

## MISHMAH AND TALMUD

by Dr. Robert A. Morey

# JESUS IN THE MISHNAH AND TALMUD



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#### **About the Author...**

r. Morey is an internationally recognized scholar in the fields of theology and apologetics. He is the author of over twenty-five books—some of which have been translated into Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Finnish, Chinese, Norwegian, Swedish, and Polish. He is the Executive Director of the Research and Education Foundation which is dedicated to researching those issues which affect not only the future of the Christian Church but also Western thought and culture. For a full listing of all his books and tapes, contact:

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#### JESUS IN THE MISHNAH AND TALMUD

#### Introduction

The statements concerning Jesus in the Mishnah and the Talmud are of great historical worth. They indicate how some of the first and second century Jews tried to refute the claim that Jesus was the long awaited Jewish Messiah.

The problem that confronts us is that all the references to Jesus were removed out of the text in A.D. 1631 by the order of a synod of Jewish leaders at Petrikau, Poland. This regrettable fact has been noted by both Jewish and Christian talmudic scholars. The order of censorship is as follows:

Great Peace to our beloved brethren of the house of Israel. Having received information that many Christians have applied themselves with great care to acquire that knowledge of the language in which our books are written, we therefore enjoin you, under the penalty of the great ban (to be inflicted upon you as shall transgress our statue), that you do not, in any new edition either of the Mishna or Gemara, publish anything relative to Jesus of Nazareth; and you take special care not to write anything concerning him, either good or bad, so that neither ourselves nor our religion may be exposed to any injury.<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully, copies of the uncensored pre-1631 texts can be found in Oxford University and several other European libraries. Thus the statements about Jesus were never actually "lost." They were published separately in numerous editions and studied by Jewish scholars in private. No one denies these facts any more.

While the Soncino edition of the Babylonian Talmud is a censored text, the editors usually give the uncensored original readings in a footnote. We have put the statements about Jesus back into the text where they originally belonged and have indicated this by [ ].

The Talmud is divided into the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is usually viewed as covering material up to A.D. 220 and is called the Tannaite period. The Gemara picks up after the Mishnah and covers material up to the fifth century and is called the Amoraim period. But it must be remembered that the Gemara often contains older Mishnahic statements.<sup>3</sup> The Tannaite statements about Jesus are identified below. All other readings are from the Amoraim period.

Mishnah Jeb. iv. 13 [b. Jeb. 49] j. Sanh. vii. 16. b. Sanh. 43. T. Shab. xi. 15. b. Sanh. 67. l. Sanh. ix. 7. b. A. Zar. 16, 17. T. Hull. ii, 22, 23. b. Shab. 104.

We will also give any footnotes found in the Soncino edition that relate to the identification of Jesus in the uncensored text where deemed of any importance.

Their apologetic value is great. When debating the issue of whether Jesus ever existed, the talmudic references to Jesus are a valid historical proof of His existence and of the basic facts of His birth, life, and death.

We must warn the reader that the following citations from the Mishnah and Talmud are not for the faint of heart or weak of stomach. To the Christian, these citations are sheer blasphemy. One can easily see why some misguided cultural Christians in the Middle Ages persecuted the Jews.

Jesus is called by many different names in the Talmudic material: Jesus, Jeshu, Jeshua, Yeshu, The Nazarene, Jose, Ben Stada, The Son of Stada, Mesith, Ben Padira, Such-a-One, So-and-So, Balaam, the king, Minim, and ha-Notzri.

Just as Christian leaders have publicly apologized to the Jews for the terrible things done to them since the Middle Ages, Jewish leaders should now publicly apologize for the terrible things they said about Jesus in the Mishnah and Talmud.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE TEXTS

According to the Talmud, the mother of Jesus was perhaps of noble birth and was named Miriam or Mary. She was a hairdresser by trade. Her husband's name was Pappus ben Jehudah but her lover's name was Panderia. She is said to have had an adulterous affair with a carpenter.

Jesus was conceived out of wedlock or by an adulterous affair and was thus a bastard. His trip to Egypt as a child is interpreted as the occasion when He learned the tricks used by magicians. Although His miracles were only illusions, He deceived many. He sinned against Israel like Balaam and caused many to sin against God by heresy. For this He was condemned and excommunicated.

Jesus claimed to be God, the "son of man" and even claimed to be able to raise Himself from the dead. This is historical proof that the Palestinian Church worshipped Jesus as God. At Lud, He was convicted of false teaching, blasphemy, and revolution by witnesses

who hid from His sight. The unfairness of the trial is seen from the fact that He was not allowed to face His accusers.

For His supposed crimes, Jesus was first stoned and then hung or crucified. When the herald proclaimed this verdict, not one person came forward in His behalf. He was hung on the eve of the Passover, which was also the eve of the Sabbath. He was 33 at the time of His death and had five disciples. After His death, Jesus suffered eternal punishment in hell by being boiled in hot semen and excrement. Such disgusting language reveals the hatred that was directed toward Jesus.

The basic chronology of Christ's life is thus verified by the testimony of His enemies. The Jews did not deny that He was born or that His mother's name was Mary. They did not deny that His birth was out of the ordinary, or that He was taken to Egypt as an infant. They do not even deny that He did remarkable things which some interpreted as miracles. They just gave the explanation that these "miracles" were actually a magician's tricks.

That Jesus was arrested and put to death is also verified by the Talmud. Even the names of some of His chief apostles are given, which is a solid proof of their historical existence. Over all, the Talmud testifies to the reliability of the historical events set forth in the Gospels.

### THE TEXTS I. HIS BIRTH

MISHNAH.[104b] If one writes on his flesh, he is culpable; He who scratches a mark on his flesh.

He who scratches a mark on his flesh, [etc.] It was taught, R. Eliezer said to the Sages: But did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches [in the form of charms] upon his flesh? He was a fool, answered they, and proof cannot be adduced from fools. [Was he then the son of Stada: surely he was the son of Pandira?—Said R. Hisda: The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. But the husband was Pappos b. Judah?—His mother was Stada. But his mother was Miriam the hairdresser?—It is as we said in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit., "turned away from"—satath da) her husband.] (SHABBATH 104 b)

R. Papa said: When the Mishnah states a MESITH IS A HEDYOT, it is only in respect of hiding witnesses. For it has been taught: And for all others for whom the Torah decrees death, witnesses are not hidden, excepting for this one. How is it done?—A light is lit in an inner chamber, the witnesses are hidden in an outer one [which is in darkness], so that they can see and hear him, but he cannot see them. Then the person he wishes to seduce says to him, "Tell me privately what thou hast proposed to me"; and he does so. Then he remonstrates; "But how shall we forsake our God in Heaven, and serve idols?" If he retracts, it is well. But if he answers: "It is our duty and seemly for us," the witnesses who were listening outside bring him to the Beth din, and have him stoned. ["And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lydda, and they hung him on the even of Passover." Ben Stada was Ben Padira. R. Hisda said: The husband was Stada, the paramour Pandira. But was not the husband Pappos b. Judah?—His mother's name was Stada. But his mother was Miriam, a dresser of woman's hair?—As they say in Pumbaditha, This woman has turned away (*satath da*) from her husband, (i.e. committed adultery).]

R. Joseph, when he came to the [following] verse, wept: But there is that is swept away without judgment. [He said]: Is there anyone who passes away before one's [allotted] time?— Yes, as in the story [heard] by R. Bibi b. Abaye, who was frequently visited by the Angel of death. [Once] the latter said to his messenger: Go, bring me Miriam, the women's hairdresser! He went and brought him Miriam, the children's nurse. Said he to him: I told thee Miriam, the women's hairdresser. He answered: If so, I will take her back. Said he to him: Since thou hast brought her, let her be added. But how were you able to get her?—She was holding a shovel in her hand and was hearing [5a] and raking the oven. She took it and put it on her foot and burnt herself; thus her luck was impaired and I brought her. Said R. Bibi b. Abaye to him: Have ye permission to act thus? He answered him: Is it not written: "There is that is swept away without judgment?" He countered: "But behold it is written: One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh!" He replied: I have charge of them till they have completed the generation, and then I hand them over to Dumah! He [then] asked him: But after all, what do you do with her years? He replied: If there be a Rabbinic scholar who overlooks his hurt, I shall give them to him in her stead. (HAGGIAH 4b)

Footnote in Soncino: "Supposed by Tosah, to be the Mother of Jesus; cf. Shab. 104b in the earlier uncensored editions. Her description Megaddela (hairdresser) is connected by some with the name of Mary Magdalene whose name was confused with that of Mary, the mother of Jesus."

R. Simeon b. Azzai said: I found a family register in Jerusalem and in it was written, "Such-a-one is a bastard through [a transgression of the law of] thy neighbor's wife," confirming the words of R. Joshua. YEBAMOTH, 4.13

#### II. HIS LIFE

Our Rabbis teach, Ever let the left hand repel and the right hand invite, not like Elisha who repulsed Gehazi with both hands, [and not like Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah who repulsed Jeshu (the Nazarene) with both hands. What of Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah? When Jannai the king killed our Rabbis, Joshua ben Perachjah [and Jeshu] fled to Alexandria in Egypt. When there was peace, Simon ben Shetach wrote to him: "From me [Jerusalem] the city of holiness. to thee Alexandria of Egypt [my sister]. My husband stays in thy midst and I sit forsaken." He came and found himself at a certain inn: they showed him great honor. He said, "How beautiful is this Ascania!" [Jesus] said to him, "Rabbi, she has narrow eyes." He said, "Wretch, dost thou employ thyself thus?" He sent out 400 trumpets and excommunicated him. He [Jesus] came before him many times and said to him,

"Receive me." But he would not notice him.

One day he [i.e., Joshua] was reciting the Shema (i.e., the words: "Hear, O Israel," Deut. vi 4 et seq.), he [i.e., Jesus] came before him. He was minded to receive him, and made a sign to him. He [i.e., Jesus] thought that he repelled him. He went and hung up a tile and worshipped it.

Joshua said to him, "Return." He replied, "Thus I have received from thee, that every one who sins and causes the multitude to sin, they give him not the chance to repent." And the teacher [i.e., he who has handed down this tradition] has said, "Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led astray and deceived Israel." (SANHEDRIN 107b)

Our Rabbis have taught, Always let the left hand thrust away and the right hand draw near. Not like Elisha who thrust Gehazi away with both his hands (and not like R. Joshua b. Perahiah who thrust one of his disciples [Jesus the Nazarene] away with both his hands). (SOTA, 47a)

R. Hisda also said in the name of R. Jeremiah b. Abba: What is meant by the verse, There shall be no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling? "There shall no evil befall thee."—the Evil Impulse shall have no power over thee: "neither shall any plague come night they dwelling"—thou wilt not be affrighted by nightmares and dread-thoughts; "neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling"—thou wilt not have a son or a disciple who publicly burns his food [like Yeshu (i.e., Jesus) the Nazarene.] (SANHEDRIN 103a)

There is no breach; [that is], may our company not be like that of David from which issued Ahitophel. And no going forth: [that is] may our company not be like that of Saul from which issued Doeg the Edomite. And not outcry: may our company not be like that of Elisha, from which issued Gehazi. In our broad places: may we produce no son or pupil who disgraces himself in public [like the Nazarene.] (BERAKOTH 176)

Rabbi Abahu said, If a man shall say to thee, "I am God," he lies; if he says, "I am the son of man" he shall rue it; "I will go up to heaven" (to this applies Num. xxiii 19) he saith, but shall not perform it. (Jerusalem Talmud Taanith-65b)

He who upon the Sabbath cuts letters upon his body is, according to the view of Rabbi Eliezer built, according to the view of the sages he is not guilty. Rabbi Eliezer said to the sages: "Ben Stada surely learned sorcery by such writing." They replied to him: "Should we in any wise on account of a fool destroy all reasonable men?" (Tosephta Shabbath XII)

He who scratches on the skin in the fashion of writing is guilty, but he who makes marks on the skin in the fashion of writing is exempt from punishment. Rabbi Eliezer said to them: "But has not Ben Stada brought magic spells out of Egypt in this way?" They answered him: "On account of one fool we do not ruin a multitude of reasonable men." (Jerusalem Shabbath 13d)

He who scratches a mark on his flesh [etc.] It was taught, R. Eliezer said to the Sages: But

did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches [in the form of charms] upon his flesh? He was a fool, answered they, and proof cannot be adduced from fools. [Was he then the son of Stada? surely he was the son of Pandira?—Said R. Hisda: The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. But the husband was Pappos b. Hudah?—His mother was Stada. But his mother was Miriam the hairdresser?—It is as we say in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit, "turned away from"—satath da) her husband. (SHABBATH 104b)

#### III. HIS TRIAL AND DEATH

When the Mishnah states a MESITH IS A HEDYOT, it is only in respect of hiding witnesses. For it has been taught: And for all others for whom the Torah decrees death, witnesses are not hidden, excepting for this one. How is it done?—A light is lit in an inner chamber, the witnesses are hidden in an outer one [which is in darkness], so that they can see and hear him, but he cannot see them. Then the person he wished to seduce says to him "Tell me privately what thou hast proposed to me"; and he does so. Then he remonstrates; "But how shall we forsake our God in Heaven, and serve idols?" If he retracts, it is well. But if he answers: "It is our duty and seemly for us," the witnesses who were listening outside bring him to the Beth din, and have him stoned. [And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lydda, and they hung him on the eve of Passover. Ben Stada was Ben Padira.] R. Hisda said: The husband was Stada, the paramour Pandira. But was not the husband Pappos b.

Hudah?—His mother's name was Stada. But his mother was Miriam, a dresser of woman's hair?—As they say in Pumbaditha, This woman has turned away (*satath da*) from her husband, (i.e., committed adultery). (SANHEDRIN 67a)

And it is tradition: On the eve of the Passover they hung Jeshu [the Nazarene]. And the crier went forth before him forty days (saying). [Jeshu the Nazarene] goeth forth to be stoned. because he hath practiced magic and deceived and led astray Israel. Any one who knoweth aught in his favor, let him come and declare concerning him. And they found naught in his favor. And they hung him on the eve of the Passover. Ulla said, "Would it be supposed that [Jeshu the Nazarene] a revolutionary, had aught in his favor?" He was a deceiver, and the Merciful (i.e., God) hath said (Deut. xiii. 8), "Thou shalt not spare, neither shalt thou conceal him." But it was different with [Jeshua the Nazarene] for he was near to the kingdom. (Sanhedrin 43a)

Rabbi Meir used to say, What is the meaning of (Deut. xxi. 23), For a curse of God is he that is hung? [It is like a case of] two brothers, twins, who resembled each other. One ruled over the whole world, the other took to robbery. After a time the one who took to robbery was caught, and they crucified him on a cross. And every one who passed to and fro said, "It seems that the king is crucified." Therefore it is said, A curse of God is he that is hung. (T. Sanh. ix. 7)

As if to say why was he hanged?—because he cursed etc. It has been taught: R. Meir said: A parable was stated; To what is this matter

comparable? To two twin brothers [who lived] in one city; one was appointed king, and the other took to highway robbery. At the king's command they hanged him. But all who saw him exclaimed, "The king is hanged!" whereupon the king issued a command and he was taken down. (SANHEDRIN 46b)

Onkelos son of Kolonikos was the son of Titus's sister. He had a mind to convert himself to Judaism. He went and raised Titus from the dead by magical arts, and asked him: Who is most in repute in the [other] world? He replied: Israel. What then, he said, about joining them? He said: Their observances are burdensome and you will not be able to carry them out. Go and attack them in that world and you will be at the top, as it is written. Her adversaries are become the head, etc.: whoever harasses Israel becomes head. He asked him: [57a] What is your punishment [in the other world]? He replied: What I decreed for myself. Every day my ashes are collected and sentence is passed on me and I am burnt and my ashes are scattered over the seven seas. He then went and raised Balaam by incantations. He asked him: Who is in repute in the other world? He replied: Israel. What then, he said, about joining them? He replied: Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. He then asked: What is your punishment? He replied: With boiling hot semen. He then went and raised by incantations [Jesus]. He asked them: Who is in repute in the other world? They replied: Israel. What about joining them? They replied: Seek their welfare, seek not their harm. Whoever touches them

touches the apple of his eye. He said: What is your punishment? They replied: With boiling hot excrement, since a Master has said: Whoever mocks at the words of the Sages is punished with boiling hot excrement. Observe the difference between the sinners of Israel and the prophets of the other nations who worship idols. It has been taught: Note from this incident how serious a thing it is to put a man to shame, for God espoused the cause of Bar Kamza and destroyed His House and burnt His Temple. (GITTIN 56b-57a)

They asked R. Eliezer: "What about Soand-So in the world to come?"—He replied. "Have you asked me only about this one?" "May one save the lamb from the lion?"—He said to them: "Have you asked me only about the lamb?" "May one save the shepherd from the lion?"—He said to them: "Have you asked me only about the shepherd?" "May a mamzer inherit?"—[He replied]: "May he marry the wife of his brother who died without issue?" "May one whitewash his house?"—[He replied]: "May one whitewash his grave?"—[His evasion was duel not to his desire to divert them with words [counter-questions], but because he never said anything that he had not heard from his teacher. (YOMA 66b)

Footnote in Soncino: "Some see in Peloni, 'So and So,' a reference to Jesus."

Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, [did the children of Israel slay with the sword]. A soothsayer? But he was a prophet!—R.

Johanan said: At first he was a prophet; but subsequently a soothsayer. R. Papa observed: This is what men say, "She who was the descendant of princes and governors, played the harlot with carpenters." [106b: Did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them. Rab said: They subjected him to four deaths, stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation.]

A certain min said to R. Hanina: Hast thou heard how old Balaam was?—He replied: It is not actually stated, but since it is written, Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. [it follows that] he was thirty-three or thirty-four years old. He rejoined: Thou hast said correctly; I personally have seen Balaam's Chronicle, in which it is stated, "Balaam the lame was thirty years old when Phinehas the Robber killed him." (SANHEDRIN 106b)

Footnote in Soncino: "Balaam is frequently used in the Talmud as a type for Jesus (v. also pp. 64–70). Though no name is mentioned to shew which woman is meant, the mother of Jesus may be alluded to, which theory is strengthened by the statement that she mated with a carpenter. (The Munich MS. has in the margin instead of i.e., singular instead of plural.) Balaam being used as an alias for Jesus, Phinehas the Robber is thus taken to represent Pontius Pilatus, and the Chronicle of Balaam probably to denote a Gospel."

And he took up his parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Woe unto him who maketh himself alive by the name of God. [a covert allusion to Jesus.] (SANHEDRIN 106a)

#### IV. Jewish Attitude Toward Him

(Mnemonic: 'ebed yishtahaveh meloshiah). Abaye said, how do I know it? Because we have learnt, HE WHO ENGAGES IN IDOL WORSHIP, IT IS ALL ONE WHETHER HE SERVE IT etc. Surely it means: whether he serve it through love or fear, [or whether he sacrifice to it as a god]. (SANHEDRIN 61b)

Footnote in Soncino: "Lit. 'The servant shall bow down to the anointed one.' Three passages are adduced, whose catchwords are respectively, Service, Prostration, The Anointed One. S. Funk (Die Juden in Babylonien, p. 94, n. 2) sees in this mnemonic an allusion to the Christians' acceptance of Jesus, 'the servant' being the title claimed by those who worship him as the Messiah."

MISHNAH. The blasphemer is punished only if he utters [the divine] name. Josehua B. Karha said: The whole day [of the trial] the witnesses are examined by means of a substitute for the divine name, thus, "May Jose smite Jose." When the trial was finished, the accused was not executed on this evidence, but all persons were removed [from court], and the chief witness was told, "State literally what you heard." Thereupon he did so, [using the divine name]. The judges then arose and rent their garments, which rent was not to be resewn. The second witness stated; "I too have heard thus" [but not uttering the divine name]. And the third says: "I too heard thus." (SANHEDRIN 56a)

Footnote in Soncino: "According to Levy, s.v., the first Jose stands for Jesus (son), and the second is an abbre-

viation of Joseph, the Father, by which, however, God was to be understood. The witnesses were accordingly asked whether the accused in his blasphemy had set Jesus above God."

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eliezer was arrested because of Minuth they brought him up to the tribune to be judged. Said the governor to him, "How can a sage man like you occupy himself with those idle things?" He replied, "I acknowledge the Judge as right." The governor thought that he referred to him [though he really referred to his Father in Heaven] and said, "Because thou hast acknowledged me as right, I pardon; thou art acquitted." When he came home, his disciples called on him to console him, but he would accept no consolation. Said R. Akiba to him, "Master, wilt thou permit me to say one thing of what thou hast taught me?" He replied, "Say it." "Master," said he, "perhaps some of the teaching of the Minim has been transmitted to thee [17a] and thou didst approve of it and because of that thou wast arrested?" He exclaimed: "Akiba thou hast reminded me." I was once walking in the upper-market of Sepphoris when I came across one [of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene] Jacob of Kefar-Sekaniah by name, who said to me: It is written in your Torah, Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot...into the house of the Lord thy God. May such money be applied to the erection of a retiring place for the High Priest? To which I made no reply. Said he to me: Thus was I taught [by Jesus the Nazarene], For of the hire of a harlot hath she gathered them and unto the hire of a harlot shall they return: they came from a

place of filth, let them go to a place of filth. Those words pleased me very much, and that is why I was arrested for apostasy; for thereby I transgressed the scriptural words, Remove thy way far from her—which refers to minuth—and come not nigh to the door of her house,—which refers to the ruling power. (ABODAH ZARAH 16b–17a)

Our Rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah. When Matthai was brought [before the court] he said to them [the judges], Shall Matthai be executed? Is it not written, Matthai [when] shall I come and appear before God? Thereupon they retorted: Yes, Matthai shall be executed, since it is written, When Matthai [when] shall [he] die and his name perish. When Nakai was brought in he said to them: Shall Nakai be executed? It is not written, Naki [the innocent] and the righteous slay thou not? Yes, was the answer, Nakai shall be executed, since it is written, In secret places does Naki [the innocent] slay. When Nezer was brought in, he said: Shall Nezer be executed? Is it not written, And Nezer [a twig] shall grow forth out of his roots. Yes, they said, Nezer shall be executed, since it is written, But thou art cast forth away from thy grave like Nezer [an abhorred offshoot]. When Buni was brought in, he said: Shall Buni be executed? Is it not written. Beni [my son], my first born? Yes, they said, Buni shall be executed, since it is written, Behold I will slay Bine-ka [thy son] thy first born. And when Todah was brought in, he said to them: Shall Todah be executed? Is it not written, A psalm for Todah [thanksgiving]? Yes, they

answered, Todah shall be executed, since it is written, Whoso offereth the sacrifice of Todah [thanksgiving] honored me. (SANHEDRIN 43a)

#### Conclusion

The Jewish witness to the historicity of the basic chronology of the birth, life, and death of Jesus should be of great interest to Christians and Jews. Today, the Jewish reclamation of Jesus is gaining momentum. But to acknowledge that Yeshua was a great Rabbi is not going far enough. He was the long awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world.

#### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Herman L. Strack, *Introduction To The Talmud and Midrash*, (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980) p. 277.

<sup>2</sup>John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, And Ecclesiastical Literature*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) Vol. X:172.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of this point see:

Bernard Pick, *Jesus In The Talmud*, (London: Open Court, 1913).

Robert Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903)

