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HEBREW, ISRAELITE, JEW
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A STUDY in semantics may seem useless erudition, yet these three names are a précis of the mystery of a unique people; they speak of an awesome design.

Since the New Testament authors did not coin the words Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew, but found them current in the language and literature of their people, a brief survey of the origin and meaning of these names in the Old Testament is a necessary introduction to our inquiry.

HEBREW, ISRAELITE, JEW
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

TODAY Hebrew ('Ibri) is frequently identified with the roaming, aggressive Habiru ('Apiru, Khapiru) mentioned in the celebrated cuneiform tablets which have been discovered in recent years in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and Egypt, the texts of Rim-Sin of Larsa (ca. 1758-1698 B.C.) and of Nuzu, Ras Shamra, Boghazköy, and Amarna (ca. 1400 B.C.). From these documents it is quite evident that the name Habiru designated not an ethnic group but rather a social or economic class, either nomads who threatened the sown areas of settled peoples, or poor vagabonds who had sold themselves voluntarily into slavery. But the identification of Habiru and Hebrew, while attractive, is by no means established.1 There still are authorities who,

1. G. Ernest Wright, "How Archaeology Helps the Student of the Bible," The Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. II (May 1940), p. 31, indicates the attractiveness of the Khabiru theory: "It has been pointed out that the great majority of the references to 'Hebrews' in the Old Testament belongs to the Patriarchal period and the period of the sojourn in Egypt. The term is usually employed when an Egyptian speaks to an Israelite, or when an Israelite identifies himself to an Egyptian, or when the Israelites as a group are named along with some other people or peoples. This certainly supports the suggestion that 'Hebrew' bore something of the same connotation as Khabiru or 'Apiru; and we are reminded again of the fact that Abraham was..."
like the ancient rabbis, consider Hebrew an ethnic name derived either
from the patriarch Eber, the great-grandson of Shem and ancestor of
Abraham (Gen 10:24), or, more commonly, from the verb 'b r (to
cross over). It would then designate the descendants of Eber, or "the
people from across the river," that is, the Jordan, or perhaps the
Euphrates, in any case from the East. In the Bible we find non-Jews
using the name Hebrew to designate Jews, and Jews applying it to
themselves when speaking to foreigners. In Gen 14:13 and Jon 1:9
the name is quite clearly an ethnic designation. In 2 Mac 7:31, 11:13,
and 15:38, and in Jdt 10:12, 12:10, and 14:16, Hebrew is certainly a
national name, evidently an archaism employed to avoid the undertone
of contempt attached to the name Jew. A similar use of the word oc-
curs in Josephus, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the
Book of Jubilees. In rabbinical literature Hebrew becomes a philo-
tical term designating the "sacred language" of the Bible and the
ancient script. With Josephus this use is extended so that Hebrew
designates Aramaic, the language of the post-exilic Jews of Palestine,
and the "Hebrews" becomes practically a synonym for the Palestinian
Jews.

Israel is the Old Testament "sacred" name for the Jewish people,
the name proper to them as God's chosen, covenanted people. With
spoken of as 'the Hebrew' (Gen 14:13), and that later Israelites were taught that
their father was a 'nomadic' or 'fugitive Aramean' (Deut 26:5). See W. F. Al-
bright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press,
1940), pp. 182-183; "Nova Documenta de Habiru," Biblica, Vol. 33 (1952),
pp. 561-562. E. Kraeling, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research,
No. 77 (Feb. 1940), pp. 32-34, rejects the identification of Hebrew and Khabiru
for philological reasons. So also E. Dhorme in the article "Amarna," Supplément au
Dictionnaire de la Bible, I, 220. G. Ricciotti, The History of Israel (Milwaukee:
Bruce Publishing Co., 1955), I, 151-152, concludes that the identification "rests
. . . on a shaky philological foundation."

2. See A. Lukyn Williams, article "Hebrew," A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by
J. Hastings, II, 325-327. Ricciotti (op. cit., pp. 150-151) admits the possibility of
both these etymologies. He points out that the Septuagint renders "Abram the
Hebrew" in Gen 14:13 as peraìte = peraites, "the man from beyond, the one go-
ing over," thus favoring a derivation from "b r. If derived from Eber, Hebrew
would include other peoples descended from the ancient patriarch. While Hebrew
and Israelite are employed as synonyms in the Bible, there are traces of an ancient
distinction, as in 1 Kg 14:21.

3. On the lips of Gentiles: Gen 39:14, 17; 41:12; Ex 1:16; 2:6; 1 Kg 4:6,
9; 13:19; 14:11; 29:3. On the lips of Jews: Gen 40:15; Ex 1:19; 2:7; 5:18;
5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13.

4. See K. G. Kuhn, article in Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament,
III, 359b.

5. See Gutbrod, article, ibid., 375-376, for the loci.
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the exceptions of Gen 32:29 where it is given to the patriarch Jacob, and of the period of the divided monarchy when it has a political connotation as the name of the northern kingdom, Israel in the Old Testament never designates an individual, a tribe, or the people as a political entity. It always connotes the character and mission of the people God chose for His singular purpose and tied to Himself in a special bond. Hence Israelite names the Jew as a member of the covenanted people. The etymology of the word is in keeping with this religious use. Israel very probably is formed from the root *srh* (to be strong) and the divine name *El*. It has the appearance of what grammarians call a jussive form and probably means “May God prevail” or “May God rule.” This etymology is in line with the traditional, popular etymology of Gen 32:29, where the origin of the name is linked to Jacob’s mysterious struggle with God when he had forded the Jabbok. There it is given the meaning of “striver with God,” because he wrestled for the blessing of the Lord and would not be without it.  

*Judah* (from which *Jew* is derived) is the name of the fourth son of Leah and Jacob, and of the tribe descended from him. During the period of the divided monarchy it designated the kingdom of the south (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin), which was ruled by the dynasty of David of the tribe of Judah. Although the word may have a beautiful religious meaning (“May Yahweh be praised”), *Judah* (and *Jew*) never acquired the religious quality of the name *Israel*.

After the destruction of the schismatic kingdom of the north in 722 B.C., the name *Israel* recovered its exclusive religious significance.

6. R. de Vaux, article “Israël,” *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, IV, 730, calls this etymology “more probable” but lists two others as worthy of consideration: (a) from *srh*, for which the meaning in Arabic “to shine” is postulated, that is, “God enlightens”; thus K. Vollers, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, IX (1906), p. 184, and H. Bauer, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXXVIII (1935), col. 477; and (b) from *y s r*, not attested in Hebrew but found in Arabic and Ethiopic with the meaning “to cure,” hence “God heals”; thus W. F. Albright, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XLVI (1927), pp. 154-158. Other interpretations have been offered. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1923), V, 307, lists some more or less imaginative explanations of the name *Israel*. For instance, “the one who tries to sing instead of the angels,” or “the one who is joyful like the angels at the time of their singing,” or again “he who walks straight with God.” Philo interprets the name as “the man who sees God” and as identical with the Logos. Following his allegorical exegesis without, however, accepting his concept of the Logos, some of the Church Fathers, like Justin the Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, at times interpret *Israel* to mean Christ.

7. See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of The Old Testament*, by Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 397; also A. Legendre, article “Juda,” *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Vigouroux), III, 1755-56.
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and was used by the prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah to designate the kingdom of Judah and the Jews as the people of God. The exiles in Babylon and later the repatriates conformed to this usage. Since the territory of the repatriates practically coincided with the limits of the former kingdom of Judah, the name Jew was also used. But the post-exilic literature shows a marked preference for Israel, which, because of its religious character, was intimately bound up with the messianic hopes of the people. Israelite was the name by which the people designated themselves, while Jew was the name by which they were known to Gentiles. The practice of First Maccabees is a good illustration of this use. In the narrative sections of the book the author employs Israel, when he himself is referring to his people. But when he records the words of Gentiles referring to the chosen people, he places the name Jew on their lips. In diplomatic letters addressed to Gentile states, and even in official, civil documents addressed to their own people, the Jewish rulers use the name Jews, not Israelites. This practice shows quite conclusively that Jew was a political designation, while Israel was a sacred, religious name. The exclusive use of Israel in books of an exclusively religious character, for instance, Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sirach) and the Psalms of Solomon, confirms the distinction between the two names.

The Jews of the Diaspora adopted the terminology of their Gentile environment and usually called themselves Jews, reserving the sacred name of Israel for the language of prayer. The practice of Second Maccabees is thus quite different from that of First Maccabees. The author himself calls his people Jews. Israel occurs only five times and always in prayers.  

HEBREW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The noun Hebrew, Ebraios, occurs only three times in the New Testament (Ac 6:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). The adjective Ebrais also occurs three times (Ac 21:40; 22:2; 26:14), while the form Ebraistis is never with only in the writings of John, five times in the Fourth Gospel.

10. See 2 Mac 1:25, 26; 10:38, 11:6 for the use of Israel in prayer; 9:5 gives the liturgical formula "the Lord, the God of Israel." Jew appears frequently, for instance, in 2 Mac 1:1-10; 8:32; 6:1, 6, 8; 10:8.
and twice in the Apocalypse. In Acts and the Fourth Gospel these adjectives are philological terms designating the language used by the Palestinian Jews, that is, Aramaic. The Apocalypse, however, uses *Ebræïst* to mean Hebrew rather than Aramaic (9:11; 16:16). This lack of precision in the use of the word, while worthy of notice, is not extraordinary. It occurs also in Josephus and even occasionally in the rabbinical literature, which usually distinguishes *'ibrit* from *aramit*.

From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the primitive Christian community of Jerusalem comprised two groups, Hebrews and Hellenists: "Now in those days, as the number of the disciples was increasing, there arose a murmuring among the Hellenists against the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration" (6:1). This, incidentally, is the first occurrence of the noun *Ellēnīstês* in Greek literature. It is derived from the verb *ellenizóin* (to speak Greek) and means "one who uses the Greek language," implying that he is not an *Ellên*, a Greek by blood. At the time this murmuring arose in Jerusalem, the members of the Church were all Jews, including only those proselytes who had accepted circumcision and the Jewish Law. The distinction between Hellenist and Hebrew is therefore a distinction between Jews, a distinction of language, not of blood. A similar division of the Jewish world into Hebrew (Aramaic-speaking) and Greek (Greek-speaking) is met with in rabbinical literature. It would however be an oversimplification to characterize the name Hebrew in Ac 6:1 as merely a philological term. In a two-language country such as Palestine then was, it would be difficult to understand the neglect of the Hellenist widows by the Hebrew almoners if difference of mother tongue were the only barrier between the two groups. It fits the situation better if we see in Luke's use of Hebrew the same extension of the linguistic term found in Josephus, by which it designates the Jews of Palestine, because they spoke Aramaic, a language akin to Hebrew, while the common speech of the

14. See Strack-Billerbeck, op. cit., II, 444; 448, d.
Diaspora Jews had become Greek. The root of the trouble between the Hellenists (Jews from the Diaspora) and the Hebrews (native Palestinians) of the early Christian community of Jerusalem seems to have been the “stiffness” of the native Palestinian toward his coreligionist born in the Dispersion.

Ac 21:40, 22:2 indicate that Paul spoke Aramaic fluently. When Christ appeared to him at the supreme moment of his life, He called him Saoul, Saoul, which is the Semitic form of his name and which, fortunately, is retained in the Greek text of all three accounts of his Damascus hour (Ac 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). This indicates that he possessed this fluency not only because of the years he spent in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel, but first because Aramaic was his mother tongue, the language spoken habitually in his father’s house at Tarsus. For the heavenly Vision certainly addressed Paul in the language of his thoughts, and he himself says expressly that the glorified Christ spoke to him in the “Hebrew dialect,” that is, Aramaic (Ac 26:14). Although born in the Diaspora, in Tarsus of Cilicia, Paul calls himself a Hebrew (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5), never a Hellenist. He is in fact “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” Since Hebrew in the extended sense designated a Palestinian Jew, this expression of Paul can only mean that his family was of Palestinian origin and, it would seem, not long resident in the Diaspora when he was born. Because the mother tongue of his home was Aramaic and his strict Pharisee father tenacious of the customs of the old country, Paul considered himself a Palestinian Jew (Phil 3:5) and would yield to no one on the purity of his Jewish blood (2 Cor 11:22).

ISRAELITE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Israelite occurs only nine times in the New Testament, but Israel very frequently, indeed sixty-six times. With the exception of Rom 9:6 (and perhaps Phil 3:5), Israel never directly refers to the patriarch Jacob but only to his descendants, that is, to the people as a whole. As in the Old Testament, it is a religious name designating the Jews who were Israelites by descent. 

15. This would account for the false tradition cited by St. Jerome that Paul was born in Gischala of Galilee (Comm. in ep. ad Philem. 23, PL 26:617).

16. The New Testament use of Hebrew warrants in itself no conclusion concerning the location of the addresses of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The title, dating from the second century, would be apt for exiled Palestinians living in Italy as well as for Jewish Christians of Palestine.
as God's covenanted people, stressing His elective grace and loving guidance. Hence, as in First Maccabees, it is the usual name employed by the Jews themselves and is never found on the lips of Gentiles.

The Synoptic Gospels: In Mark's Gospel Israel is found only twice. Once it is on Jesus' lips when He answered the scribe's question as to the first of all the commandments with the great word of the Old Testament: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one God; and you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart" (Mk 12:29–30; Deut 6:4–5). The second time it is on the lips of Jesus' enemies when they sarcastically refer to His messianic claim: "He saved others, himself he cannot save! Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Mk 15:31–32). In both these passages the religious significance of the name is quite marked. In Matthew and Luke, Israel is met with more frequently. While the emphasis on the religious connotation of the term varies in degree, it is always present. Gutbrod, however, in his scholarly article in Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, denies a religious connotation to Israel in Mt 2:20. He maintains that "land of Israel" there, like the expression Ereẓ Israel of the rabbis, is merely a geographical designation with no religious overtones. But Matthew's accommodation of Hosea's "Out of Egypt I have called my son"—the son being for the prophet the people of Israel—to Jesus' sojourn in Egypt indicates that he intends an analogy between the Jews' entrance into Canaan after the Egyptian bondage and Jesus' return to Palestine from His Egyptian exile (Os 11:1; Mt 2:15). "Land of Israel" in this pericope has then the meaning "land of promise," the land of God's chosen people. Has it not the same religious significance for the rabbis? In Mt 9:33, 10:23, and Lk 4:25, 27, Israel is likewise employed geographically without any diminution of its sacred character.

This sacred character is marvelously evident in Luke's gospel of the infancy. Mary's joy in the help God has given "to Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy" (1:54); Zachary's praise, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and wrought redemption for His people" (1:68); Simeon's waiting for the Messiah as "the consolation of Israel" and his welcoming Him as "the glory for Thy people Israel" (2:25, 32); his prophecy, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel" (2:34)—they all give wit-
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ness to the people's appointed role as an instrument in the scheme of salvation.

The religious meaning of Israel is, of course, especially marked in Jesus' use of the name. His praise of the believing centurion: "I say to you that I have not found such great faith in Israel" (Mt 8:10; Lk 7:9) accentuates the spiritual meaning of the term. Israel is the chosen people among whom Jesus, the Messiah, looked for and had a right to expect faith. The reason for His special and, as far as His personal ministry went, exclusive mission to the "lost sheep of Israel" (Mt 15:24) was not their pitiful need, which they shared with Gentile sinners, but their membership in Israel, the people to whom Moses had said: "You are a people sacred to the Lord, your God, who has chosen you from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly His own" (Deut 14:2). Therefore Jesus bid His apostles: "Do not go in the direction of the Gentiles, nor enter the towns of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5-6). Only after Good Friday, when the religious leaders of Israel had rejected Him, did Jesus command the apostles "to make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). Thus, in the mysterious providence of God, their shutting themselves to the Christ made an opening for the nations, or, in the words of St. Paul, "by their offense salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:11).

Jesus' promise to the apostles that they would be like the ancient judges of Israel, indeed would be coregents with Him, the Messiah (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30), raises a problem which we shall consider at some length when discussing Paul's use of the name Israel. This is the problem: Does Israel in the New Testament also designate the Church of Christ, the New Covenant as the perfection of the Old, as the fulfillment of its great promises? "And Jesus said to them, Amen I say to you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28). The phrase "the twelve tribes of Israel" designates the totality of the chosen people. Even after the destruction of the northern kingdom and the "loss" of the ten tribes that comprised it, the expression continued in use. In "the regeneration," that is, in the "new world," "the world to come" spoken of by the prophets, namely the messianic era, the apostles who have left all to follow Jesus will share in His sovereign
rule over God's chosen people. When Jesus spoke these words the apostles shared the popular hope for a temporal restoration of the nation under a glorious Messiah. Since Jesus had told them that His own mission was limited to His own people according to the flesh (Mt 15:24) and had forbidden them to preach to Gentiles and Samaritans (Mt 10:5-6), the apostles could have understood the expression "the twelve tribes of Israel" only as a reference to the Jewish people. But when Matthew, years after the Resurrection and Pentecost, composed his Gospel and recorded this promise, he and his Christian readers could not have failed to see in it a reference to the jurisdiction over the Church contained in the apostolic office.

The observations just made are applicable also to Lk 22:30. Luke, however, places this promise, as well as Jesus' lesson on the spirit of humble service that must characterize the authorities of His Church, in the setting of the Last Supper, after the institution of the Eucharist and the announcement of Judas's betrayal (Lk 22:14-30). It is quite probable that Luke has removed these sayings from their original context and placed them in the Supper setting under the influence of the liturgical practice of the primitive Church. Jesus' logia on humble service would be particularly appropriate at the Christian liturgical gatherings and were probably recalled on their occasion. "For which is the greater, he who reclines at table, or he who serves? Is it not he who reclines? But I am in your midst as he who serves. But you are they whom I have continued with me in my trials. And I appoint to you a king, even as my Father has appointed to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging..."

18. In ancient civilizations the act of judging was considered the essential act of royal power. "Judging" therefore connotes "ruling" and should not be restricted to "pronouncing sentence." See M. J. Lagrange, Evangelie selon saint Matthieu (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1927), p. 382.

19. Lagrange, op. cit., pp. 380-382. J. Knabenbauer, Evangelium secundum Matthaeum (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1893), pp. 164-168, gives a summary of the opinions of the Fathers. St. Jerome, strange to say, comments that Christ promises His apostles that they will "condemn" the Jewish people who had refused to believe their preaching—rather typical of Jerome's irascible temper. The passage is commonly understood to refer to the final judgment at the end of the world. But A. Calmet, Commentarius Literarum in Omnes Libros N.T. Tomus Primus (Wurzburg, 1787), pp. 368-369, sees in this promise a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. He attempts ingeniously, but unsuccessfully, to explain how the apostles had part in that judgment of the year A.D. 70.


21. Reading, as in Mt 19:28, katësìthe (Vulg. sedeatis) with the Codex Vaticanus rather than katësìte, whence the probability of a harmonization of Lk with Mt 19:28.
the twelve tribes of Israel." Read in the context of the Last Supper and of the Christian liturgical gatherings, it is "hardly doubtful that the table is the eucharistic table and the 'judging on the thrones' signifies the government of the spiritual Israel, which is the Christian community." The kingdom in which the apostles partake of the table of Christ is the Church with its eucharistic banquet. This exegesis does not exclude the usual eschatological interpretation, for "the Eucharist is the figure and the pledge of heavenly beatitude, but the attention is directed first to the eucharistic banquet in the kingdom already present, and to the authority of the apostles in this same kingdom, that is, in the Church."

Jesus' use of Israel in this promise to His apostles may have influenced John's description of the Church in his Apocalypse as "the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the children of Israel" (Apoc 7:4).

The Fourth Gospel: Israel occurs four times in the Gospel of John, Israelite once (Jn 1:31, 49; 3:10; 12:13; 1:47). In all five texts it designates the Jew as a member of the people God singled out for a special destiny.

The Apocalypse: In the Apocalypse John employs Israel three times. In the first text, where the Church at Pergamum is censured because she permitted in her midst Gnostics, men holding "the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, that they might eat and commit fornication" (2:14), the term designates the ancient Jews, the chosen people of the period of the exodus. The other two texts (7:4; 21:12) offer strong evidence for the thesis that John regarded the Church, "the New Jerusalem," as Israel standing on a mountain great and high, now encompassing the whole world, with its portals open to all peoples. Many recent Catholic commentators of the Apocalypse, J. Sickenberger, A. Gelin, A. Wikenhauser, and J. Bonsirven agree in explaining the 144,000 as a symbol of the Church. They see in this symbol of the 144,000 sealed out of every tribe of Israel a promise that God will protect the faithful members of His Church in the midst of the calamities which His providence sends for the chastisement of the wicked world. The Apocalypse, in the opinion of Père Bonsirven, professes the Pauline thesis, "maintaining that the Church is the true Israel; the 144,000 to be protected can-
not be Jewish Christians only, because at the end of the first century the majority of the faithful were of Gentile origin. 24 Similarly Wikenhauser: "The marking with God's seal places the servants of God under the special protection of God. This cannot be applied solely to Jewish Christians and denied to Gentile Christians." 25 Finally, the description of the Church in Apoc 21:12 as the "New Jerusalem," having twelve gates inscribed with the names of "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," seems a conclusive confirmation of this exegesis. 26

The Acts of the Apostles: Israel and Israelite occur quite frequently in the Acts of the Apostles and, with two exceptions, only in the first half of the book. 27 These chapters narrate the history of the primitive Church in its Palestinian homeland, while the second half of the book treats of Paul's missionary activity in the Gentile world. This squares well with what has been said about the practices of First and Second Maccabees. In the Acts, Israel always keeps its religious connotation, but with varying degrees of emphasis. When the apostles address the Jewish people as "Israelites," they are reminding them of their responsibility as members of God's covenanted people to do God's will and accept His Messiah, Jesus. One Sabbath, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, after the reading from the Law and the Prophets, Paul arose and said: "Israelites and you who fear God (i.e., Gentile proselytes who accepted Israel's faith but shied away from circumcision and much of the fat of the tal) are Israel. 28


25. See the works cited above: Sickenberger, pp. 191-192; Gelin, p. 662; Wikenhauser, p. 137; Bonsirven, pp. 317-318; Allo, p. 346: "Doubtless St. John had in mind the spiritual Israel, but if he speaks here of the historic Israel and a little later (verse 14) of the 'twelve apostles,' he wants to show the unity of the Old and New Testaments; in any case, the teaching of these verses is the universality, the 'catholicity,' of the heavenly Jerusalem." Ezekiel (Chap. 48) is the source of John's symbol.

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the Mosaic Law), hearken. The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they were sojourners in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm led them forth out of it.” Then, having taken his hearers in one bold sweep through sacred history, he confessed: “From his (David’s) offspring, God according to promise brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Ac 13:16-17, 23). Gutbrod remarks on this last verse: “The Israel that receives the promise and the Israel that enjoys the fulfillment of the promise is one and the same, God’s community.”

So Paul declares to the leaders of the Jewish community of Rome: “Brethren . . . it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain” (Ac 28:17, 20).

The Epistles of Paul: In the Pauline corpus Israel occurs eighteen times, nine times in the Epistle to the Romans, and Israelite three times, twice in Romans,29 the name keeping its religious significance throughout. Israel is the people the Lord has adopted like a son; to whom He has granted the glory of His nearness, the Shekinah; with whom He has made the Covenant; to whom He has given the Law, the worship, and the promises (Rom 9:4). Eph 2:12 is a striking illustration of Paul’s use of the word. Before the coming of Christ the Gentiles were “without God in the world,” atheot, deprived of “citizenship,” politeia, in Israel, the people of God. A learned rabbi, steeped in the history and theology of the Old Testament, Paul was almost fiercely proud of the privileges of God’s chosen people. His faith in the election of Israel never faltered. As a Christian he believed and maintained stoutly that he was a true Israelite, because the Church of Christ is the Israel of God. For Paul the Church is not a substitution for a discarded Old Covenant. The Church is the perfection of the ancient Covenant, because she is the realization of all its promises. The Church, in Paul’s thought, is identified with the Israel of David, of the exodus, of the patriarchs, just as the mature man is identified with the boy and the infant. Chapters 9 to 11 of his Epistle to the Romans give the first steps in the development of his argument for this basic thesis of his theology. He establishes from biblical history that “they are not all Israelites who are sprung from Israel; nor because they are the descendants of Abraham, are they all his children; but Through

29. Israel, Rom 9:6, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25, 26; 1 Cor 10:18; 2 Cor 3:7, 13; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:12; Phil 3:5; Heb 8:8, 10; 11:22. Israelite, Rom 9:4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22.
Isaac shall your descendants be called.' That is to say they are not the sons of God who are the children of the flesh, but it is the children of promise who are reckoned as posterity" (Rom 9:6–8). The Apostle is not opposing, in this passage, a spiritual Israel (the Church) to a fleshly Israel (the Old Covenant). Neither is he concerned with proving that any besides those of Jewish descent might inherit the promises. He is occupied solely with establishing that the divine oath sworn to Israel is and will be fulfilled even if some of the Jews keep aloof from the Christ. For certainly, physical descent from Abraham and Jacob is not in itself a ground for inheriting the promises. The proof is God's election of Isaac to be the bearer of His promise and His exclusion of Ishmael; and, more striking still, the rejection of Esau, the first-born of Isaac and Rebekah, and the choice of his twin, Jacob, to carry on the holy line of patriarchs (Rom 9:9–13). Thus Paul proves that God's pledge to Abraham, to all the patriarchs, and to the whole people of Israel, has not been made void, even though the majority of the people have not believed in Jesus the Christ. For Paul, Israel in its theological, sacred significance is not coextensive with the Jewish people. It is at once narrower and wider. One can be a Jew, a blood descendant of Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, and yet not be, in the fullest and truest sense, an Israelite, a real member of God's covenanted people. Through their unbelief in Jesus, the Seed of Abraham, who makes true the promises, the majority of the Jewish people have cut themselves off from the Israel of fulfillment. It is in this sense that they are like

Hebrew, Israelite, Jew

“branches broken off.” And it is in this sense that Paul refers to the Jews in 1 Cor 10:18 as “Israel according to the flesh.”

“Physical connection with the Jewish stock was not in itself a ground for inheriting the promise. That was the privilege of those intended when the promise was first spoken, and who might be considered to be born of the promise. This principle is capable of a far more universal application, an application which is made in the Epistle to the Galatians (3:29; 4:28), but is not made here (Rom 9:6–8).”

In chapters three and four of Galatians the Apostle argues that the seed in whom the promises of Abraham are fulfilled is Christ. If he believes and is baptized, anyone, irrespective of his origin, is incorporated in Christ, and the man of faith becomes a child to the patriarch, inherits “the blessing of Abraham” and “the promise of the Spirit” (Gal 3:7, 14). “For all you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are the offspring of Abraham, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:27–29). Thus Gentiles, “who were once afar off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ,” who before were “excluded as aliens from the community of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,” have received in Christ “citizenship in Israel” (Eph 2:12–13). The Church is therefore the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), the Israel of His aim, the Israel He planned and prepared through the long generations that sprang from Abraham’s loins, the Israel He saw when He pledged to the patriarch a Blessing to “all the nations of the earth” (Gen 12:2–3; 18:18) and children as numerous “as the stars of the heavens, as the sands on the seashore” (Gen 22:17).

Thus the Church does not supersede and replace Israel. She is Israel. Mary, the apostles, the disciples, the hundred and twenty gathered in the Cenacle (Ac 1:15), all the many thousands of Jews who believed in Jesus, constitute the “faithful remnant” of which the prophets spoke. “The converted Jews may be very few in number; it must be so in order that they may be ‘the remnant,’ but few as they are, they form the holiest part of the new people, and it is only because of

32. The expression occurs more than fifty times, especially in Isaiah, for instance, Is 1:9; 10:20–22; 11:11–12; Zach 8:11–12; Soph 3:13; Jer 31:7.
insertion with them on the same stem that the Gentiles become Israel." 33 The majority of the Jews have been broken off from the tree of Israel because of lack of faith. But the tree, God's chosen people, still lives on in the holy remnant that accepted the Messiah. Gentiles are admitted into Israel the way branches of wild olive are grafted on to the cultivated tree (Rom 11:17-24). It is thus that Isaiah (Chap. 55 and 56) envisaged the future, and thus that Paul calls the Church the Israel of God. The Gentile Christians supported by the stem, "the faithful remnant," share in the fatness of the olive tree and are branches by the gracious mercy of God. As for the "natural branches" that have been broken off, "they are most dear for the sake of the fathers" (Rom 11:28), and "God is able to graft them back" (Rom 11:23).

33. L. Cerfau, La Théologie de L'Eglise suivant saint Paul (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1948), p. 39. Concerning the Remnant see Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, IV, "Der Rest im Alten Testament" by Henrich, pp. 200-215, and "Der Restgedanke bei Paulus" by Schrenk, pp. 215-221. In his article "Was bedeutet 'Israel Gottes'?" in Judaica, VI, 2 (June 1949), pp. 81-93, Gortlob Schrenk argues vigorously that "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) refers only to Jewish Christians, precisely to Jewish Christians who do not share the errors of the Judaizers of Galatia. N. A. Dahl, in "Zur Auslegung vom Gal 6:16," Judaica, VI, 3 (Sept. 1950), pp. 161-170, answers Schrenk's arguments and shows how the context of chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians offers strong support to the exegesis of "the Israel of God" as the whole Church, while it is very unfavorable to Schrenk's exegesis. Dahl's article is followed immediately (pp. 170-190) by a long answer from Schrenk, "Der Segenswunsch nach der Kampfepistel." He points out that both interpretations are ancient. St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 354-407) saw the whole Church in the Israel of God of Gal 6:16, while St. Ephraim (A.D. 306-373) restricted it to Jewish Christians. I think Schrenk is absolutely right in his basic thesis that the Jewish Christians constitute the Awtahl Israels, the faithful remnant. But I cannot follow him in his refusal to grant Gentile Christians citizenship in this Israel of God. Were not proselytes considered members of Israel? 34. It might not be amiss to point out that when Paul speaks of the Jews as torn from the tree, he certainly does not wish to prejudge the eternal salvation of the individual Jew. That he calls his disbelieving kinsmen "branches broken off," and only a little later speaks of them as "most dear for the sake of the fathers," shows that the first expression does not refer to their inner state of soul. This he leaves to God to judge. The Jews are "branches broken off" because their disbelief in Christ cuts them off from membership in the Church. Still, through faith and love, a Jew can be orientated toward, and invisibly linked to, the Church, the one Body of salvation. Again, "broken branches" is a metaphor, and metaphors must never be pressed too far: for the Apostle the Jews are not just dry wood. Without doubt, denial of Christ against one's better knowledge is death, but disbelief in Christ because of inculpable ignorance, though it is an appalling loss, need not kill the faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which is life. Needless to say, however, that according to the spirit of Paul and the teaching of the Church, a Jew (and for that matter any man) who is saved though—without his fault—he has not believed in Christ, is still saved through Him.

JEW IN THE SYNOPSIS

The Synoptic passion narratives are filled with counterpoints by First Maccabees, a text known to have been read by Jews that preserved "Where is my God?" from Pilate placating the Jews" (M. Ant. 11:10). But the Targum, speaking from the perspective of the nation, might perhaps suggest that the rabbis of the Talmud, and the Jews opposed to the new movement, may have had a different view of the name for the people. However, John's unique narrative must reflect the situation as it appeared to him.

The Apostolic Exposition of the Jews

Jews of faith in Jesus as the Messiah had to face a number of apostolates that had to be considered in order to determine in whom the same power and influence were to be invested. In his long discourse and 11. At the end of his sermon, Jesus says: "He who has heard in a Gentile the word of the kingdom and has understood it, has the exceptional honor of hearing it spoken in the presence of the disciples." These words are then continued in the passage from Matt 13:50-52.

11.4 Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament

This is the reason why the exhortation to salvation, addressed to each man in this way: "He who has heard in a Gentile the word of the kingdom and has understood it, has the exceptional honor of hearing it spoken in the presence of the disciples." These words are then continued in the passage from Matt 13:50-52.
JEW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Synoptic Gospels: The rather infrequent use of Jew, Ioudaioi, in the synoptic Gospels agrees with the Palestinian practice as illustrated by First Maccabees. Jew is the Gentile name for the people and is used by Jews themselves only when speaking to Gentiles. The Magi inquire: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" (Mt 2:2), and the title Pilate placed over Jesus' cross bore the inscription "The King of the Jews" (Mk 15:26; Mt 27:37; Lk 23:38). In Lk 7:3: "And the centurion hearing of Jesus, sent to Him elders of the Jews," the evangelist, speaking from the viewpoint of the Gentile soldier, adopts his terminology. Mark's "for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat without frequent washing of hands" (7:3) is a parenthesis intended for Gentile readers unacquainted with Jewish customs. Referring to the rumor started by the chief priests that, by night, while the guards at the sepulcher were asleep, the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, Mt 28:15 continues: "And this story has been spread among the Jews even to this day." The omission of the article before Jews in the Greek text suggests that the meaning is "among some Jews," that is, among those Jews opposed to the Church. If this is so, then Matthew is employing the name in the restricted sense that is typically Johannine. But this verse may be an added observation of the Greek translator and so reflect the usage of a later period.

The Acts: In the Acts, the name Jew is met frequently (78 times), most often (67 times) in the last fifteen chapters, which narrate Paul's apostolate in the Gentile world. In these chapters Luke adopts the terminology current among Gentiles and Jews of the Diaspora. The same principle explains the use of Jew in six texts of chapters 9, 10, and 11. In all these (9:22, 23; 10:22, 28, 39; 11:19) the name occurs in a Gentile environment. A few instances (2:5, 11, 14) are apparent exceptions, but the principles underlying the usual practice explain these texts too. In verse 5 Luke wants to distinguish Jews of the dispersion from the pagans among whom they dwell, and in verses 11 and 14 Jews by birth from proselytes. In a few texts of the Acts (12:3, 11; 13:50; 14:18; 17:5, 13), Jew has a nuance of enmity to the Church. This is especially marked in 12:3, 11.

The Epistles of Paul: Paul employs the name Jew in an exceptional manner. In the synoptic Gospels and in Acts the name is usually found
in the plural, except of course when applied to an individual. In Paul Jew is used in the singular and without the article. It does not indicate an individual, a member of a nation and a religion, but it is a type, almost an abstraction, designating a religious entity or a religious attitude. The Pauline contrast of “Jew and Greek” or “Jew and Gentile” is a good illustration of this use. This contrast is founded not precisely on ethnic differences but on a religious reality that is the result of God’s action in history. The Jew is the recipient of God’s revelation and of the Law. He possesses advantages other men do not enjoy (Rom 3:1; 9:4). This use of Jew as a type is quite evident in Rom 2:28-29 where the Apostle opposes “the Jew who is so outwardly” and “the Jew who is so inwardly.” In the context the genuine Jew, “the inward Jew,” is one who not only knows the Law but keeps it. Thus for Paul, true Jew and Jew by blood are not synonymous. The true Jew is one who has the virtues which his religious faith supposes; true circumcision is of the heart. Père Lagrange observes on this passage: “By this incontestable principle that God esteems only true virtue, that of the interior, of the heart and soul, Paul was preparing his theory of the true Israel, which gives to Christians the right to claim, in the spiritual sense, all the privileges conferred on Israel by the Old Testament.”

The basic religious note Paul attaches to the word Jew is observance of the Law. He applies the term to Jewish Christians who observe the Law (Gal 2:13), but also to Jews who do not believe in Christ. So in 1 Cor 9:20-21, when he says: “I have become to the Jews a Jew . . . to those under the Law, as one under the Law. . . .”

The Apocalypse: Jew occurs only twice in the Apocalypse (2:9; 3:9). In both texts Christ, through the mouth of John, denies this honorable name to Jews hostile to the Church. Implying that they do not form “the synagogue of God,” He calls them “a synagogue of Satan,” the adversary of God. Of course, it is not the Jewish people that is said to serve Satan, but only the foes of the Church. The Jews who persecute the Church “say they are Jews, and are not, but are lying,” an expression which recalls the “outward Jew” of Rom 2:28-29. In the Apocalypse, however, the implication is clear that the true Jews who are marked by the promise of God are the “true Jews,” the Jews who have kept their religious vocation. Because God is faithful to His promise and patient with His people who have not always kept it, He has opened “the Way of the Lord” for the Jews. Thus Paul uses the term Jew, also for the Jew who believes in Christ. A few years later when he was writing to his infant Church in Rome, he asks His readers to remember the Jewish people for whom He died (Rom 15:1). Thus true Jew is not an ethnically defined group, but one who has the virtues which his religious faith supposes; true circumcision is of the heart. Père Lagrange observes on this passage: “By this incontestable principle that God esteems only true virtue, that of the interior, of the heart and soul, Paul was preparing his theory of the true Israel, which gives to Christians the right to claim, in the spiritual sense, all the privileges conferred on Israel by the Old Testament.”

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Jews who form "the synagogue of God" are the Christians." Yet a
promise is held out that even Jewish persecutors will turn to Christ.
Because the bishop of the Church at Philadelphia has been steadfast
and patient under persecution, Jesus, "the Holy One, the True One, He
who has the key to the house of David," has caused "a door to be
opened" before him: Jews will come and worship and know that the
Lord loves the Church (Apoc 3:9).

The Fourth Gospel: While Israel occurs rarely in the Fourth Gospel,
Jew, almost always in the plural, appears very often: seventy times.
A few times, as in the Synoptics, it occurs on the lips of non-Jews as an
ethnic and religious name for the Jewish people. Thus Pilate begins
his interrogation of Jesus: "So you are the king of the Jews?", then
asks Him: "Am I a Jew?", and later turns to His accusers: "Do you
wish that I release to you the king of the Jews?" (18:33, 35, 39).
Thus the pagan soldiers, mocking Him: "Hail, king of the Jews!"
(19:3). Thus the title on the cross (19:19). So too the Samaritan
woman calls Jesus a Jew (4:9), and He Himself adopts her termi
nology when, assuring her that Israel is the people destined to give the
Saviour to the world, He says: "Salvation is from the Jews" (4:22).
The Gentile origin of the first readers of the Fourth Gospel accounts
for the quite frequent use of Jew to designate the inhabitants of Pal
estine during Jesus' lifetime and to explain Jewish terms and customs.
Long absence from Palestine and life in a Gentile environment led
John to adopt the terminology of the Gentiles. Hence in many texts
Jew is employed as an author of the Diaspora (such as the author of
Second Maccabees) would use it, as a conventional name for the people
without any further nuance. It should be noted, however, that
Jn 8:31, 11:45, 12:11 refer to Jews who believed in Jesus.
Besides these uses John employs Jew in a manner peculiar to him
self. Frequently the name designates the enemies of Jesus, "the Jews"
becoming almost a stereotyped expression for opposition to Him. "The

37. J. Bonsirven, op. cit., p. 11; Wilkenhauser, op. cit., p. 37; Allo, op. cit., p. 35, explains that "synagogue of Satan" is an intended contrast with the "synag
gogue of God" of Num 16:3 and 20:4.
38. In rabbinical literature Jew is met with on the lips of Samaritans; see Strack-
Billerbeck, op. cit., II, 424.
40. Jn 4:9; 8:31; 10:19; 11:19; 31, 33, 36; 12:9, 11. "All this shows that in
John loudaios is often simply the designation of the men with whom Jesus dealt,
and designation appropriate for readers who were remote in culture and time" (Gut
brodt, loc. cit., p. 386).
Richard Kugelman, C.P.

Jews," then, are the leaders of the nation, those adversaries of Jesus whom the synoptic Gospels call "the chief priests, the Pharisees (scribes) and the elders." "The Jews therefore were looking for Him at the feast, and were saying, Where is he? And there was much whispered comment among the crowd concerning Him. For some were saying, He is a good man. But others were saying, No, rather he seduces the crowd. Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of Him" (7:11-13). These "Jews" are clearly distinguished from the crowd, likewise Jewish. Since they are an object of fear to the people, they must be influential persons, chief priests or leading Pharisees, who were seeking Jesus' death because He had violated the Sabbath and made Himself God's equal. (For the distinction between Jesus' enemies and the people, see 7:15 and 7:20; 7:32 and 7:31; 8:3 and 8:2.) A comparison of John's pericope of the expulsion of the merchants and money-changers from the Temple (2:13-22) with the parallel narratives of the Synoptists confirms this identification of "the Jews," in this restricted sense, with the religious leaders who opposed Christ. Jesus engages in a discussion with "the Jews" who are indignant at His action and question His authority (2:18, 20). In Mt 21:15 and Mk 11:18 the chief priests and scribes, in Lk 19:47 the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people, are angry and desire to put Jesus to death. "The Jews therefore said to Him: What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?" (Jn 2:18). "And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and said to Him, By what authority do you do these things? and, Who gave you this authority to do these things?" (Mt 21:22-28; Mk 11:23-27; Lk 20:1-8).41

Renée Bloch makes a very penetrating observation. With the exception of a single reference to the scribes (8:3) and to the elders (8:9), the Fourth Gospel never speaks of scribes, elders, Herodians—an indication that the collective expression "the Jews" must embrace Jesus' adversaries of Galilee as well as His enemies among the leaders of the nation in Jerusalem.42

The various senses in which John uses Jew are evidence that the special nuance of which we are speaking is not contained in the word itself. Many of the limited uses of the word "Jews" at John may be explained because of the context. In this way, John's distinction between the "chief priests, the Pharisees..." and the crowd is consistent with the Synoptists. Jesus and the leaders of Jerusalem were clearly in conflict. Renée Bloch makes a very penetrating observation. With the exception of a single reference to the scribes (8:3) and to the elders (8:9), the Fourth Gospel never speaks of scribes, elders, Herodians—an indication that the collective expression "the Jews" must embrace Jesus' enemies of Galilee as well as His enemies among the leaders of the nation in Jerusalem.43

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41. Other instances of the limited use are Jn 2:18, 20; 5:16, 18; 7:11; 8:48, 52, 57; 10:33; 13:33 and frequently in the Passion narrative, 18:12, 14, 31, 36, 38; 19:7, 12, 31, 38.
42. R. Bloch, loc. cit., p. 29.
Hebrew, Israelite, Jew

n the eyes of the Pharisees and the scribes, the Jews were much to be desired. For some were interested in Him, but the Pharisees, who were the crowd, were indignant. In Mt 21:15 the chief priests and scribes and the elders of the people, and the Herodians—those who were adversaries of Jesus—were among the leaders of the crowd (8:9). With the exception of the chief priests (8:9), the other leaders of the crowd were enemies of Jesus. The Jews opposed to Jesus are indeed characters of history, but they are also in the intention of John the type of opposition to the Christ. "It is not the concrete reality of these men and hostile groups which preoccupies John," as Renée Bloch puts it so well. "These men, these groups, these Jews, represent for him the attitude of refusal; they become the type of opposition to the Incarnate Word, a historical symbol of the struggle of the darkness against the Light. It is the universal drama of this struggle between the Word made flesh and the darkness of the world which is at the center of the evangelist's attention. The concrete historical element is but a symbol, but a sign. It is this theological vision—of which the Incarnation is the foundation and to which the Prologue gives the key—that commands the literary structure and even the terminology of the Gospel. Hence the most characteristic Johannine sense of the expression 'the Jews'—which could be called pejorative 43—can be understood only in this framework." For John, Renée Bloch insists, the drama which took place within the Jewish people around the year 30 represents the universal and, at the same time, most intimate drama of faith and refusal, which has a particularly poignant character in the people in whose bosom the Word was made flesh. The refusal of the Jews is thus the symbol of all refusal, while the faith of those Jews who came to believe is the symbol of all Christian faith.44

The devout Christian who, conscious of the role of sin in the drama of Jesus, identifies himself with those Jews who condemned Him and

43. Is "pejorative" really the right word? No doubt, an unthinking reader may take John's restricted and symbolic use of "the Jews" as derogatory, antagonistic, but it was never meant to be so. What the evangelist is doing here is using a common figure of speech, synecdoche, in which the part is named instead of the whole ("a hundred head" instead of "a hundred cattle"), the whole instead of the part ("science says" instead of "scientists A, B, and C say"), the species instead of the genus ("Kodak" instead of "camera"), or the genus instead of the species ("creature" instead of "man"). With John, it is the whole for a responsible, a representative part; we all do this every day when we say: "The French (meaning: the French Assembly) turned out their government," or: "America (meaning: the American tennis team) won."

with those who clamored for His crucifixion has rightly understood John’s use of the name Jew. But the Christian who associates his Jewish neighbors with those who plotted Christ’s death is perpetuating an injustice never contemplated by the apostle. If a man reads John’s account of the Passion without the spirit of the gospel, he may well be tempted to point his finger and exclaim: “Those Jews!” But if he reads it with the spirit of the gospel, he will strike his breast and say: “It is I who am the sinner; it is we, all of us, who are the crucifiers of Jesus.”

A member of the Israel of God, grafted by the divine mercy into the faithful remnant which continues the chosen people, the Catholic has a family pride in “our holy patriarch Abraham.” Like Paul, the desire of his heart is for the salvation of his “kinsmen” the Jews. And he exults in knowing that they, the “natural branches,” will surely be grafted back to partake again of the fatness of the stem and contribute to the fullness and beauty of God’s olive tree.