

ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY'S JUDAIC-CHRISTIAN STUDIES PROGRAM

A REFLECTION ON ITS HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract

Oral Roberts University's (ORU) Graduate School of Theology and Missions offered the Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration (JCSC) of Master of Theology in Biblical Literature between the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2020. Under the supervision of Brad H. Young, the program flourished with academic excellence and distinct practical applications. Students learned to comprehend the teachings of Jesus in their Second-Temple Jewish context and to recognize the Jewish roots of Christianity. The program employed the comparative/associative methodology for exegetical work and utilized the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and primary Jewish sources, such as the Rabbinic literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Practical applications were implemented through personal encounters with Jewish rabbis, scholars, and those involved in Jewish-Christian relations who visited ORU to speak to the JCSC students, guests, and larger audiences. Attending special lectures by national Jewish speakers delivered in two local houses of worship offered additional practical benefits. Students also participated in field trips to the noted Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art. The Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration program reflected Oral Roberts' love for Israel, the Jewish people, the Hebrew Bible, and the Hebrew language.

Brad Young and Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration

In the fall of 2007, an innovative and important academic degree entered the Graduate School of Theology and Missions (GSTM) at Oral Roberts University (ORU): The Master of Arts in Biblical Literature with a Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration

(JCSC).¹ At the time, only a few universities accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) offered graduate degrees in Judaic-Christian Studies.² Professor of Biblical Literature, Dr. Brad H. Young, was the lead professor and advisor to the program until 2018, when he retired and was conferred Emeritus Professor. For twelve years, the program and Young were inseparable. He was a protege of eminent Jewish scholars David Flusser and Shmuel Safrai. According to his curriculum vitae, after spending a year abroad at Jerusalem University College (1973–1974), Young finished his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1978 at ORU, with a major in the Hebrew Old Testament and a minor in the Greek New Testament.³ Later that fall, he returned to Jerusalem and entered the graduate program in Comparative Religions at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Young earned his MA in 1981 with a major concentration in Early Christianity and a minor concentration in Early Judaism. He completed his PhD in 1986 as valedictorian of the class with a specialization in New Testament Studies and the Jewish Beginnings of Christianity. Young is an expert in Old and New Testament studies, the Hebrew and Greek languages, early Christianity and Judaism in late antiquity, Rabbinic literature, and Jewish-Christian dialogue and interfaith relationships in cross-cultural studies. While working on his two graduate degrees at Hebrew University, Young was the general editor of Flusser's 750-page book, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*. In addition to academics, Young was a leader in Jewish-Christian relations and a member of the Israel Inter-faith Committee (1979–1987). In Tulsa, he participated in [the] Jewish and Christian Dialogue Group, a body he continues to see today.

¹ The Graduate School of Theology and Missions was used until the Spring of 2011. In the fall of 2011, the name was changed to the Graduate School of Theology and Ministry.

² The ATS lists 279 schools on their "Discover Our Schools" page. In the "Degree" search, no institution is offering MA degrees or MA certificates in Jewish-/Judaeo-/Judaic-Christian Studies. Only the titles "Intercultural Studies," "Interreligious Studies" and "Jewish Studies" appear. See, "Degree," <https://www.ats.edu/member-schools>, accessed 5 October 2023. Only ORU and Alliance Theological Seminary offer Master of Arts (Biblical Literature) degrees. See, "Master of Arts (Biblical Literature)," <https://www.ats.edu/member-schools>, accessed 5 October 2023. I located one school that offers a Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies: Seton Hall University. See "Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies," www.shu.edu/academics/ma-jewish-christian-studies.html, 5 October 2023. Dallas Theological Seminary was the only ATS-listed school that I located offering a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies. See, "Master of Arts in Jewish Studies," <https://www.ats.edu/member-schools>, accessed 22 October 2023. It is remotely possible that a few more of the 279 schools offer JCSC type programs. Searching for them exceeds the time constraints for this article.

³ Brad H. Young, "Curriculum Vitae," 1, https://oru.edu/pdfs/faculty-and-staff/faculty-profiles/cv/brad_young_cv_2013.pdf, accessed 26 September 2023.

The Purpose of this Article

Chancellor Oral Roberts was highly recognized and commended for his tent-based healing crusades, his powerful evangelism, his seed faith concept, and the phrase “something good is going to happen to you.” Apart from an exceptional, comprehensive senior thesis by Kyle Hansen and specific articles that have appeared in the *Spiritus* journal, little has been published concerning Roberts’ passion for Jewish studies, and his love for Israel, the Jewish people, and the Hebrew Bible.⁴ Moreover, the palpable effects that his passions have had on the JCSC program is a topic that has not been investigated. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to describe a rare and exceptional program that was conceived and birthed during the first forty years of ORU’s history—a program whose origins can be traced back to ORU’s founder Oral Roberts.⁵ The article will introduce unfamiliar readers to the JCSC program and hopefully awaken wonderful memories for JCSC alumni who experienced the multifaceted, preeminent program. Specifically, I will 1) discuss the full history and content of the JCSC program; 2) explore two attributes that comprised every course: academics and practical applications; 3) discuss Oral Roberts’ profound influence on the development of the JCSC program; and 4) explain how the JCSC program, hence the MJCS degree, emerged from the prevailing ethos of the GSTM.

History of the JCSC Program

The Birth of the Program

Recently, I asked several ORU alumni, “Who started the JCSC program?” Their automatic response was “Brad Young,” but Young was not the originator. On the contrary, the program originated with James Breckenridge, Associate Professor of Theology, who joined the GSTM in 1988.⁶ After reading at least two of Young’s

⁴ Kyle Hansen, “Oral Roberts and Israel the Forgotten Story” (Senior thesis, Oral Roberts University, 2015), 29. I extend tremendous thanks to Kyle Hansen for his initial presentation in Zoppelt and for supplying me a copy of his thesis.

⁵ The first ORU Seminary began in 1965. The brochure for The Graduate School of Theology states, “The Graduate School of Theology of the Oral Roberts University, will be officially opened September 9, 1965, with the Junior class. Each year thereafter, a new class will be activated. The first graduation where the Bachelor of Divinity Degree is conferred will be in the Spring of 1968. The Seminary is a distinct educational entity and at the same time an integral part of the University.” See, ORU Library, Holy Spirit Research Center, “Graduate School of Theology Brochure (1965),” *ORU Archival Collection*, 6, 1, <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/oruarchives/6>, accessed 22 October 2023.

⁶ Brad H. Young, Advisor to the Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration Program at Oral Roberts University, interview by author, Tulsa, OK, 11 May 2023. Young was on the committee that hired Breckenridge.

books, and presenting a paper at the Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting entitled “The Biblical Theology of Brad H. Young as a Paradigm for Evangelical-Jewish Dialogue,” Breckenridge was disturbed by the lack of biblical astuteness among Christians.⁷ He believed a Judaic-Christian studies degree would place ORU on the “cutting edge” of scholarship by equipping students to understand the Hebraic basis of Christianity because Jesus, undeniably, was Jewish.⁸

Breckenridge’s idea was not unreasonable. Oral Roberts had an affection for Hebrew and for the Jewish people when he founded the university. His fervor in those areas unfolded in the early 1950s and continued throughout his life. His first visit to Israel was in 1953 with Myron Sackett. Sackett had been distributing Bibles for a few years before he was introduced to Roberts in Phoenix, Arizona. During his first visit to the Holy Land in 1953 with Sackett, Roberts told him, “Dr. Sackett, I don’t think you realize what a great work this is in giving the Bible back to the Jewish people who gave it to us in the first place. I want to have a part with you in this work.” By 1962, through the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association (OREA), Roberts and Myron Sackett distributed over 128,000 Bibles to the Jewish people in Israel under the name The Hebrew Bible Project. Sackett summarizes, “And I can say now that I little realized that from that day until this hour in February 1962, that he and I, together with God and the help of our friends and partners, would be able to print and distribute over 128,000 copies of the Bible to the Jewish people.”⁹

Former ORU presidents, GSTM professors, and deans of the seminary shared Roberts’ passion in one or more of the following areas: 1) the Hebrew language and Jewish Studies; 2) improving relationships with members of the Jewish community in Tulsa; 3) fostering Jewish-Christian dialogues globally; 4) overseeing trips to Israel with ORU students; and 5) creating multi-racial reconciliation through Jesus’ message of love and forgiveness. As a result, Roberts supported Young’s work for the seminary.¹⁰

James “Jimmy” Buskirk, the first dean of the second seminary, hired Young in 1976 to teach Modern Hebrew to the undergraduate students.¹¹ Over the years,

⁷ James Breckenridge, “The Biblical Theology of Brad H. Young as a Paradigm for Evangelical-Jewish Dialogue,” Evangelical Theological Society 51st Annual Meeting, Danvers, MA, November 1999, 21, https://www.etsjets.org/files/annual_programs/1999/1999_ETS_Program.pdf, accessed 29 September 2023.

⁸ Young interview, 11 May 2023.

⁹ See Myron Sackett, “How We Are Taking Christ to the Jews,” *Abundant Life*, February 1962, 21.

¹⁰ Young interview, 11 May 2023.

¹¹ In 1967, Ervin served as the acting dean of the School of Theology and “quickly encountered the challenges of running a new seminary. . . [he] realized that the young university was not ready for a seminary. In 1968, he asked Oral to close the seminary.” See, Daniel D. Isgrigg, “Thoughts from my Research as a Pentecostal Historian and Professor: Howard Ervin,” 3, <https://danieldisgrigg.com/howard-m-ervin/>, accessed 30 September 2023. The second seminary opened in 1975. See, Oral Roberts, “Why a School of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University?,” *ORU Catalog 2009–2010*, 113, <https://oru.edu/academics/catalog/index.php>, accessed 22 October 2023.

various deans encouraged Young “to develop new classes,” a task Young enthusiastically fulfilled. Roy Hayden and Howard Ervin also encouraged Young.¹² Hayden was a brilliant Semitic language and Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) professor in the GSTM for almost thirty-eight years. Hayden took Young’s class GBIB 766, Introduction to Rabbinic Literature.¹³ Ervin, the most senior GSTM professor, taught the Hebrew Bible and pneumatology for forty years. In 1970, after the tragic Kent State shootings, Hayden and Ervin took nine undergraduate students for a ten-week study trip to the American Institute for Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem.¹⁴ For fifty-four years, Oral Roberts and these ORU pioneers were casting seeds towards the future birth of the Judaic-Christian Studies program.

The JCSC construction began around 2005, under Thomson Mathew’s guidance as the GSTM dean. Mathew was a strong advocate of the program. As a third-generation Pentecostal/Charismatic preacher from India, he understood ministry in multi-religious settings. At this point, Young had ample support from administrative heads (past and present) to devise the program. Cheryl Iverson, associate dean of the GSTM, worked extensively with Young, and Paul Chappell, former dean of the GSTM, helped him with book selections for the courses. Chappell had been investigating which books to acquire for a future PhD program in Judaic-Christian studies. After about two years, the curriculum, course syllabi, and the Hebrew and Greek language requirements were complete. Young sighed, “It was a lot of work . . . a long process.”¹⁵ The faculty approved the new program,¹⁶ and in the fall of 2007, “Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration” appeared in an ORU catalog for the first time.¹⁷ When I attended the ORU College Weekend event in March 2008 and sat in his classes as a visitor, I did not know that the JCSC program was less than a year old.

Program Contents

The JCSC program was built on two pillars: world-class academics and practical applications. The academic pillar was unrivaled by way of Young’s superior training at Hebrew University and his nigh three decades immersed in the field. The JCSC courses integrated translation work, analysis of the cultural, historical, and religious context of

¹² Brad H. Young, interview by author, Tulsa, OK, September 28, 2023.

¹³ Young interview 28 September 2023. GBIB represents Graduate Bible.

¹⁴ “The American students were allowed to enroll in a maximum of nine credit hours which included archaeology, historical geography, and the religious significance of the modern State of Israel.” Lynn M. Nichols, “A Summer Sequel,” *Oral Roberts University . . . Now*, 2:1 (Fall 1970), 13.

¹⁵ Young interview, 11 May 2023.

¹⁶ Young interview, 11 May 2023.

¹⁷ *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, “Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration,” *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, 122, <https://oru.edu/academics/catalog/index.php>, accessed 22 October 2023.

Bible passages, evaluation of grammar and linguistics, exegesis, Jewish hermeneutics, and the comparative use of Jewish primary sources for elucidating Bible passages. The primary sources included the Hebrew Bible, the Greek New Testament, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and numerous works from the Rabbinic literature (the Mishnah, Talmud, Mekhilta, and the *Midrashim*).¹⁸

The Judaic-Christian subjects were comprehensive though not exhaustive. Below are some of the subjects the students encountered:

- The Jewish background of Jesus (Yeshua) and of the Gospels;
- Understanding the words of Jesus in their first-century Jewish context;
- Jesus and the Sabbath;
- Faith, grace, and Torah;
- Jewish and Christian prayer in the time of Jesus;
- *Halakhah* and *Aggadah*;¹⁹
- The Synoptic Problem: Lucan versus Markan Priority;
- The Comparative/Associative Method using primary Jewish sources;
- Hebraisms in the Gospels;
- Apocalyptic literature and its genre in the New Testament;
- Gentiles, Israel, and the natural olive tree in Romans 11:16–21;
- Paul’s Jewish observance after his Acts 9 calling; and
- Understanding oral tradition and oral transmission.

If any of the subjects above required theological reflection, reading and exegeting passages from a primary source, such as the Hebrew Bible, enabled students to glean theological insights directly from the Scriptures, instead of depending exclusively on secondary sources. For additional clarification, the comparative Jewish sources became invaluable. To illustrate, two of the student outcomes in GBIB 715 Bible and *Midrash* (Hebrew) stated, “Discuss the importance of being able to read and understand the Hebrew Bible” and “Explain the teachings of Jesus and their connection to Bible and *Midrash*.”²⁰ Through *Midrash*, rabbis examined and compared different passages from the Hebrew Bible to uncover rich interpretations of Scripture, beyond a superficial reading of the text. In John 4:22, Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “You Samaritans

¹⁸ Advanced JCSC courses examined scribal traditions, specific rabbinic periods, and the differences between the *halakhic* material and the *aggadic* material. See the following note.

¹⁹ *Halakhah* means “the way we walk.” The *halakhic* materials are legal and authoritative. *Aggadah* consists of stories, accounts, and everything else that is not *Halakhah*.

²⁰ Brad H. Young, “Student Outcomes,” syllabus from GBIB 715 Bible and *Midrash* (Hebrew), Oral Roberts University, January 2012.

worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews” (NASB20). Jesus affirms that salvation is from the Jewish people, making a Hebraic understanding of Jesus’ words an imperative.

Despite the many subjects within the JCSC corpus, most courses had two general goals: 1) to comprehend the words of Jesus accurately in their first-century, Second Temple Jewish context; and 2) to recognize and apprehend the Jewish roots of Christianity according to Paul’s charge in Romans 11:18, “Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you” (NASB). Overall, the class subjects were inviting and pleasant, but difficult subjects inevitably arose, namely antisemitism, replacement theology, and the *Sho’ah* (Holocaust). Such topics led to important discussions about antisemitism in biblical scholarship, bias in several English translations of the New Testament, the church’s response to the Holocaust, and current hostilities towards modern-day Israel.²¹ Young lived in Jerusalem among the Jewish people for over ten years, establishing him as a credible resource to discuss these vital issues. He advised the students to uncover and evaluate the facts before establishing their own perspective.

Young supplemented the academics with scholarly videos and documentaries—such as a video concerning James Dunn’s “New Perspective on Paul” and assorted documentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Sho’ah*. Young brought multiple artifacts from Israel to class: replicas of Jewish oil lamps, a menorah, and a facsimile of the Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In fact, his small office served as a miniature museum because it contained an authentic replica of a Qumran jar, a historic group photo of Robert Lindsey, David Flusser, David Bivin, and Shmuel Safrai, shelves filled with Judaica, choice academic texts, and a host of Jewish primary sources.

Specific Contents of the MJCS Degree

The JCSC program was derived from the Master of Arts in Biblical Literature (MBL) degree, which required seventy-three to seventy-three and one-half credit hours to graduate. The “Concentration” and the “Theological and Historical/Cognate” courses distinguish the JCSC program from the basic MBL degree.”²² When I started my research, I assumed that Young created all the JCSC courses from scratch, especially the classes in the “Concentration” section. I was wrong. The required and elective courses

²¹ For example, fifteen translations render the Greek word “Ἑβραϊστί” (*hebraisti*, Hebrew) Aramaic instead of Hebrew. See, *BibleGateway.com* “John 19:13,” n.d., n.p., <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/John%2019:13>, accessed 20 October 2023.

²² Master of Arts in Biblical Literature Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration Advisement Degree Plan Sheet, “Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration and Theological/Historical/Cognate,” Oral Roberts University, 2007.

for the “Concentration” and “Cognate” portions of the JCSC program already existed and had been in the ORU catalogs for years.²³ There were over seventy GBIB courses in the ORU catalogs from 2000–2007. The required “Concentration” hours varied from thirty-three to thirty-six, but the courses themselves were fixed.²⁴ Five became the permanent JCSC “Concentration” courses (15 hours):

- GBIB 618 Matthew (Greek) or approved substitute Greek course;
- GBIB 688 Jewish Background to the Gospels;
- GBIB 676 Pauline Theology/Jewish Thought;
- GBIB 715 Bible and *Midrash* (Hebrew); and
- GBIB 766 Intro to Rabbinic Thought and Literature.

Three other GBIB courses became the required MBL JCSC “Electives” (9 hours).²⁵ Students chose from the following:

- GBIB 583 The Parables of Jesus in Their Jewish Context;
- GBIB 697 Jewish and Christian Prayer in the Time of Jesus;
- GBIB 747 Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew);
- GBIB 766 Introduction to Rabbinic Thought and Literature;
- GBIB 774 Jewish Apocalyptic Literature; and
- GBIB 777 Exegesis of Romans (Greek).

Finally, the “Theological Historical/Cognate” (12 hours) included four non GBIB courses:

- GTHE 611 Theology of the Old Testament;
- GTHE 621 Theology of the New Testament;
- GTHE 681 Historical Theology; and
- GTHE Theology Elective.

²³ See, [2000–2002] *ORU Catalog*, “List of GBIB Courses,” 102–3, <https://orcu.edu/academics/catalog/index.php>, accessed 23 October 2023; and [2002–2004] *ORU Catalog*, “List of GBIB Courses,” 141–44, <https://orcu.edu/academics/catalog/index.php>, accessed 23 October 2023.

²⁴ Thirty-three “Concentration” hours were required from 2007–2011. The degree plan sheets from 2007–2008 and 2010–2011 years suggest thirty-three credit hours.

²⁵ The Electives are part of the thirty-six hours of Concentration courses.

Before the MBL degree with JCSC existed, a GSTM student could have pursued any of the above GBIB classes as an elective, after satisfying the prerequisites. The availability of GBIB classes, as far back as 2000, suggests that the GSTM and ORU were comfortable with subjects pertaining to the Jewish background of Jesus' life, heritage, culture, and message. Earlier, I noted the strong support Young received from the GSTM and from Oral Roberts during the construction phase of the program. Currently, the same seventy GBIB courses (except GBIB 747 Dead Sea Scrolls) are available in the 2023–2024 Catalog without the JCSC program. Ultimately, the program brought to the foreground and intensified various GBIB courses that existed under multiple ORU presidencies.

A Close Look at GBIB 688 The Jewish Background to the Gospels²⁶

The preceding forty-eight hours of Concentration, Elective, and Cognate courses distinguished the MBL with JCSC degree.²⁷ Perhaps you are wondering, “What comprises a specific JCSC course?” Consider GBIB 688 The Jewish Background to the Gospels, one of the most popular JCSC classes. The syllabus describes the course as: “A study of the historical, cultural, and religious background to the life and teachings of Jesus in light of early Jewish sources. Examines post-biblical Jewish literature to gain fresh insights into the Gospels and message of Jesus.”²⁸ The syllabus explained that the purpose of GBIB 688 was to “enable the student to . . . [s]tudy the life and teachings of Jesus by carefully studying and analyzing the gospel texts and their parallels; examine the inter-relationships between the synoptic Gospels, early Jewish sources; and the cultural milieu in which Jesus lived and carried out His mission.”²⁹ Overall, GBIB 688 provides a clear example of academic life in the JCSC program.

²⁶ Inarguably, the three most popular courses were the GBIB 583 The Parables of Jesus in Their Jewish Context, GBIB 688 The Jewish Background to the Gospels, and GBIB 697 Jewish and Christian Prayer in the Time of Jesus.

²⁷ The remaining 25 to 25.5 hours required to graduate also apply to the other MBL degrees. The rest of the MBL-JCSC Degree Plan Sheet included Assessments (1 hour), the ORU Distinctive courses (3.5 to 6 hours), and Prerequisites (18 to 21 hours). In 2007, the GSTM offered two Academic MBL degrees—the Master of Arts in Biblical Literature Concentration in Biblical Literature (MLIT) and the Master of Arts in Biblical Literature Concentration in Advanced Languages (MAL).

²⁷ The remaining twenty-one hours are not unique to the JCSC program: GBIB 756 Thesis Research and Proposal; GBIB 757 Thesis Writing; GBIB 500/510 1st Language Greek/Hebrew Synthesis I; and GBIB 501/511 2nd Language Greek/Hebrew Synthesis II.

²⁸ Brad H. Young, “Student Outcomes,” syllabus from GBIB 688 The Jewish Background to the Gospels, Oral Roberts University, January 2012.

²⁹ From the syllabus for GBIB 688, Spring 2012, page 1.

Textbooks were a significant part of every JCSC course. Young only selected critically acclaimed authors and scholars. For instance, GBIB 688 posted four required textbooks: F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*; and Brad H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*, with three optional books: Abraham Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*; and David Flusser, *Jesus*. The assigned texts elucidated conventional views or the latest scholarly perspectives, whether they concurred or diverged from Young. In this way, JCSC students were critically informed. I recall the classic rabbinic example from *Abot Rabbi Nathan* describing four disciples who are likened to a sponge, funnel, strainer, or sieve. “The ideal disciple is the sieve—a sieve lets out the bran and retains the fine flour (*Abot* 5:18). . . . The most desirable type of disciple is like a sieve who retains only the best of the teaching.”³⁰ Young encouraged the students to be sieves, not sponges (absorb the bad and the good), or funnels (in one ear and out the other), or strainers (keep the bad and allow the good to pass).

Practical Applications

I now turn to the second pillar of the program, the practical applications. JCSC students learned about the status of Jewish-Christian relations in Israel, and they participated in Jewish-Christian relations at ORU and in the Tulsa community. Young invited renowned rabbis, Jewish teachers, college professors, and Jewish leaders involved with Jewish-Christian relations to lecture at ORU on numerous subjects, especially topics from the Hebrew Bible. Many of the guest speakers flew to Tulsa from Israel. The JCSC students also attended lectures held at two local Jewish houses of worship and participated in exclusive tours Young prearranged at the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, a local Jewish treasure. The following examples illustrate the significant guest lecturers for the program.

Amy Jill Levine visited ORU on March 19, 2012. At the time, Levine was Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University and Affiliated Professor at the Woolf Institute: Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations in Cambridge, England.³¹ Levine aimed 1) “to identify areas where Christian teachings go wrong”; 2) to clarify the misunderstanding in Jewish/Christian contexts “where Jesus is taken out of that context and looked over and above Judaism instead of speaking from the heart of Judaism to other Jews”; and 3) to establish Jewish-Christian dialogue without

³⁰ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 266.

³¹ Amy-Jill Levine, “Curriculum Vitae,” Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt University, n.p., n.d., <https://as.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/people/emeriti/amy-jill-levine/>, accessed 20 August 2023.

sacrificing “our own positions on the altar of interfaith sensitivity.”³² Levine welcomed corrective emails perchance she had “erred” or said something “blasphemous.”³³ Allowing mutual correction between us and Levine safeguarded a growing Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Rabbi Gerald Meister addressed the ORU community on January 22 and 23, 2013, in association with the Center for Jewish Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC) in Israel. Meister was born in England, studied at the University of Wisconsin and the revered Yeshiva University in New York, and was fluent in many languages.³⁴ He was a principal forerunner in Jewish-Christian relations. Meister covered multiple subjects in two days, speaking pointedly about faith, humility, and the kingdom of God. He affirmed that the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) is the national treasure of the Jewish people, the revealed and infallible word of God, not subject to human emendations or editing. Meister visited ORU again before he passed unexpectedly on March 25, 2013, at the age of 71. On April 18, 2013, Young hosted a wonderful memorial service for Meister at ORU, and David Nekrutman was the chief speaker. This was a meaningful and practical demonstration of Jewish-Christian Relations.

David R. Nekrutman’s first visit to ORU was on January 10, 2012. Nekrutman was the executive director of CJCUC. He spoke to the GBIB 583 The Parables of Jesus in Their Jewish Context class in the morning and the GBIB 715 Bible and Midrash students in the afternoon. (I was present in both classes.) Nekrutman, a Yeshiva graduate, began his work in Jewish-Christian relations in New York in March 2002. Meister, Nekrutman’s “pulpit rabbi in Brooklyn New York and . . . mentor in Jewish Christian relations,” urged him to expand his impact in Jewish-Christian relations by earning a master’s degree from a Christian university.³⁵ Meister’s first and only recommendation was ORU. A few years later, Nekrutman enrolled in the MBL-JCSC program. In May 2018, Nekrutman became the first Orthodox Jewish person to graduate from the GSTM. He did so with honors. Young hooded both of us on the same day. Nekrutman provides webinars and Bible studies by Zoom and lectures and teaches regularly in churches across the United States and the world. I was privileged to edit Nekrutman’s first book, *Your Sabbath Invitation*, which he later adapted for high school students in the home school network.

³² Pamela Idriss, “Amy-Jill Levine,” class notes from GBIB 583 Parables of Jesus in Their Jewish Context, Oral Roberts University, March 2012.

³³ Pamela Idriss, “Amy-Jill Levine,” March 2012.

³⁴ Brad H. Young, “Memorial Service Rabbi Dr. Gerald Meister of Blessed Memory,” program, Oral Roberts University, 18 April 2013.

³⁵ David Nekrutman, interview by Robert Stearns, Buffalo, NY, 29 March 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf7yrEqUYIc>, accessed 23 October 2023.

Orthodox Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, the director of Interfaith Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center founded by Rabbi Marvin Hier in 1977, visited ORU several times.³⁶ For years, Adlerstein taught high school girls at the Yeshiva University High School of Los Angeles. In the Fireside Room on March 10, 2015, Young and Adlerstein provided a “Passover Demonstration” to a crowd of ORU students and outside guests.³⁷ Every table had at least one *Haggadah* and a *Pesach* (Passover) plate containing bitter herbs, *charoset*, horseradish, and *matzot*.³⁸ Young asked me to read an opening portion of the *Haggadah*, for which I was honored. The crowd marveled when Adlerstein stated that his familial *Pesach* seders always lasted until one or two in the morning, despite sleepy-eyed but willing children. Conducting an annual *Pesach* Seder obeys a positive *mitzvah* (commandment) from Exodus 13:8: “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt’” (NASB). *Pesach* is a major educational event for children. The *Haggadah* contains questions, games, and opportunities to involve the children throughout the celebration, so time is truly inconsequential. Those familiar with *Pesach* may misunderstand or forget (as I did) that *Pesach* demonstrations are only abbreviated versions of a longer celebration. Adlerstein’s enthusiasm persuaded me (and likely others) to disregard the time and to focus completely on the Seder.

Other lecturers included Shiri Achiash-West, the Israeli *sheliach* to Tulsa (2013).³⁹ Achiash-West spoke to the GBIB 635 Theophanies class about the land of Israel.⁴⁰ On October 7, 2013, Achiash-West greeted Tulsa at the “A Night to Honor Israel” celebration at Victory Church. On March 12, 2015, Faydra Shapiro spoke in GBIB 676 Pauline Theology and Early Jewish Thought about “Passover and Easter: Connection and Separation.”⁴¹ Shapiro is the founder and executive director of The Galilee Center for Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations located in Galilee, Israel (now called The Israel Center for Jewish-Christian Relations).⁴² Another important visitor

³⁶ “Passover Demonstration,” a flyer, printed by the Oral Roberts University College of Theology and Ministry, February/March 2015. The Simon Wiesenthal Center is a “a global Jewish human rights organization” confronting antisemitism and hatred worldwide. “Understand Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Mission,” <https://www.wiesenthal.com/about/about-the-simon-wiesenthal-center/>, accessed 10 August 2023.

³⁷ “Passover Demonstration,” flyer, February/March 2015.

³⁸ The *Haggadah* is the written text read and recited throughout the *Pesach* Seder. Many *Haggadadot* exist.

³⁹ A *sheliach* is an emissary from Israel who is chosen to further Jewish-Christian relations in a specific location in the world for a specific amount of time.

⁴⁰ Achiash-West is the first and only secular Jewish person to lecture the students during my years in the JCSC program.

⁴¹ Faydra Shapiro, “Passover and Easter: Connection and Separation,” a lecture, 12 March 2015, in GBIB 676 at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK.

⁴² The Israel Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, “Dr. Faydra Shapiro,” <https://www.jewishchristianrelations.com/meet-the-team>, accessed 23 October 2023.

was Orthodox Rabbi Pesach Wolicki, a Yeshiva teacher in Israel and a leader at CJCUC (in 2016). Wolicki's first ORU appearance was in Zoppelt on January 14, 2016. In that lecture, Wolicki emphasized our commonalities, namely our mutual belief in the God of the Bible. He delivered a fascinating and impactful talk concerning how Jewish persons find their soulmates. Wolicki is happily married with eight children. The next day, in the GBIB 749 Textual Criticism of the Bible for Translation and Research class, Wolicki taught on Psalm 19 using Jewish hermeneutics. He poignantly expressed how uncomfortable his Yeshiva students would be in this enclosed classroom of Christians. He returned to ORU in April 2016 and for additional lectures in 2018.

Field Trips

Temple Israel

The JCSC field trips afforded an immediate connection to the Jewish community in Tulsa. JCSC students were edified by the special lectures held at Temple Israel for their "Annual Dr. E. N. Rubin Clergy Institute on Judaism." Temple Israel is a Reformed Congregation. The guest speakers were Jewish authors, professors, college presidents, and rabbis. Each guest presented a morning and an afternoon talk. The Temple provided lunch, so the students were able to interact with members of the congregation and others from the Jewish community. On November 18, 2011, Rabbi Naomi Levy spoke at the Temple's thirty-fourth yearly event. Her subjects were "Talking to God" and "Hearing God's Call." Levy was in the first class that admitted women to pursue the rabbinate at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In "Talking to God," Levy referred to her book *To Begin Again: The Journey Toward Comfort, Strength, and Faith in Difficult Times*.⁴³ The "Hearing God's Call" was a study session, not a lecture. Attendees received detailed handouts entitled: "Rabbi Naomi Levy Study Sheet: 'Understanding God's Call.'"⁴⁴ The handout highlighted texts in Exodus and Leviticus concerning the calling of Moses. On November 11, 2013, president-elect of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbi Aaron Panken, spoke at the thirty-sixth annual event on the subjects: "True Lies—Approaching the Talmud" and on "Lights, Burning Quietly Bright: The True Story of Hanukkah."⁴⁵ Panken distributed handouts for both talks, which contained texts from Numbers, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Josephus, the Talmud, and other Rabbinic texts. Handouts for Levy and

⁴³ Naomi Levy, *To Begin Again: The Journey Toward Comfort, Strength, and Faith in Difficult Times* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 269.

⁴⁴ Naomi Levy, "Rabbi Naomi Levy Study Sheet: 'Understanding God's Call,'" a handout, 18 November 2011, Temple Israel, Tulsa, OK.

⁴⁵ Aaron Panken, "True Lies—Approaching the Talmud," and "Lights, Burning Quietly Bright: The True Story of Hanukkah," a handout, 11 November 2013, Temple Israel, Tulsa, OK.

Panken presented the texts in Hebrew and added English translations when necessary. Both rabbis were pedagogic, thorough, and engaging.

Congregation B'nai Emunah

At Congregation B'nai Emunah, the JCSC students enjoyed several *Shabbat* meals. On January 23, 2015, after the meal, Harvey Lechter from Lehigh University expounded on the history and function of Kabbalah, with the snappy title, “Middle Ages to Madonna.” On another visit to B'nai Emunah after the *Shabbat* dinner, the students viewed an impressive display of art projects created by the children of B'nai Emunah. The children were asked to depict any aspect of the *Sho'ah* that impacted them. Some constructed models of the cattle cars, others focused on the drab prison uniforms, another built an art piece memorializing thousands of wooden shoes. Eva Unterman was also present that night.⁴⁶ Unterman is a famous *Sho'ah* survivor who has lived in Tulsa for over sixty-two years. She was selling copies of the biography her granddaughter Phoebe Eloise Unterman had written and illustrated especially for children entitled, *Through Eva's Eyes*. Some of us remembered Unterman from a previous meeting when she shared her experiences at Auschwitz, Stutthof, and Theresienstadt. During her last public presentation, Unterman made a bold victorious statement: “The best way to get back at the Nazis is to have children and grandchildren,” something she certainly did.⁴⁷ Unterman has received numerous awards for her efforts to keep the history of the *Sho'ah* alive and accurate. On October 5, 2022, Unterman was inducted into the Tulsa Hall of Fame, the same month that she turned 90.⁴⁸

The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art

Most students were probably unaware that Tulsa has a recognized Jewish art museum; I certainly was. The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art is only two miles north of ORU, and it adjoins the Charles Schusterman Jewish Community Center. Both buildings reside on the Zarrow Campus, the home of the Tulsa Jewish Federation. The lower level of the museum features a fine arts gallery and the Sanditen/Kaiser Holocaust Center, which continues to the second floor. The Holocaust Center displays hundreds of artifacts belonging to soldiers and *Sho'ah* victims: clothing, shoes, the starred yellow badges, letters, documents, photographs, and more. The second floor contains

⁴⁶ Unterman is a “Lifetime Honorary Board Member” of B'nai Emunah. See, Congregation B'nai Emunah, “The Synagogue: Leadership,” <https://www.tulsagogue.com/leadership>, accessed 17 October 2023.

⁴⁷ Eva Unterman, “Eva's Story,” public speech, 2015, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

⁴⁸ Ted Landers, “A conversation with Eva Unterman, Holocaust survivor and Tulsa Hall of Fame Inductee,” 6 October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oe19QKw1fE>, accessed 14 October 2023.

thousands of artifacts from 5,000 years of Jewish history, life, culture, and religion: Torah scrolls, Torah pointers, prayer shawls, a *chuppah*, a *succah*, *ketubot* (marriage contracts), *Shabbat* candlesticks, *tzdeqah* boxes, and much more. An exhibit area in the back hosts the permanent and visiting fine art pieces.⁴⁹

Eva Unterman

Eva Unterman's story is an ideal segue to the Sherwin Miller Museum because a crucial part of her life lives permanently at the museum. In the Holocaust Center of the museum, there is a huge black and white photograph of a lovely woman walking on the sidewalk—carefree and smiling (under the German occupation of Lodz, Poland, Jews were prohibited from using sidewalks in the center of the city).⁵⁰ The woman was Eva Unterman's mother. Unterman loved to shop in old bookstores looking for books about the *Sho'ah*. Approximately twenty-eight years ago, she was in an old Border's bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She noticed a book, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto*.⁵¹ Unterman and her family lived in Lodz. She perused the book and was shocked to discover a picture of her mother. Unterman purchased the book, and that picture is the telling life-size photograph on the wall of the Sherwin Miller Museum.⁵²

Bob Golan

The second museum story involves Bob Golan. In 2015, my husband and I attended Kyle Hansen's incredible presentation about Oral Roberts' deep interest in Jewish studies and the land of Israel. In 1953, Roberts had traveled to Israel and met David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion urged Roberts to learn Hebrew. Later, when back in Tulsa, Oral and Evelyn started learning Hebrew from Bob Golan. Golan's family had escaped Poland in 1939 before the "Final Solution," and before the Nazi death camps were fully activated. Golan was 12. After the war, Golan was living in Israel where he experienced Israel's rebirth as a nation on May 14, 1948. In those days, Israel was trying to build an Air Force from a limited supply of planes and trained airmen. In 1949, Golan became one of the celebrated "Spartan Boys." Tim Stanley writes, "Golan was one of 42 men sent to the U.S. in 1949 to become certified

⁴⁹ For more details see the "About" section of the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art at <https://www.jewishmuseumtulsa.org/about>, accessed 17 October 2023.

⁵⁰ Eva Unterman, "Eva Unterman: Holocaust Survivor," interview by John Erling, *Voices of Oklahoma*, 12 October 2010, <https://www.voicesofoklahoma.com/interviews/unterman-eva>, accessed 14 October 2023.

⁵¹ Unterman, interview by John Erling, 12 October 2010. The book is, David Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto*, trans. Kamil Turowski, ed. Alan Adelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵² Unterman, interview by John Erling.

aviation mechanics through a yearlong training program in Tulsa. The “Spartan Boys” would eventually return to Israel and put their new skills to work, even helping establish a Spartan-inspired aeronautical school, the country’s first.”⁵³ Golan moved to Tulsa in 1954, after his military discharge in Israel, where he married and raised two sons.⁵⁴

Golan was my first docent from the Sherwin Miller Museum. His tour was informative and heart-rending. Golan emphasized the dehumanization, defamation, and the boundless ridicule the Nazis inflicted on the Jewish people and on other people groups—the mentally challenged, the weak, and the disabled. Golan despised the Nazis’ “Final Solution”, but he was gratified and determined to destroy the lies by declaring the truth about the Holocaust. Among the artifacts, I found the yellow badges to be the most disturbing. The tour continued to the second floor, where students sat on pews inside the *shul* model, and Golan lectured further on other aspects of Jewish history. A *shul* is the Yiddish word for “school,” but it refers to a synagogue.⁵⁵ Golan passed on February 9, 2016, at the age of 88.

As result of the tours, the Sherwin Miller Museum and the Community Center became my second home for special events. Young, my husband, and I attended a lecture at the Community Center by Susanna Heschel, Eli M. Black, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, daughter of esteemed Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel. We also attended a lecture by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. In the summer of 2014, I took some introductory modern Hebrew classes at the Community Center. In 2020, I entered a more rigorous program at the Rosen School of Hebrew in Israel, and now have six modern Hebrew classes a week.

Oral Roberts and the Ethos of the GSTM

Oral Roberts’ support of Jewish studies was more explicit than most realize. In 1998, Young acknowledged Roberts’ advocacy in his book, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*:

I would be remiss if, at this point, I neglected to acknowledge with gratitude Founder/Chancellor Oral Roberts and the strong platform he and Oral Roberts University have provided for the pursuit and exploration of the scholarly issues surrounding Christian and Jewish theology. He has both personally and

⁵³ Tim Stanley, “Bob Golan, Tulsa Jewish community figure and one of the ‘Spartan Boys,’ dies at 88,” *Tulsa World*, 3–4, https://tulsa-world.com/obituaries/localobituaries/bob-golan-tulsa-jewish-community-figure-and-one-of-the-spartan-boys-dies-at-88/article_bce0a4ad-5abc-5ea1-bd90-de365f9d2fe3.html, accessed 16 October 2023.

⁵⁴ Stanley, “Bob Golan,” 4.

⁵⁵ Tamar Fox, “shul,” <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/2008/11/25/going-to-shul-is-good-for-you-an-interview-with-dr-eliezer-schnall/>, accessed 17 October 2023.

academically promoted improved relationships and active dialogue among Christians and Jews, providing a receptive arena for understanding the words of Jesus, appreciating the Jewish people and esteeming their faith.⁵⁶

In his senior paper for ORU, Hansen observes:

Oral Roberts was a student of Judaism because he saw Christ and Christianity as from the Jews and as a branch in the tree of God's covenant to the Jews. . . . Oral Roberts was familiar with Christianity's Jewish heritage, the evangelist took some unique steps in Jewish-Christian relations. . . . In fact, Roberts' personal library contained volumes of books like *Midrash Rabbah*, the writings of Maimonides, and the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.⁵⁷

Roberts' interest in Jewish studies coincided with his academic expectations for the GSTM. He states, "I expect excellence from our students. [Our] . . . motto at ORU . . . says 'excellence is a way of life.' We believe in giving God our best. . . . Our students have the finest professors and facilities . . . we expect our students to devote their finest efforts to their studies."⁵⁸ Roberts was an evangelist and a scholar. In 1969, he published *The New Testament with Personal Commentary by Oral Roberts*, and in 1990, Roberts donated over 200 Jewish studies books to the ORU library.⁵⁹

Rabbi David J. Wolpe at ORU's Chapel Service

During my first interview, Young mentioned an unprecedented ORU event—one that foreshadowed the JCSC program's existence. In 1992, Richard Roberts welcomed and introduced seven members of the Tulsa Jewish Federation (TJF) to chapel:

Praise God. I welcome you all . . . students, and faculty, and staff but also the many visitors that we have . . . because of this very special occasion today. . . . We are blessed this morning to have among us a number of the leaders of the Tulsa Jewish Federation and our Jewish Community (applause erupted here before Roberts finished his sentence) and I would like to introduce some of them to

⁵⁶ Young interview, 11 May 2023.

⁵⁷ Hansen, "Oral Roberts and Israel," 29. Footnote 108 says, "John 4:22." Footnote 109 reads, "Rom. 11:16–24." The last sentence, "In fact, Roberts' . . . the *Encyclopedia Judaica*" is footnote 110 in Hansen's paper, which states, "Brad H. Young, 'Oral Roberts Remembered,' *Travelujah*, 13 January 2010, accessed 12 January 2015, <http://www.travelujah.com/blogs/entry/Oral-Roberts-Remembered>. See, Hansen "Oral Roberts and Israel," 29.

⁵⁸ Oral Roberts, "Why a Graduate School of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University?" *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, 120.

⁵⁹ *The New Testament: with Personal Commentary by Oral Roberts* (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, 1969). This Bible is available for viewing at the Holy Spirit Resource Center of the Center for Spirit-Empowered Research. The statement regarding "200 Jewish studies books" is from Hansen's personal interview with Young. See Hansen, "Oral Roberts and Israel," 29n111.

you . . . if they would stand as I introduce them Rabbi Emeritus Arthur Cahn from Congregation B'nai Emunah; the Executive Director of the the TJF David Bernstein was expected to arrive; Jeffery Levinson, Chairman of Community Relations Committee; Rose Miller, Jewish Federation Cultural Series; . . . [the] Israeli Emissary; Brian Green, the Education Director of Congregation B'nai Emunah—who was representing Rabbi Fitzerman, who was on the platform at the “Night to Honor Israel” event held at the ORU Mabee Center; Yolanda Churney, the Director of Community Relations Committee.⁶⁰ Let’s give them all a good God bless you.⁶¹

Spirited applause followed. The TJF had attended chapel to hear a distinguished guest speaker, Rabbi David Wolpe, author of *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God*. Wolpe was the first Rabbi to speak in an ORU chapel. Both Richard and Oral Roberts encouraged the students to buy a copy in the lobby after chapel. Regarding the book, Oral Roberts stated, “I have it marked up through and through . . . the pages turned down. . . . I’ve read this book through at least five times.”⁶² Oral Roberts spent almost six minutes introducing Wolpe. Portions of the introduction seemed prophetic because Roberts perfectly described the heart of the JCSC program.

I am more honored than ever to stand here. . . . [Evelyn and I] first heard David Wolpe . . . many months ago . . . up the street . . . where we . . . regularly . . . hear speakers . . . every time we are uplifted, we are taught; we learn more about our roots. Judaism did not come from Christianity. Christianity came from the roots of Judaism, and I always feel humbleness come over me when I am in the presence of the descendants, blood descendants of . . . Abraham and Sarah . . . Isaac and Jacob, and what we have come to call the children of Israel . . . became the nation of Israel and out of whom came . . . the Messiah. . . . We learn things that . . . we had not had an opportunity to know . . . in our Christian faith particularly when we hear someone who has an understanding of the Christian faith that is . . . often surprising to Christian people . . . as we listen to him today to share from the Jewish point of view anything that will help us serve our Lord better and know our background better and cling to our roots better will be a blessing long remembered.⁶³

Wolpe addressed ORU “as a rabbi representing the Jewish tradition,” and he hoped “to share together common roots and ideas [that] will benefit all of us.” He spoke for

⁶⁰ Richard Roberts, “Introduction to the Members of the Tulsa Jewish Federation,” chapel service, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, 10 January 1992.

⁶¹ The name of the Israeli Emissary is unclear on the recording. Roberts, “Introduction,” 10 January 1992.

⁶² David J. Wolpe, “How We Come to God Through Loneliness and Loss,” ORU chapel, 10 January 1992, <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/chapel/117/>, accessed 22 September 2023. His book is *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

⁶³ Oral Roberts, “Introduction to Rabbi David Wolpe,” Chapel Service, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, January 10, 1992.

twenty minutes on the subject, “Ways in which we come to God through of a sense of loneliness and loss.”⁶⁴ Wolpe identified three somber facets of life—loneliness, fear of death, and that every person is temporary, but he promptly hailed God’s love for us, especially in tragedies. Human intimacy and empathy are limited by thoughts, but God is aware of all our thoughts and deepest emotions every day and every moment. Wolpe stated that in his Jewish tradition God means “many things, but two of the most important are that if there is a God then you are never alone. And if there is a God you never truly die.”⁶⁵ God will never forget us. Wolpe’s profound insights dispelled any fears.

During his lecture, Wolpe repeated the phrase “my Jewish tradition.” That phrase capsulizes the heart of Jewish-Christian relations: we can learn from one another, especially when we share truths about God. Inviting Wolpe to speak to the GSTM and to the entire university substantiated Oral Roberts’ perspective on Jewish-Christian relationships. Both Oral and Richard Roberts championed the JCSC program fifteen years before it was created.

The MJCS Degree and the Ethos of the GSTM

In the 2000–2007 ORU Catalogs, the GSTM is categorized as working from a “charismatic” or “charismatic/Pentecostal” ethos. Under the heading, “Graduate Theology (Seminary),” the 2007–2008 catalog reads, “Professional, theological education at this seminary integrates Biblical and theological training with practical skills. This integration takes place in a charismatic/Pentecostal ethos where the gifts of the Spirit are manifested and spiritual formation is nurtured.”⁶⁶ The same catalog adds, the MBL degree “program enables students to integrate hermeneutical and exegetical insights into a theological/historical framework shaped by interaction with the charismatic ethos of Oral Roberts University.”⁶⁷ Ethos can be defined as “character, sentiment . . . the guiding beliefs, standards, or ideals, that characterize or pervade a group, a community, or an ideology: the spirit that motivates the ideas, customs, or practices of a people . . . or a region.”⁶⁸ The MBL-JCSC degree and the JCSC program were a consequence of what I call a *prevailing* ethos that coincided with the GSTM’s declared or written ethos. My research indicates that Jewish studies were of paramount

⁶⁴ Earlier, Wolpe spoke to the seminarians on “The ways in which—in the Jewish tradition—we come to God out of a concept of love, beauty, and of relationship to others.”

⁶⁵ David Wolpe, “Ways in Which We Come to God through of a Sense of Loneliness and Loss,” Chapel Service, Oral Roberts University, 10 January 1992.

⁶⁶ *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, “ethos,” *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, 119, 121, 125, <https://oru.edu/academics/catalog/index.php>, accessed 22 October 2023.

⁶⁷ *ORU Catalog 2007–2008*, “ethos,” 125.

⁶⁸ *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, “ethos,” ed. Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 1993), 781.

importance to Oral Roberts and to the GSTM's administration and faculty from the GSTM's inception. An ethos mindful of the Jewish background of Jesus, the Jewish people, the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew language, and modern-day Israel prevailed throughout the history of the GSTM from 1978 through 2007.

Conclusion

Despite a limited existence, the JCSC program was not hidden or obscure. The classes were filled with MBL, Master of Divinity students, counseling majors, and students seeking MAs in theological and historical studies. To date, thirty-three students earned a Master of Arts degree with a Judaic Christian Studies Concentration. Five JCSC students were accepted into the PhD program at the Jewish Theological Seminary.⁶⁹ At least three women have entered or finished their doctoral degrees. One JCSC alumna taught biblical Hebrew at a local Christian academy here in Tulsa.

After months of research and two lengthy interviews with Young, I am convinced that the Master of Arts in Biblical Literature with a Judaic-Christian Studies Concentration was an outgrowth of seeds Oral Roberts planted in Israel in 1953.

I want to thank the *Spiritus* team for inviting me to write this article, a process they rightly called a "pilgrimage." The pilgrimage necessitated reviewing eleven binders of detailed class notes. Without question, the program was outstanding. I am thankful for stellar academics and the unforgettable practical applications provided by Brad H. Young. The Judaic Christian Studies Concentration program in the Graduate School of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University permanently changed my life and confirmed the focus of my future studies.



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⁶⁹ A separate collection from the JTS resides in the Library Annex. The collection is described as, "Jewish Theological [S]eminary Collection. Especially through the work of Dr. Brad Young, the seminary has fostered strong ties with the Jewish community as part of its conviction that Christians should understand the origins of their faith in large measure by understanding respectfully and deeply the Judaism from which Christianity was born and with which it still has unique relations," <https://oru.libguides.com/spec/theoSpec>, homepage, accessed 23 October 2023.