

A RABBINIC COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE GOSPELS OF
MATTHEW, MARK, and LUKE

Samuel Tobias Lachs

AJT^b
Ant.
APB
BA
BAG

BHM

B_J
CD
CTM

D
DJD

ESBNT^c

EWJ

Expos. T.
FTG

GJV

GLL

GV

HALAT^d

HST^e

Abbreviations of Works Frequently Cited

- American Journal of Theology*
Josephus, *Antiquities*
Singer, Authorized Prayer Book
Biblical Archaeologist
Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957)
A. Jellinek, *Bei Hamdrash*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem, 1938).
Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*
Cairo Genizah Text of the Damascus Document
R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Mishnah* (1903; reprint ed., New York: Ktav),
Codex Bezae
Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955-)
J. A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1951)
J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977)
Expository Times
M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribner's, 1938).
E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 4th ed. (Leipzig, 1901)
S. Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter in Talmud, Midrash und Targum* (Berlin, 1898)
L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1892)
W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1967-)
R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968)

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HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>	
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>	
ICC	International Critical Commentary	
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (4 vols; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962)	
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>	
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>	
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>	
JE	<i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> , ed. I. Singer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1902)	
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>	
JN	J. Klausner, <i>Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching</i> (New York: Macmillan, 1946)	
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>	
JPOS	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>	
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>	
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>	
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>	
LNT	J. D. M. Derrett, <i>Law in the New Testament</i>	
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>	
MT	Massoretic Text	
NEB	New English Bible	
NH	Pliny, <i>Natural History</i>	
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>	
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>	
NTSup.	Supplement to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>	
NTRJ	D. Daube, <i>New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism</i> (London: Athlone, 1956)	
PAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>	
Oxy.P.	Oxyrhynchus Papyri	
PJ	J. Jeremias, <i>The Parables of Jesus</i> , 6th ed. S. H. Hooke (New York: Scribners, 1963)	
QDAP	<i>Quarterly Department of Antiquities in Palestine</i>	
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>	
REJ	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>	
REJS	S. Zeitlin, <i>The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State</i> , 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962-78)	
RLGT	C. G. Montefiore, <i>Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings</i> (New York: Kraav, 1970)	
RSV	Revised Standard Version	
S	Codex Sinaiticus	

SB	H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , 6 vols. (Munich, 1956)	
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature	
SG	Claude G. Montefiore, <i>The Synoptic Gospels</i> , 2 vols. (1927; reprint ed., New York: Kraav, 1968)	
SJ	T. A. Manson, <i>The Sayings of Jesus</i> (London, 1961)	
SJLA	<i>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</i>	
SNVT	J. D. M. Derrett, <i>Studies in the New Testament</i> , 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1977)	
SNV/SMS	<i>Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas</i> , Monograph Series	
Sonc. Tal.	Soncino Talmud	
SSM	W. D. Davies, <i>The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).	
SSMUOT	K. Stendahl, <i>The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament</i> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968)	
Studies I, II	I. Abrahams, <i>Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels</i> , reprint of 1917 & 1924 eds. of First and Second Series (New York: Kraav, 1967)	
TA	S. Krauss, <i>Talmudische Archäologie</i> , 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1910)	
TDNT	G. Kittel, <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981)	
TJ	T. S. Mason, <i>The Teachings of Jesus</i> , 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935)	
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>	
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>	
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>	

Abbreviations of
Rabbinic Works

- Mishnah
- Tosefta, ed. M. S. Zuckerman (Jerusalem, 1937)
- Babylonian Talmud
- Palestinian Talmud
- Rabba Gen. R., Exod. R., etc.
- Targum; J. (Yerushalmi), O. (Onqelos)

Tractates

Ar.	Arakhin
AZ	Avodah Zarah
BB	Baba Batra
Belh.	Bechorot
Ber.	Berakhot
Bez.	Beza (Yom Tov)
BM	Baba Mezi'a
BQ	Baba Qamma
Dem.	Demai
Eduy.	Eduyot
Er.	Eruvin
Git.	Gitin
Hag.	Hagigah
Hor.	Horayot
Hul.	Hullin
Kel.	Kelim
Ker.	Keritot
Ket.	Kerubot
Mak.	Makkot
Meg.	Megillah
Men.	Menahot
Mid.	Middot
Miq.	Miqvaot
MQ	Mo'ed Qatan
M.Sh.	Ma'aser Sheni
Naz.	Nazir
Ned.	Nedarim
Neg.	Nega'im
Nid.	Niddah
Ohol.	Oholot
Pes.	Pesahim
Qid.	Qiddushin
RH	Rosh Hashanah
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
Sem.	Sema'hot
Shab.	Shabbat
Shev.	Shevuot
Sheq.	Sheqalim
Sof.	Soferim
Sot.	Sota
Suk.	Sukkah
Tam.	Tamid
Ta'an	Ta'anit

Tem.
Ter.
Yev.
Yom.
Zev.

Temurah
Terumot
Yevamot
Yoma
Zevachim

Aggad. Ber.
ARN
ARN II

Aggadatar Bereshit, ed. S. Buber (Krakow, 1903)
Avot de R. Nathan

DE
DER
DEZ
Mek.
MHG

Avot de R. Nathan, ed. S. Schechter (New York, 1945)
Derekh Erez
Derekh Erez Rabbat
Derekh Erez Zurta
Mekilta de R. Ishmael
Midrash Hagadol, Genesis, ed. M. Margulies (Jerusalem, 1947)

Mid. Pr.
Mid. Ps.
Mid. Sam.
Mid. Tan.
MRS
PR
PRE
PRK
SER
SOR
Tan.
Tan. B.
Yal.

Midrash Proverbs
Midrash Psalms, ed. S. Buber (Vilna, 1891)
Midrash Samuel, ed. S. Buber (Cracow, 1893)
Midrash Tannaim
Mekilta de R. Shimon b. Yohai
Pesikta Rabbati, ed. M. Friedmann (Vienna, 1880)
Pirge de R. Eliezer (Warsaw, 1832)
Pesikta de Rav Kahana, ed. S. Buber (Lyck, 1868)
Seder Eliyahu Rabbat
Seder Olam Rabbat
Tanpuma
Tanpuma, ed. S. Buber (New York, 1946)
Yalqut Shimoni

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QApoc.
4QEn
1QM
4QFlor.
4QP.Bless.
1QH.
1Q.2Q, etc.

Genesis Apocryphon from Cave 1
Enoch texts from Cave 4
Milhamah, The War Scroll
Florilegium from Cave 4
Patriarchal Blessings from Cave 4
Hodayot, Thanksgiving Hymns from Cave 1
Numbered caves of Qumran

under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through his nostrils, and when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back to him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or a foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make it known to the spectators that he had left the man.⁴

Then Ben Temalion [a demon or a goblin] came to meet them. He said: "Is it your wish that I accompany you?" Thereupon R. Simeon wept and said: "The handmaid of my ancestor's house was found worthy of meeting an angel three times, and I not even to meet him once. However, let the miracle be performed, no matter how." Thereupon he [Ben Temalion] advanced and entered into the Emperor's daughter. When R. Simeon arrived there he called out: "Ben Temalion leave her, Ben Temalion, leave her"; and as he proclaimed this he left her.⁵

32 *the whole herd . . . into the sea* Gadera must have been near the Sea of Galilee.

33 *the herdsmen*, etc. More than likely they were Gentiles, since it was forbidden by law for Jews to raise swine.⁶

Luke 8:27 *there met a man*, etc. Only Luke and Mark describe the actions of the demoniac, and this description is closely paralleled by the rabbinic definition of an imbecile: "Our Rabbis taught: 'Who is considered to be an imbecile? He who goes out alone at night, and he who spends the night on a cemetery, and he that tears his garments.'"⁷

NOTES

1. See *SB*, 1:490-491.
2. Cf. Josephus. *Ant.* VIII.46-47. See also E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge, 1965).
3. En. 16.1, Jub. 10.5-11, Test. Sim. 6, Test. Jud. 2.5.
4. Josephus. *Ant.* VIII.2.5.
5. B. Me'ila 17b.
6. M. BQ 7.7; B. *ibid.* 82b. See also B. Men. 64b; B. Soc. 49b; Josephus. *Ant.* XIV.2.2; TJ Ber. 4, 7b (22); B. Ned. 49b.
7. B. Hag. See also T. Ter. 1.3 (p. 25); TJ Ter. 1.1 (40b); TJ Git. 7.1 (48c).

52. *The Healing of the Paralytic*

M A T T . 9 . 1 - 8

1 And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. 2 And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."³ And behold,

some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." 4 But Jesus, knowing,^m their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,'ⁿ or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 6 But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins."^o—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, take up your bed and go home." 7 And he rose and went home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

M A R K 2 . 1 - 1 2

1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"11 'I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.' 12 And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

L U K E 5 . 1 7 - 2 6

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every town of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.^o 18 And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;^p but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. 20 And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." 21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" 22 When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 24 But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"1 say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." 25 And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. 26 And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying "We have seen strange things today."

- m Other ancient authorities read *seeing*.
 n Some read *have been forgiven*.
 o Some read *was present to heal them*.
 p Greek *him*.

COMMENTARY

In this miracle story, the new theme introduced here is the forgiveness of sin by Jesus, adumbrating the essential function of the Christ figure. Here in this miracle story, sin is the cause of illness, which, when forgiven, causes the illness to disappear.

1 *to his own city* I.e., Capernaum; see Mark 2.1.
lying on his bed A stretcher, or portable bed.¹

2 *your sins are forgiven* This notion that sickness is the result of sin is well attested to in rabbinic sources. E.g., "R. Hiyya stated: 'The patient is not healed of his sickness until his sins are forgiven'."² "R. Ammi: 'There are no sufferings without sin.'"³ The prayer for forgiveness (in the *Schemoneh Eserel*) precedes the prayer for healing.⁴ In rabbinic Judaism, man could forgive a sin, and it was a moral imperative so to do when the sin committed was against himself, but not for others; for forgiveness is from God, through direct access and not through an intermediary.

6 *But that you may know that the Son of man has authority*, etc. This verse and v. 8 seem to be contradictory. Is "Son of man" here a messianic title, or is it the Aram. for "human being," *bar neshah*? If it means "human being," then what is the miracle of Jesus?

8 *When the crowds saw it* Seeing the healing, the crowds were afraid and glorified God, who had given the power to heal to a human being, and perhaps recited the blessing for such an occasion, "Who has apportioned from His wisdom to those who fear Him."⁵

NOTES

1. For an example of a portable bed, see M. RH 2.9.
2. B. Ned. 41a.
3. B. Shab. 55a. Cf. Büchler, *Types of Jewish Palestinian Piety*, pp. 328, 329, 340. On the forgiveness of sins, see Abrahams, *Studies I*, chaps. IX and XX.
4. That sin causes sickness, see B. Meg. 17b; Singer, *APB*, pp. 456-457.
5. B. Ber. 58a.

53. *The Call of Levi*

MATT. 9. 9-13

9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. 10 And as he sat at tables in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with

Jesus and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous but sinners."

MARK 2. 13-17

13 He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them. 14 And as he passed on, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. 15 And as he sat at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

LUKE 5. 27-32

27 After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he left everything, and rose and followed him. 29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at tables with him. 30 And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; 32 I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- q Greek *reclined*.
 r Some read *James*.
 s Other ancient authorities read *and*.
 t Other ancient authorities add *and drink*.

COMMENTARY

9 *a man called Matthew* In Mark he is called Levi the son of Alphaeus; perhaps both were tax collectors.

sitting at the tax office On the tax collector as an undesirable of society, see above p. 109. He was most likely in the service of Antipas. "The custom officer would sit by the landing stage to collect custom dues on exports carried across the lake to territory outside of Herod's rule."¹

10 *as he sat at table* I.e., reclining at table. "It is clear from the reaction of the Pharisees and from rabbinic sources, that one should avoid the company of the undesirable of society. The reason why the Pharisees did not want to break bread with the sinners was not due to pride or to exclusiveness. For the Pharisees, the table was not merely a place for eating and drinking and