Introduction

> By this one commandment it was made, therefore, known, that those
> things which had been established by Moses on account of the
> people's *hardness of heart* (Ex. 32:9) should be abolished, since the
> *stiff-necked people* (Matt. 19:8) had been replaced by the people who
> cherished Abraham's faith. These [commandments], *you shall not kill,*
> *and you shall not commit adultery* (Ex. 20:13–14; Deut. 5:17–18) and
> all the others, were observed even before the Law, and were [only]
> proclaimed in the Law. They were [later] made perfect in the Gospel.
> All the commandments in the Law, therefore, which were introduced
> for any reason, have ceased, not so that the ancient [order] might be
> abolished, but that the new [order] might be confirmed.[1]

No doubt, the author of this text, Ephrem of Edessa, was a faithful post-
Nicene Christian. Ephrem (306–373 CE) was one of the most renowned
Syriac Christian writers and is one of the earliest known to us by name.
Living in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, Ephrem followed
the New Testament and the teachings of the Western Church, and
accepted Paul's abolition of the commandments. Like his contemporaries
from the Western Roman Empire, he claimed that the commandments
were given to the Jews because of the "hardness of their hearts." But, he
argued, after the Christians had been chosen as the People of God, there
was no need for these commandments.

    This quote is part of Ephrem's discussion on divorce laws. As we shall
see, like his western Christian contemporaries and predecessors, he
accepted the evangelic prohibition on divorce. And, like other citizens of
the Roman Empire, he accepted some of the formal customs of the
betrothal ceremony, as described in Roman legal literature. Being a Chris-
tian citizen of the post-Nicene Christianizing Roman Empire, he was

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[1] Ephrem, *Diatessaron* 14.18 (Leloir 1963 ed. 130; McCarthy trans. 222 with changes). See full
discussion, p. 158.

committed to Roman law, as well as to Christian traditions, beliefs, and customs rooted in Greek and Roman Christian communities. This, however, is not the whole picture. He was also a Syrian living at the far end of this great Roman Empire. And he was an inhabitant of a Semitic region that preserved Semitic traditions, some of which are known today only from Sectarian and rabbinic sources. Ephrem's writings have constantly shown that he stands at a crossroads between eastern traditions and the western regime in which he lived, between a commitment to post-Nicene Christianity and Semitic – or even Jewish – heritage and practice.

The focal point of this book is matrimonial law. While the affinity between the theological and exegetical traditions appearing in Ephrem's writings and those appearing in Jewish literature has been studied extensively, scholars have paid very little attention to the extent to which there was affinity – or not – between the legal traditions Ephrem mentions, and halakhic traditions (that is, Jewish legal traditions). Nevertheless, legal or halakhic topics offer an exciting new context for understanding two of the main areas of inquiry in the study of late antiquity: first, the relation between Syriac Christianity, Jewish traditions, and Jewish communities, and subsequently the origin of Syriac Christianity; and second, the evolution of Christian legal thought and practice from their nascent stages. These two themes will accompany us throughout this book.

The focus on Ephrem's legal traditions and their comparison to Roman law and rabbinic halakha will enable us not only to point to the general similarity between Ephrem's traditions and Jewish ones but also to identify how his writings may reflect specific traditions from particular communities and periods. The halakhic discourse is, in many cases, much more varied and diverse than the theological and exegetical discourse in Jewish sources. Thus, when we examine a specific halakhic issue, we can perceive differences, for example, between sectarian and rabbinic practices or between Palestinian and Babylonian customs, that are not always identifiable when focusing on exegesis or theology. As a result, we will be able to position the halakhic traditions preserved in Ephrem's writings in relation to specific Jewish groups in late antiquity, and address the reasons for these affinities. This process, in turn, will allow us to reflect on the larger question of the origin of Syriac Christianity and its relation to Jews and Judaism in the first centuries CE, and on the evolution of the Christian legal tradition as a whole.

As a test case, this book focuses on matrimonial law as preserved in Ephrem's writings in comparison with contemporary and earlier Jewish, Christian, and Roman sources. This comparison demonstrates the affinity

between the legal traditions found in Ephrem's writings and early, some-times rejected, halakhic traditions, and the gap between Ephrem's legal traditions and contemporary Roman law, Christian legal discourse, and even contemporary rabbinic halakha. Recognizing this connection and the ways in which Ephrem was related to early Palestinian sectarian groups leads to the conclusion that he did not adopt Jewish traditions from his immediate surroundings. Rather, these traditions – which he may not have even recognized as Jewish – were transmitted to him using various chan-nels, whether Jewish, Jewish–Christian, or Christian. His preserving of earlier Palestinian legal traditions indicates that the origin of Syriac Christianity, at least partially, was rooted in early Palestinian sectarian groups.

The attempt to position Ephrem with regard to legal or halakhic traditions does not solely serve the study of Syriac Christianity and its relation to Jews and Judaism. It is also an ambitious undertaking to study early Christian sources from a legal perspective, and to start drawing the complex picture of the early Syriac Christian legal traditions – traditions rooted in late antique Roman law, Greek legal traditions, and rabbinic and sectarian halakha. In this book, I demonstrate Ephrem's naturalistic approach to sexual relations and their legal implications. As can be seen from his discussion on sexual relations, rape, and divorce, according to Ephrem the physical sexual act is a stronger determinant of marriage than words of intent or consent, and thus it can create an unbreakable marital bond. By that, Ephrem stands in strong opposition to Roman concepts of law, Christian legal discourse, and contemporary rabbinic halakha in his preference for the physical act as the primary determinant of the legal reality. This conclusion, however, is important not only for understanding Ephrem's legal thought and practice, nor only in determining his relation-ship to Jewish legal thought. Rather, it is a first step toward describing the legal thought and practice of late antique Christianity, whether in Syria or elsewhere, using sources that have been only sparsely used to date in the scholarly study of legal history. These embryonic legal traditions would later develop into the great Christian legal systems of the medieval and Byzantine worlds.

Ephrem: His Life, Time, and Home

No other leader in the emerging Syriac Christian community of late antiquity attained the same level of renown and honor as Ephrem. Living in the fourth century, Ephrem wrote polemical works, biblical commentary,

and numerous hymns. Only a few years after his death, his younger contemporaries had already begun to document and compose stories about his life and eulogize his writings. These stories were quickly followed by the publication of works attributed to him, translations of his own works into various languages, and full biographies describing his life and acts.[2]

He was born in 306 CE to a Christian family in the Christian community of Nisibis, a Roman border-town between the Roman and Sasanian empires (in what is present-day Turkey). Three times during his lifetime, in 338, 346, and 350 CE, the Persians tried to conquer Nisibis, and three times they were defeated. Eventually, in a peace treaty signed in 363 CE, Nisibis was ceded to the Sasanians. The Roman citizens of Nisibis, among them Ephrem, did not want to leave their hometown, but Emperor Jovian had agreed in the negotiations that they would depart and move to Roman territory.[3] Nevertheless, a Christian community remained in Nisibis after the Sasanian occupation, and, while suffering occasionally from persecution,[4] it also established the School of Nisibis.[5] Ephrem decided to remain in the Roman Empire, joined his neighbors, and fled westward, arriving at Edessa. He lived there for ten years, until his death in 373 CE.[6]

Living in both Nisibis and Edessa, Ephrem may have had close ties with local Jewish communities.[7] Josephus, writing in the first century CE, is the first to mention the Jewish community in Nisibis.[8] Tannaitic sources – that is, rabbinic sources from the first and second centuries – refer to Nisibis as the hometown of R. Judah, son of Bathyra, who lived toward the

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[2] Amar, *vita*.

[3] Sturm, "Nisibis"; Possekel, *Evidence*, 14–18; Lange, *Portrayal*, 13–16; Lange, *Diatessaron*, 1:17–30; Haider, "Tradition and Change," 204–6.

[4] Brock, "Christians."

[5] Vööbus, *Statutes*; Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*; Gero, *Barṣauma*, 14–24; Becker, *Fear of God*, 77–81.

[6] For descriptions of Ephrem's life, see the recent work of Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 9 ff. and the bibliography noted there; Lange, *Diatessaron*, 1:9–14; and Amar, *vita*, 2:x–xiv. See also Duval, *Histoire*, 151 ff; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 2:84–92; Vööbus, *Literary*, 46–58; Segal, *Edessa*, 87–91; Outtier, "Saint Éphrem"; Halleux, "Saint Éphrem"; McVey, *Hymns*, 3–28; and van Rompay, "Christian Syriac Tradition," 622–8 and noted on p. 622.

[7] For a survey of the Jewish communities in Syria and their knowledge of Hebrew, see Millar, "Rural Jewish Community."

[8] Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.312 (Feldman ed. and trans. 9:180–1); ibid. 18.379 (Feldman ed. and trans. 9:210–11). Josephus describes a city on the Euphrates, close to Nahardea, whereas Nisibis, in which Ephrem lived, is further to the north, in Mesopotamia, next to the river Khabur. This led Oppenheimer to claim that the Nisibis mentioned in Josephus and rabbinic sources as the hometown of R. Judah son of Bathyra is not Ephrem's hometown, but a town in Babylon, some 400 km to the south. Gafni, however, rejected this claim, see Oppenheimer, *Between Rome*, 356–73, and Gafni, *Jews of Babylonia*, 23 note 20.

end of the Second Temple era, and of his grandson of the same name, who lived during the second century.[9] The Nisibene Jewish community maintained ties with Palestine as well as with Nehardea in Babylon.[10] After the middle of the third century, however, the evidence of a Jewish community in Nisibis becomes sparse.[11]

Like other cities in the Eastern Roman Empire, Edessa,[12] Ephrem's home in his final years, was a city of different religious communities, including Christians and Jews among polytheist citizens of the Roman Empire. In Edessa, Ephrem joined a Christian community whose origin is documented from the second century in literature that was possibly written there and mostly known to Ephrem.[13] The *Acts of Thomas*, an account of Judah Thomas's missionary journey to India and later martyrdom,[14] the *Peshitta*, the Syriac translation of the Old Testament,[15] and the *Odes of Solomon*, a collection of forty-two odes composed in Greek or Syriac and attributed to Solomon,[16] all relate at different levels to Jewish or

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[9] Neusner, *History*, 46–52, 130–7. [10] *b. Pesah.* 3b; *b. Shab.* 96b; *b. Qidd.* 10b.

[11] For a survey of Jewish life in Nisibis, see Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia," 38*–9*; Eshel, *Jewish Settlements*, 189–91; and Gafni, *Jews of Babylonia*, 23–4. For a religious history of Nisibis, see Russell, "Nisibis."

[12] For a survey of the history and archeological findings in Edessa, see Drijvers, "Hatra," 863–96; Millar, *Roman Near East*, 472–88; Drijvers and Healey, *Old Syriac Inscriptions*, 35–41; cf. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 87–94; and Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 5–45, who emphasizes the city's Greco-Roman background. For a description of the city, its beliefs and history, see Duval, *Histoire*; Klijn, *Edessa*; Segal, *Edessa*; Drijvers, *Cults*, 9–18; and Possekel, *Evidence*, 20–6 and noted at note 61. For bilingualism in Syria, see Millar, *Rome*.

[13] For Ephrem's acquaintance with *Odes of Salomon*, see Wensinck, "Epiphany"; Harris, "Ephrem's Use"; and Lattke, "Salomo-Ode 13" and there notes 2–4.

[14] The question of the Edessan origin of the *Acts of Thomas* is under debate. Klijn, in his introduction to the translation of the *Acts of Thomas*, and in other places, claimed it was written in Edessa, see Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 30–3, and Klijn, *Edessa*, 64 ff. Seven years later, Klijn defended his opinion in a response to Ehlers' rejection, see Ehlers, "Thomasevangelium" and Klijn, "Christianity in Edessa." Klijn later changed his mind, relating the *Acts of Thomas* to a wider area of Syria, see Klijn, "Acts of Thomas Revisited," 7. Nevertheless, the Edessan origin has been accepted by scholars such as Hopkins, *World Full of Gods*, 176 and Bremmer, "The *Acts of Thomas*." Drijvers suggests it was written in east Syria, see "Facts and Problems." For the latest survey on the *Acts of Thomas*, see Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics*, 98 ff.

[15] Weitzman, *Syriac*, 247; cf. Lane, "Reception of Leviticus," 311–12. While Weitzman, *Syriac*, 206–62; Maori, *Peshitta*, 103–208; Brock, "A Palestinian Targum"; and Brock, "The Peshitta Old Testament," claim the *Peshitta* was of Jewish origin, Emerton, "Unclean Birds," claims it was written by Christians. For a survey of research, see Dirksen, "Peshitta," 261–4.

[16] Klijn, *Edessa*, 45–64; cf. Ehlers, "Thomasevangelium," 300–1. In a series of articles, Drijvers claims that *Odes of Salomon* originated in Syria at the beginning of the third century, but he does not specify a location. These articles were collected and reprinted in Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, chapters VII–IX; see also Murray, "Characteristics," 3–6. Tatian, the writer of the *Diatessaron*, on which Ephrem commented, also identified himself as Syrian. This has led scholars to claim he was from Edessa as well. Peterson, however, argues that this claim does not have a strong textual basis, see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 71–2. For a biography of Tatian, see Petersen, *Diatessaron*, 22–4;

Jewish–Christian traditions in Edessa. Edessa was also known to the Palestinian Rabbis, who claimed it was the biblical city ʾerek.[17] The Jewish community in Edessa was probably wealthy, consisting of merchants who maintained good relations with their neighbors,[18] and were possibly known to Bardaiṣan.[19]

Like other cities in Roman Syria, Edessa was bilingual, with Greek and Syriac native speakers, as well as Syriac speakers with varying knowledge of Greek, ranging from a basic understanding of several loan words to high proficiency and exclusively writing in Greek.[20] Edessa was a center of study and thought from the middle of the second century CE, and was home to the philosophers Bardaisan and Marcion.[21] While it seems Ephrem did not know the Greek language, he was clearly acquainted with Hellenist culture as well as Christian traditions that originated in Greek-speaking Christian communities, and was influenced by them to a certain extent.[22] Only in the fifth and sixth centuries, after Ephrem's death, did Edessa become a center for translation from Greek into Syriac, thereby enhancing the influence of Greek culture on the Syriac Christian communities and making Roman and Greek works available to Syriac readers.[23]

This mix of identities calls for clarification regarding what a religious identity *is*, how it created borderlines between the various Syrian communities of the fourth century, and what the terms used in this book regarding the different religious groups signify. By the fourth century,

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Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 67–72; and Shedinger, *Tatian*, 13–20. For the Syrian origin of the *Diatessaron*, see Petersen, *Diatessaron*, 39–46.

[17] *Genesis Rabba* 37.4 (Theodor and Albeck ed. 346:3); Targum *Ps. Jonathan* on Genesis 10:10 (Ginsburger ed. 17; Maher trans. 47); Targum *Neofiti* on Genesis 10:10 (Macho ed. 55; McNamara trans. 10); Ephrem, *Genesis* 8.1 (Tonneau ed. 65; Mathews and Amar trans. 147); Jerome, *Questions on Genesis* 10.10 (De Lagarde ed. 16; Hayward trans. 41). Note that in the parallel Babylonian text, Edessa is absent, *b. Yoma* 10a. Cf. Eshel, *Jewish Settlements*, 11–12.

[18] Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia," 39*–40*.   [19] Cohen, "Sabbath Labor."

[20] Brock, "Translation Technique." See especially Butts, *Language Change*, 30–40, who has shown that while there is evidence of native Syriac speakers with knowledge of Greek, there is no evidence of native Greek speakers with knowledge of Syriac.

[21] Drijvers, "The School of Edessa." For a description of the polytheist cults in Edessa, see Drijvers, *Bardaisan*; Drijvers, "Persistence of Pagan Cults"; Drijvers, "Marcionism in Syria"; Segal, *Edessa*, 35–8; and Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 83–116. For a survey of Christianity in Edessa until the time of Ephrem, see Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 117–38; Griffith, "Christianity in Edessa."

[22] Possekel, *Evidence*; Monnickendam, "How Greek."

[23] Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, 7–30; Brock, "From Antagonism"; and Brock, "Greek Words." For a description of the school of Edessa in the fifth century, see Duval, *Histoire*, 163–83; Becker, *Fear of God*, 64–8; Wood, "Syriac"; and especially the recent detailed discussion of Butts, *Language Change*, regarding the long and continuous period of contact between Greek and Syriac and its influences. For a description of the evolution of traditions referring to Edessan Christianity, see Drijvers, "Image of Edessa."

the concept of religion as an identity-marker, separate from ethnic and geographic identities, seems to be established.[24] Furthermore, by this time, Christian orthodoxy[25] and the rabbinic movement were already at an advanced stage of development, albeit development that took them in different directions. While Christian orthodoxy evolved emphasizing the theological aspect of its identity,[26] the rabbis developed the halakhic system and emphasized the importance of its observance to the Jewish identity.[27] Similarly, within the Hellenist world, Christianity defined itself in relation to so-called pagan heresies, while these Greek religions developed their identity in relation to Christianity and in its mold.[28] In both cases, the rise of these identity-markers and, with them, the formation of these communities allows us to detect the borders between these religious groups. In this book, we will therefore use these classifications – namely, rabbinic Judaism, Christianity, and polytheism[29] – as identity-markers of the religious communities in Syria and in the Eastern Roman Empire in general.

A more complex picture, however, characterizes the earlier centuries, when the boundaries between Christian and Jewish communities, just as the borders between Christian and polytheist communities,[30] were even less clear and more fluid. The long and gradual process of separation and self-definition was still in an embryonic stage. The fluidity between these communities resulted in compositions characterized by different levels of hybridity, mixing beliefs, practices, norms, and traditions, which would

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[24] The question of the concept of religion was highly debated regarding rabbinic Judaism and its relation to earlier Judean groups. Following several discussions regarding the formation of rabbinic Judaism as a religion and the dating of this process, such as those of Daniel Schwartz, *Jewish Background*, Cohen, *The Beginnings*, and Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism*, Steven Mason claimed that the concept of religion does not exist in antiquity; rather, what is usually translated as "Jewish," or "Jew," should be translated "Judean," and refer to ethnicity, see Mason, "Jews, Judaeans." This claim was rejected by Daniel Schwartz, *Judean and Jews*, 91–112, 158–66, both on the basis of modern English language, in which "Jewish" refers not only to religion but also to ancestry, and also because some aspects of religion exist in antiquity, including in Judaism. Like Schwartz, Boyarin also claims that the concept of religion exists in late antiquity. In fact, he claims this concept is what allowed Judaism and Christianity to draw the boundaries between them and develop as separate communities by the fourth century. See Boyarin, *Border Lines* and his, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity."

[25] Elm, "Othodoxy."   [26] Graumann, "Conduct of Theology."

[27] Edrei and Mendels, "Preliminary Thoughts."

[28] See especially Elm, "Hellenism," who calls to separate Hellenism and Paganism, and further bibliography noted there.

[29] For the term "Polytheism" to describe Greek late antique religions, rather than paganism, see Fowden, "Late Polytheism." In the absence of better terms, "polytheism" will be used in this book, despite the problems associated with this use.

[30] For a recent survey, see Maxwell, "Paganism."

only later be defined specifically as either Jewish or Christian. The schol-
arly debate on these Jewish–Christian compositions, on the identity of
their composers and the communities in which they were written, and on
the overall question of the parting of the ways and its chronology is beyond
the scope of this book.[31] Furthermore, given our focus on Ephrem and the
fourth century, the identity of these communities and their literature is less
relevant for our discussions. Rather, the reception of these compositions
and their role in conveying early Jewish–Christian traditions to Ephrem
will be significant to our understanding of Ephrem's legal traditions and
their origin. Compositions that were transmitted within the Christian
communities, even though they may have originated in communities with
strong Jewish characteristics, will therefore be tagged "Jewish–Christian"–
that is, the "Jewish" kind of "Christian." They will refer to sources with
different levels of hybridity across traditions, beliefs, and practices that
would later be identified as *either* Jewish *or* Christian.

State of the Research

The study of Syriac Christianity, and especially its relation to Jewish
literature, is part of a long tradition of comparative studies on late antique
Judaism and Christianity. Even in early studies, Syriac writers, particularly
Ephrem, repeatedly stood out as Christian preservers of Jewish trad-
itions.[32] The works of Sebastian Brock and John Gibson, among others,
continued this scholarly trend.[33] They discussed parallels between Syriac
Christian sources and Jewish sources starting from the Second Temple,
such as Qumran or *Jubilees*. Brock, Robert Murray, and others added

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[31] For the main contributions to the discussion on the parting of the Jewish and Christian ways, see
Becker and Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*; Lieu, *Christian Identity*; and Boyarin,
Border Lines. For a general survey and further bibliography, see Koltun-Fromm, "Defining Sacred
Boundaries."

[32] The most famous work dedicated to drawing parallels between rabbinic sources and the New
Testament is probably that of Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*. Though the
larger part of this research seeks to explain Christian sources in light of Jewish ones, the comparison
between Jewish and Christian sources has also been used to explain Jewish traditions in light of
Christian sources, e.g. Naeh, "Freedom." Ephrem was at the center of studies linking Syriac
Christianity to Judaism starting from the nineteenth century, such as the studies of Rahmer,
Hebräischen Traditionen I; Rahmer, *Hebräischen Traditionen II*; Krauss, "Jews I"; Krauss, "Jews
II," through the studies of Ginzberg, *Die Haggada*; and Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* and others.

[33] Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 1:14–30; Gibson, "From Qumran"; Murray, *Symbols*, 9–18; Brock,
"Abraham"; Guillaumont, "Un Midrash"; Anderson, "Celibacy"; Becker, *Fear of God*, 86.

parallels from later rabbinic sources to this discussion,[34] especially Palestinian sources; they also highlighted the influence of rabbinic exegetical methods on Syriac writers.[35] Brock further claimed that Syriac Christianity played a part in transmitting Jewish traditions to medieval literature, and discussed the Jewish origin of the *Peshitta*.[36] These assertions are supported by studies of early Jewish–Christian writings attributed to Edessa and are made more plausible by our knowledge that Jews lived in Syria at that time.[37] Not surprisingly, the reason given for the affinity between Syriac Christian traditions and those of the rabbis has varied, according to the scholars' differing views on the origins of the Syriac Christian community.

So how did Christianity reach Edessa? Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–ca. 339 CE), writing a history of the church in the fourth century, supplies us with the earliest version of the *Doctrine of Addai*, a narrative that addresses this very question. According to Eusebius' account, Jesus sent his disciple Addai to Edessa to heal King Abgar. In addition to medical assistance, Addai also brought with him the new Christian faith.

As a whole, this narrative has not been accepted by most historians, but themes from it have been claimed to reflect various possibilities about the origin of Syriac Christianity.[38] Albertus Klijn accepted the basic assumption that Christianity reached Edessa in the first century, the time of Addai and the apostles,[39] whereas Simon Mimouni, who accepted the early Jewish origin of the Syrian Christian community, claimed it evolved from an early local Jewish–Christian community in Edessa, which was not necessarily related to Palestine.[40] Walter Bauer and, later, Han Drijvers claimed, on the contrary, that Edessan Christianity evolved from polytheist communities rather than Jewish ones.[41] Judah Segal combined these two

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[34] Brock, "Jewish Traditions"; and Brock, "A Palestinian Targum." For similarities between the *Peshitta* and Jewish sources, see Brock, "The Peshitta Old Testament" and Koster, "Which Came First." For similarities with Jewish Biblical exegesis, see Levene, "Pentateuchal Exegesis."

[35] Brock, "Sarah"; Murray, "Rhetorical Patterns."   [36] Brock, "Syriac Legens."

[37] Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia"; Neusner, *History*.

[38] For further research regarding the *Doctrine of Addai*, see Duval, *Histoire*, 81–102; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 1–38; Segal, *Edessa*, 62–80; Murray, *Symbols*, 4–9; Brock, "Eusebius"; Drijvers, "The Protonike Legend"; Ball, *Rome in the East*, 94–6; Griffith, "Christianity in Edessa," 7–9; Griffith, "Doctrina Addai"; and Ramelli, "Historical Traces." This topic was also thoroughly discussed by French scholars at the end of the nineteenth century, see Tixeront, *Les origines*; Martin, *Les origines*; and later Desreumaux, "La doctrine d'Addaï." They tried to treat the historical value of the *Doctrine of Addai* less critically. For versions of this story in later Syriac literature, see van Rompay, "Jacob of Edessa."

[39] Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 30–3. For his discussion on the *Doctrine of Addai*, see Klijn, *Edessa*, 29–41.

[40] Mimouni, "judéo-christianisme."

[41] Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*; Drijvers, "Addai und Mani"; Drijvers, "Syrian Christianity"; and similarly Ehlers, "Thomasevangelium," 284–93 and 308–17.

possibilities and suggested a dual origin: Antioch in the west and the Jewish–Christian community of Nisibis in the east.[42] Similarly, Bas ter Haar Romeny described the first Edessan Christians as both Jewish and pagan.[43]

The first two possibilities – that Syriac Christianity originated from a Palestinian or some other Jewish group, or that it originated from local polytheist groups – are reflected in discussions on the affinity between Syriac Christian sources and Jewish sources. This affinity is explained in two ways: on the one hand, Han Drijvers, who rejected the claim of a Palestinian origin of Syriac Christianity, explained the similarities between Syriac Christian sources and Jewish sources as being a result of the strong influence of the contemporary Jewish community in Edessa on its Christian neighbors and the strong appeal of its culture.[44] On the other hand, Leslie Barnard, Gilles Quispel, and others claimed that Syriac Christianity originated from sectarian groups of the first and second centuries in Palestine, and that these were the reason for this affinity.[45] In other words, if the Syriac Christian community originated from local polytheist groups, its affinity with Jewish traditions was the result of contemporary Jewish influence; but if it originated from a Jewish group, whether Palestinian or not, it was the result of its preservation of earlier Jewish traditions.[46]

This tension, between the Jewish traditions and influences, and the local polytheist traditions and influences, had a great impact on the study of Ephrem's literature. As already mentioned, the affinity between Ephrem's writings and Jewish writings has been discussed by several scholars, from the nineteenth century through to recent publications emphasizing this phenomenon.[47] These scholars described Ephrem as one of the strongest examples of the affinity between Syriac Christian traditions and Jewish traditions. This, however, does not mean to say that Ephrem drew only from Jewish traditions. He was, after all, a Roman citizen living in the Eastern Roman Empire: a Christian living in the time of the

[42] Segal, "When Did Christianity"; cf. Segal, "Jews of North Mesopotamia," 43*–6*.
[43] Haar Romeny, "Hypotheses."   [44] Drijvers, "Jews."
[45] Black, "Hasidaean-Essene Asceticism"; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence"; Quispel, "The Discussion"; and earlier Duval, *Histoire*, 107–25, who related Syriac Christianity to early Jewish–Christian groups.
[46] For a survey of scholarship, see Shepardson, "Syria."
[47] In addition to the general surveys mentioned in note 32, see also some of the literature focusing on Ephrem, e.g., Gerson, "Die Commentarien"; Jansma, "Reflections"; Jansma, "Beiträge"; Kronholm, *Motifs*, especially 215–24; Kronholm, "Holy Adultery"; Kronholm, "Abraham"; Séd, "la paradis"; Narinskaya, *'Jewish' Sage*; Brock, "Abraham"; and Brock, "Jewish Traditions," 225–8, who notes that this affinity continued, though on a smaller scale, after Ephrem's death.