Catholic Church explicitly corrected the idea that grace and The Law are opposed. This can be found in their Catechism (teaching) from 1992 which saw in Jesus' life observance of The Law, the festivals and respect for the Temple. This affirms that nothing in Jesus' ministry and teaching annuls the validity of the gifts bestowed by God on the Jewish people.

It is also important to note that John Calvin (from whom Presbyterian theology is derived), stressed the continuing importance of the Law for Christians. Through it, Christians would learn about the will of God and become aware of sin and the need for redemption. The Law taught love of God and of neighbours, for God's sake and for Christians, it helped them conform their lives to God's image as shown in Jesus. While the Church of Scotland emerges from this way of seeing the Old and New Testament as equally important, many Christians do slip into a tendency of seeing a binary choice between The Law and grace and between a legalism and the spirit, which influences how Christians see contemporary Jewish practices.

As Jewish-Christian relations have improved, there is more effort to change the way that the Pharisees are talked about and referenced in sermons. These efforts highlight what Jesus had in common with the Pharisees, present him as a Torah-faithful Jew and avoids reference to the 'Jews' as a collective opposition.

16. The Law

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

There is much more to the Law as a concept in Judaism than a series of rules to be followed. A key component of Jewish Law is empathy for others, hence the reference in Proverbs 31:26 to “Torat hesed” — the law of loving kindness.

Torah means teaching and is seen as a loving gift from God. The Torah given to Moses by God also consists of an oral tradition which has been amplified in later centuries. Rabbis have interpreted and developed Halakha over the centuries in light of a host of changing economic, social, and technological conditions and in many different geographical locations and interpretation can vary between communities and individual rabbinic authorities.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

Christians need to acknowledge how, as a faith, our emphasis on the spiritual freedom of Christians over literal interpretation of The Law has led to the creation of a stereotype and caricature of the Jew groaning with the weight of the law.

Attitudes to Jesus’ own observances of Jewish laws and The Law more generally are being revised in many denominations. This has resulted in deeper appreciation and understanding of Jesus as a Jew who upheld contemporary Jewish practices and traditions during his life.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Christianity has put greater emphasis on what it means to follow The Law (as defined by the Covenant given on Sinai) in relation to faith in Jesus as saviour. This has put more emphasis on Judaism being a religion of law by way of contrasting it with the messages of Christianity.
- The Law, or Halakha in Judaism is binding, eternal and of central importance. The Oral Law is key to the Halakha and to the interpretation of the Written Law.
- In Judaism Moses is referred to as ‘our teacher’ whereas in Christianity he is seen as and equated with a lawgiver.

16. The Law

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'The Law'

This entry is poignant in that the differences between the two understandings demonstrate how useful this glossary might be. It is a phrase with clear meaning in its straightforward definition which obscures the fact that the starting point to even approaching the meaning are really quite different. The fact that it is more of an instruction, or a way of life will be new to many who understand it to be a long list of laws. The idea that Jews have to grapple with and consider context as much as Christians is an important reflection to have too and is almost comforting given how complex and confounding it can be within the Church.

The idea of the oral and written law will be fascinating to many Christians. This will offer a new insight into how Jews approach interpreting the Torah. On reflection it is helpful to see that the oral law developed in the common era when Christianity was on its own trajectory which underlines how developments in the Jewish religion have not been on the Christian frame of reference. This therefore demonstrates that we must approach this subject carefully and avoid mischaracterisation of Jewish practices and relationship to the law which are necessarily rooted in our own beliefs, attitudes and internal discussion regarding law and grace.

Another aspect that Christian readers will find interesting are references to collective redemption. This has been an interesting point of comparison in other entries too and is worth spending more time on in dialogue given how it must influence several moral issues and notions of responsibility.

Jewish Reflections on 'The Law'

For the Jewish religion, Law is central and so the Jewish community is sensitive to negativity directed at the Law from Christianity, especially as Jewish Law incorporates a compassionate disposition to the keepers of the Law. Clearly a position that does not oppose the Law but rather looks at completing the Law is easier to work with, although of course remains disagreeable. However, it would still be important for Christian worshippers to understand that for religious Jews, the Law is the means of drawing close to God. This Law necessarily engages with the reality of the circumstances of any given time, and it also looks back to the foundational experience of the Revelation at Sinai. Furthermore, the idea that the Law is something solely akin to jurisprudence misses the more spiritual aspect of the Law and the Commandments of the Torah which it seeks to expound. One religious approach looks at how since the Law is a direct expression of God, fulfilling the Law is an act of cleaving to God. This shows its deep theological importance for Jewish people which frames and structures all aspects of their lives. It is important therefore that there is an acceptance and not a rejection of a Jewish legal approach which focuses also on nuanced aspects of the Law in every day Jewish life.

17. Zionism

Meaning(s) within Jewish tradition

For many Jews, Zionism started at the dawn of our faith, when God commanded Abraham to uproot himself from Mesopotamia and go “to a land that I (God) will show you”, the clear implication being that Jewish faith would forever be Israel-centric.

The actual term ‘Zionism’ represents a modern movement rooted in the teachings of the Bible and the history of the Jewish people, yet for some Jews it is limited to a modern, political, and secular movement. Some separate Judaism as a religion from Zionism as a political ideology whereas for others, the two are inseparable given the importance of the Promised Land for both the practical and spiritual elements of the Jewish faith.

It has many dimensions to it and there is no single Zionism. However, today Zionism is broadly defined by Jewish people as their right to a homeland in Israel within secure borders. In the context of this popular definition, it follows that, those who are anti-Zionist would deny the right of self-determination to Jews — an expression of antisemitism.

The word connotes a yearning for a return to a homeland, not a search for one, as expressed in Psalms 126 and 137. Other references are in Psalms 20, Isaiah 49, and the book of Lamentations; inter alia.

Zion as a word is synonymous with Jerusalem (see Jerusalem). Zion also came to be applied to the People of Israel as well as the Land of Israel (see Israel and Holy Land) as a whole. Chief Rabbi Mirvis, writing about Zionism as an integral article of Jewish faith, has said:

‘Zionism is a belief in the right to Jewish self-determination in a land that has been at the centre of the Jewish world for more than 3,000 years. One can no more separate it from Judaism than separate the City of London from Great Britain.’
The Telegraph, 3rd May 2016

Meaning(s) within Christian tradition

Zionism is seen by Christians as a Jewish ideological and national movement for self-determination. It is understood to be both spiritual and political within Jewish thinking. There is also a version of Zionism, referred to as Christian Zionism, which comes in a few different forms depending on one’s specific Christian background. Broadly speaking Christian Zionism affirms the Jewish right to self-determination in Israel. This right can be justified on a Biblical, political, or moral basis (or all three) depending on your beliefs as a Christian.

The term ‘Zion’ can be seen in a few ways. With a focus on how it appears in the Old Testament, it is equated with Jerusalem or the City of David.

In the book of Revelation, Mount Zion comes to represent the Kingdom of God and therefore there is an element of Zion being viewed as a reference to God’s dwelling and holiness that is then equated and replaced by the Kingdom of God as described in the Gospels (see Kingdom of God). While Zion is real, a physical entity begun with a literal cornerstone, Jesus and the Kingdom of God is the metaphorical equivalent. Jesus is the point of reference from which Zion is built in the heart of an individual providing an important spiritual foundation for a Christian upon which faith, like the literal stones of Solomon’s temple, is then developed.

Zion can also be understood as the Mother Church, applying the promises for the ‘daughters of Zion’, to Christians. This would fall under the ‘supersessionist’ banner since it strays from seeing Zion as either Jerusalem or the Promised Land, and tends towards a Christian spiritualisation of Israel, encapsulated in the Christians and in the church (See Promised Land).

Looking at how Christian beliefs have spiritualised understandings of Zion; Jerusalem and the land is an important starting point to understanding Christian ideas around Zionism.

17. Zionism

Importance of the term in Jewish history

To understand this term's importance in Jewish history, it is helpful to delve into some of the different ideologies and beliefs found within Zionism to demonstrate how divergences have existed from the beginning and evolved over time.

Religious Zionism views the importance of Jewish return and sovereignty over the land of Israel as having Messianic significance, i.e., that the creation of Israel would bring about the Messiah. Religious Zionists see their connection to the land as a realisation of their religious beliefs and want the state to be governed in accordance with Jewish law.

Political Zionism, founded by Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) is secular and was primarily sparked by the Dreyfus affair. This was an incident where a Jewish officer in the French military was falsely accused of treason and his treatment generated a nation-wide debate on antisemitism. This debate, along with the Jewish pogroms in Russia, helped a young Jewish journalist and lawyer, Theodor Herzl to think about and articulate more seriously the need for Jewish self-determination with the natural place being the historic homeland of Israel. While there was consideration of alternative locations, there was a belief that this land was there, waiting for them, where there has been a continuous Jewish presence since Temple times. Herzlian Zionism envisaged that becoming a nation would help normalise perceptions of Jews and the Jewish place in history because the Jewish people would be treated as a nation like any other nation in an era of nationalism and nation building. In this way he hoped it would bring an end to antisemitism.

Leon Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* written in 1882 in Russia similarly appealed to the Jewish community on the grounds that emancipation wasn't working. He argued that Jews would never be equal to non-Jews in Europe without a state of their own.

Cultural Zionism directly confronted the political aspirations of Herzl. Its founding father, Asher Ginsburg believed that Jews should come back to the land, not with the objective of sovereignty but with the aim of cultural dominance. The Hebrew University (founded in Jerusalem well before the State of Israel) was part of this endeavour to create a Jewish cultural and linguistic dominance.

Esoteric Zionism was a more mystical and spiritual strain. Groups such as Chibbat Zion (Lovers of Zion) were rabbinical movements emerging at the end of the Ottoman Empire. They saw in the demise of the Ottoman presence in the land an opportunity for return and settlement.

Importance of the term in Christian history

From the 18th century, a small number of Protestants in Europe and North America argued that Jewish 'restoration' in the Holy Land, alongside the formation of new Christian nations, would fulfil various redemptive prophecies in the New and Old Testaments. In the early beginnings, Christian Zionists had little contact with Jewish Zionists except for a handful of individuals. It was not until the 1970s that Evangelical Churches began to actively reach out to the Israeli government, with explicitly political Christian Zionist organisations formed. That said there are older roots of Christian Zionism which can be traced to the Reformation, when support for the restoration of Jews to the Holy Land grew. This is referred to as Christian Restorationism and can be dated back to the late 16th Century. In the latter stages of the 19th century and early 20th, there was a growth of Christian Zionist thinking that supported Jewish return to the Holy Land in order to decrease the Jewish population in Europe. This idea was heavily influenced by the strains of antisemitic and pseudo-scientific racism of the time. What history makes clear is that there are different strands of Christian Zionism. Some see the gathering of Jews in Israel to be a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Jesus. Others see Genesis 12 to be an instruction for Christians to bless Abraham's descendants to receive blessings. The Church of Scotland has been influenced by Christian Zionist ideas since the early 19th century. In 1929 the Church sent a group of men on a mission to report on the condition of the Jews in Palestine. Their report was widely published. In it they describe seeking out Jewish communities in Palestine, Syria and the Austrian Empire. They set about determining Jewish readiness to accept Christ or, separately, their preparedness to return to Israel as prophesied in the Bible. In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, there was support for the formation of Israel and the migration of Jews to it across many denominations. This support was rarely articulated in relation to any form of Zionism and predated any mainline denomination's official statements about Israel by several decades. Support was defined through a moral and practical reflection that Jews deserved the safety of their own homeland. Some Christians were so active in their support that they formed organisations like 'Children to Palestine' which encouraged Church members to donate money and care packages to facilitate the migration of Jewish orphans from Europe to Israel. They created propaganda films which portrayed Israel as a young nation with ancient and holy roots, one which would be a haven for all those who called it home. The language and the imagery used was very much one of a modern utopia. More recently there are a number of activists within the Church who would say they are anti-Zionist or critical of Zionism as an ideology. They stake their position in the idea that Zionism and the Balfour declaration were rooted in colonialism and it is a Christian duty to support Palestinian Christians and Muslims, alongside other peoples, in resisting all forms of colonialism. Much of the focus of anti-Zionist Christians is on human rights issues and justice issues where Palestinians are often at the sharp end of an unequal conflict. They engage with partners such as B'Tselem and Rabbis for Human Rights as well as a number of Palestinian Christian organisations such as Sabeel and Kairos Palestine. Those who are active may visit and hear directly from those living under occupation and stay up to date in the campaigns and advocacy work of Palestinians. There has also been thinking within the Catholic Church and theologians within other denominations who would propose a form of Catholic or minimal Christian Zionism. This would not be a theology which instrumentalises the return of the Jewish people to bring about the Second Coming of Christ, but something which does place spiritual significance on the return of the Jews to their religious homeland. For thinkers such as Gavin D'Costa, who is the leading contemporary theologian behind minimal Christian Zionism, this still leaves room for Palestinian aspirations for a State.

17. Zionism

Importance of the term in relation to Jewish identity

Many British Jews are passionate Zionists, and this constitutes an important part of their identity. They would define Zionism as the right of the Jewish people to have a homeland in Israel within secure borders. On this basis, they would not hold criticism of a particular policy of an Israeli government to be anti-Zionist. Indeed, some of the fiercest critics of Israeli government policy can be found in Israel, which is a robust democratic state. Rather, through their Zionism they champion the right of Israel to exist and take deep exception to those who would seek to deny the Jewish people to have this right, particularly after the Holocaust.

In recent times, identification with and support of Zionism has increased amongst British Jewry. Although Israel is a part of UK Jewry's identity regardless of the level of antisemitism, it is definitely more important because of it and because of the perception that Israel is unfairly picked on and subject to double standards, particularly within more left leaning political circles but also by Christians, in the media and elsewhere.

What is important for Christians to know about the Jewish understanding?

It is important for Christians to understand that Jews and Judaism have changed over the past 2000 years and not been fossilised. This means that growth and development of the Zionist movement is important to understand in reference to Jewish experiences of history and spiritual references, not in relation to a Christian worldview.

Christians need to understand more about Jewish concepts of Zionism, not just Christian Zionism. Along with this, there needs to be better understanding of the diversity within Jewish Zionism. The spiritual importance of the Land of Israel and its relationship to the Jewish people is an important part of Judaism and needs to be better acknowledged by Christians.

Although diaspora Jewish communities exist and flourish in many countries around the world, the feeling is of being guests in benevolent host countries that history has demonstrated countless times over two millennia can become unwelcoming.

Zionism provides an avenue to connect to a safe haven and homeland for Jews, hopefully away from antisemitism and discrimination.

Importance of the term in relation to Christian identity

There are those who oppose Christian Zionism within the Church of Scotland, and many of them would be critical of what they perceive to be religious Zionist claims. Many will perceive Jewish Zionism to be the claim that a specific piece of land being given by God to a particular people and will see this as something which Christians need to question. More importantly, if the idea that this gift of ownership is being used by fellow Christians to justify ignoring Palestinian claims, then the Church has a duty to argue theologically to dispute such justifications. This is what was being attempted in the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report in 2013. In that vein the attempt is not to deny Israel's right to exist as a modern state, but to remove the theological weight from its significance from within Christian circles. The message is for other Christians not to see it as a sign of prophecy at the expense of Palestinians. The influence of Christian Zionism, along with the Biblical lens through which Israel is viewed can often result in the Church placing Israel on a moral and spiritual pedestal. The impact of this is that the interpretations of Israel as a modern, secular state are based on a view of Israel which is either idealised or unrealistic. For Christian Zionists, Israel can do no wrong. For those who see Israel as the modern manifestation of Biblical Israel, it should do much better. For those who wish to refute Christian Zionism or the political ideology of Zionism altogether, the State of Israel should be entirely reconsidered. This approach is reflective of some strains of contemporary Christian discourse which is reviewing Christianity's colonial and missionary past. In seeking redemption for this, many Christians are reflecting on the fact that the Church and Christians have claimed moral and spiritual superiority but whose misdeeds not only undermine this claim but were often done in the name of religion. This is a hard truth to reckon with and involves unpicking the theological tools that were misused to justify several goals that put power and greed above the teachings of Jesus. The outworking of this critical review is one which sees all religious nationalism as suspect; morally degrading for the people in control and harmful to all others subject to it. The counterweight of active Christian Zionism has resulted in targeted critique of how religious nationalism plays out in Israel-Palestine. This is in tandem with Palestinians crying out for help in what they view as a critical misreading of the Old Testament to prop up Christian support of the State of Israel. Many supporters of Christian Zionism would see Jewish ownership of and autonomy over the land of Israel (including Gaza and the West Bank) as undebatable. They also see Jerusalem as the undisputed capital of a Jewish state. They would argue that Israel is not a state like any other but an outworking of God's plan. Israel's political fortunes therefore have profound theological and political consequences. For this reason, it is possible to encounter overt displays of support for Israel within Protestant Churches in the form of leaflets but also, in some cases, an Israeli flag. There are some Christians who would consider themselves to be supporters of British Jewry and their Zionist views, but who would not identify as Zionist or Christian Zionist per se. They would see this as an act of solidarity with the Jewish community and be more engaged with Jewish understandings of Zionism rather than seeing the State of Israel as fulfilling a Biblical prophecy or having spiritual significance. On the whole most Church of Scotland members do not think or speak out about issues relating to Zionism that often. They would neither define themselves as Zionist nor anti-Zionist. On this topic, it is the loudest voices at either ends of a highly polarised topic that are heard and widely publicised.

17. Zionism

What is important for Jews to know about the Christian understanding?

Christians lack personal understanding of how firmly entrenched in the land Judaism as a faith is, irrespective of how modern Zionism has evolved. Empathising with the material and spiritual importance of the land, is crucial for engagement on this topic.

The universalistic ideas contained within Christianity makes it hard to fully support some Zionist aspirations as nationalism and ethnonationalism is something we have tried to move away from.

Christian Zionism presents many theological and ethical challenges, and it is important that these are addressed to promote justice and peace in the Holy Land. In addition, there are many more forms of both Christian Zionism and land theology within Christianity than this glossary was able to present. The Church itself would benefit from having a fuller understanding of how land in general, and the Holy Land in particular, plays a role within the Church of Scotland as a denomination and Christianity

Whilst being respectful and mindful of differences in approach, it is valid and important for Christians to engage with Jewish Zionist aspirations and claims as a political and spiritual movement. The central importance of the land in Judaism and Jewish thinking needs to be recognised and understood within the Church of Scotland.

For many Christians it is very hard to distinguish between the secular State of Israel and Israel as the home of the Jewish faith and tradition. The two are so enmeshed and intertwined in the popular mindset that Christians find it hard to separate the one from the other.

Key Points and Differences Summarised

- Jewish understandings and relationship to Zionism are rooted in a combination of influences relating to religion, history, identity, and direct experience of exile as well as a spiritual connection to the Land of Israel.
- Political Zionism, which is focused on Jewish self-determination and nationhood, and religious Zionism, which is concentrated on a redemptive return to the Land of Israel are important to understand on their own terms as well as in relation to one another.
- Within the many Christian approaches to Zionism there are more traceable theological movements, which are partially a reaction to history and politics (i.e., a reaction to the creation of the State of Israel or the Holocaust) but less intricately connected to direct collective historical experience and identity. This is particularly true for those whose views are formed in relation to expectations and prophecy connected to the End Times.
- For Christians who are more critical of Zionism, their approach is rooted in a social theology which has a more universalistic approach to land ownership and sovereignty. There will be many motivations for such views relating to their own experiences and relationship to Palestinians, political sympathies, Church tradition etc.

17. Zionism

Reflections

Christian Reflections on 'Zionism'

Important to reflect that Christian Zionism and Zionism are not the same thing. This differentiation proves that Zionism is almost a useless term without a prefix or qualifier even within the many shades and diverse roots of Christian Zionism. Most importantly for Christian readers it is important to reflect on Jewish Zionist developments through history and today, and the fact it developed independently of Christian perspectives. This carries with it the recognition that Judaism has developed independently for 2000 years, attempts to use Christian interpretations of scripture to argue against Zionist thinking is to misunderstand how Zionism has developed and why. In that vein, there needs to be reflection on what it means for a Jew to be a Zionist and to check the assumption that a Zionist will automatically defend everything that Israel does and even the idea that they should have to be asked. As Christians do not tend to ask patriotic immigrants from Pakistan what their beliefs on the blasphemy law are, when Christians meet Jews, we might ignore the temptation to immediately bring up events in Israel and the actions of the Israeli State.

Empathy is needed with the feeling expressed in this entry that many Jews are guests in a host country, a host who may change their mind or turn against them. This is a really important point as, irrespective of views on Israel and Jewish autonomy there, this feeling of being hosted is one which Christians will never have to grapple with on the basis of being Christian. It may be relatable in respect to those who are asylum seekers or immigrants but not on a collective level, as White Scottish Christians tend to not experience any tension between their citizenship and faith which is reflected in the existence of a national Church and a cross on the flag.

The difficult next step in dialogue is the fact that the Church's Palestinian Christian partners deserve to be listened to when they express their discomfort with Zionism (both Christian and Jewish understandings of it). They do not carry the same privilege that White Scottish Christians have, and they live with the reality of a Jewish majority State and military occupation in a very different way. Whilst many Church of Scotland members will recognise the need to hear lots of voices from the region, they will naturally wish to raise the voices of these Christian partners and will feel duty bound to bring their stories home.

Jewish Reflections on 'Zionism'

In a 2010 report by the Institute of Jewish Policy Research on UK Jewish attitudes, 82% of those interviewed, considered Israel as central or important to their identity. Zionism as the movement that delivered and sustained Israel is a core part of UK Jewish discourse and engagement. What could be seen by the entry above of our Church of Scotland friends were a number of issues on which to comment. Firstly, it seems that the Church of Scotland approach to Zionism is very much influenced by a historic Christian Zionist approach which is rarely critical of Israel, but which in this entry seems to be notably downplayed as a significant tradition within the Church of Scotland, and Zionism on the one hand; and a more anti-Zionist approach as a reaction to this on the other. In the middle of this is a mainstream Jewish understanding of Zionism. In the UK, a large number of Jews do not look at the country in prophetic terms and even those who do use a more religious approach will be strongly supportive of a continuing democratic approach that supports minority communities. At the same time, given recent Jewish history, maintaining a majority Jewish population is understood as important. Additionally, in the report mentioned initially, over two thirds of those interviewed believed in the need for territorial compromise in order for the existence of a Palestinian State. Secondly, it seems from the helpful Church of Scotland entry that the engagement with Israel and Palestine is often unbalanced to Palestinian organisations and human rights based Israeli organisations. These voices are important in themselves but need to be balanced by more civil society voices from within the State of Israel to paint a better picture of the multiplicity of perspectives within Israel. Reference back to the *Inheritance of Abraham?* report in terms of what the entry says it was trying to achieve should not obscure the fact that it was highly damaging to relationships with the Jewish community. This is because it interprets Jewish scriptures so as to negate the connection the Jewish people have to the Land of Israel, and disregards the historical connection to the Land, replacing it instead, with a Christian understanding of the relationship between people and land. A common issue in this glossary has been a Christian difficulty with dealing with the idea of God's relationship, for the Jewish people, to a specific piece of land. In this entry on Zionism in particular, there is no real engagement with Christian understandings of the legitimacy of a Jewish theological attachment to the land. This is an important area to reflect on and build dialogue on. This relationship is part of our religious history but should not mean a sense of superiority and domination over any others. The conflict that exists between Israel and the Palestinian nation is not understood by many as of religious import — rather a political conflict between two peoples who have a connection to one piece of land. Again, and finally, for many Jewish people, Israel and Zionism are part of their identity and given them a sense of confidence — but are not understood within a totally prophetic framework. Religious Jews will understand a Providential involvement in the return to Jewish sovereignty, but not necessarily in an eschatological manner and certainly not in a way that means domination. On the other hand, the use of the term 'colonialism' regarding Zionism and Jewish sovereign presence is heard as offensive by most Jews and many would understand it within the rubric of antisemitism. In addition, bearing in mind the way that many Jews define Zionism to be the right of the Jewish people to have a homeland in Israel within secure border, Christians can understand why there is such a sharp response to 'anti-Zionistic' sentiment.

Reflections

from Rabbi David Mason

It has been a privilege to be a part of organising this Glossary Project, a real privilege. In it, I have sensed a real opportunity. An opportunity to create a mature concept of dialogue. One where each leaves space for the other.

Curiosity has been at the centre for me of this dialogue. In fact it is necessary for any dialogue to be successful. Curiosity to learn about the terms used by the other. Curiosity to see how terms we use are understood by the other; and vice versa.

Let us remind ourselves of the genealogy of this project. It came out of tension in the relationship between the Church of Scotland and the Jewish community in the wake of the Inheritance of Abraham? report of 2013. As a way of exploring this tension, and understanding the relationship between our two communities better, we initiated this dialogue process, to get right to the heart of the words we use that are so central to our own faith, but so foreign to another.

Our dialogue and resultant Glossary were a chance to talk to each other with respect, friendship and openness in order to bequeath a tool kit to our co-worshippers in how to understand each other better and how to express ourselves theologically, in a way that may involve disagreement but not offence of the other's core self.

You will see that we covered a large array of terms and subjects. The dialogue was at once structured, but also allowing for spontaneity of ideas. For me, what was most fundamental, was looking at the differences between our respective religious positions as they relate to the land.

Importantly, we didn't focus on what binds us. We focused on what can potentially pull us apart. In fact, this, in my opinion, is the most efficient and successful way to undergo a process of dialogue. In our Midrashic texts of about 1600 years ago, there is a statement that in Creation, when God separated between the lower and upper waters, 'From there, difference entered the world'. This means that 'difference' is ontological in nature, a part of our very being. So if we only look to focus on the similarities, we will miss the differences and the resultant tensions, all of which must be understood if we are to engage in a meaningful way with people from a different worldview.

This dialogue focussed on the opposite. Pairs of Rabbis and Ministers met online, sometimes as a larger group, and were lucky to have the opportunity to delve into the differences that exist between us. I feel blessed to have been a part of this, and pray that the glossary will be a tool that will allow differences to exist, without them turning into conflict and rift. May our efforts contribute towards greater understanding, harmony and peace.

Reflections

from The Very Rev Dr Susan Brown

Words are not everything, but they are incredibly important. Words need to be carefully chosen. The right words at the right time, communicated in the right way, have the potential to inspire when inspiration is needed; to challenge when challenge is needed and to encourage.

But words are far from precise.

The way they are both understood and used is influenced by things such as context, culture and language.

Words carry nuances and assumptions for both speaker and hearer. Sometimes we are aware that others may well hear what we say quite differently to the way we intended. At other times, we can be completely unaware and cause unintended hurt and harm.

This is why even those who speak the same language can find that language separating them!

The conversations between members of the Jewish and Christian (Church of Scotland) communities, were born out of the dialogue which was set up in response to the Inheritance of Abraham? report to the General Assembly of 2013.

The dialogue was a necessarily theological engagement, seeking better understanding of where each was coming from in the light of the Report. The dialogue began the journey of rebuilding relationships and trust in our common and yet different, faith traditions to encourage continued, honest, conversation.

However, in order for that journey to have a greater and more far-reaching impact, it needs to produce tangible learning from which wider participation can grow. That was when the idea of the creation of a glossary was born.

The two faith traditions share a common root and yet in dialogue, we discovered that those common roots are often interpreted very differently. What if we had honest conversations from our different perspectives which explored words used in both traditions? What might we discover about what those words mean to each of us? How might that understanding impact on what we say to each other and how we say it? And how could we encourage others to join in those conversations so that the words we each use, might be used more intentionally?

Personally, I am not sure I expected to find the conversations as fascinating as they were! Whether listening in to what others discussed or participating in that discussion, each of the conversations was stimulating, insightful, thought provoking and even inspirational.

I learned so much about two different ways of thinking which has aided not only my understanding of another faith, but helped me to understand more of my own.

Conversations around 'nationhood' and 'mission' and 'land' opened my eyes to cultural and contextual nuances and understandings that I had a notion of, but which I had not fully grasped the deeper significance of.

These conversations really need to continue. The glossary is only a starter for 10 and naturally can only offer perspectives from within a tiny strand of the larger complexity of the thinking of people from the Church of Scotland and Orthodox Jewish communities. The words discussed have not exhausted those discussions. And neither is that list exhaustive. Nowhere near it.

What the glossary offers is an insight into two faith communities, with common roots but very different expressions of the faith they hold on to. Both communities will be enriched by the continuation of these conversations, and we hope that parishes and synagogues will pick up the baton and learn to enjoy and to understand each other more over honest conversation.

Let the words we each use, reflect mutual respect through our differences and may they celebrate our God gifted humanity.

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI



The Church of Scotland