



Walking God's Paths



5. Metaphors for a Unique Relationship

INFORMATION SHEET

An Analysis of Some of the Metaphors Mentioned in the Video

This session encourages participants to perceive the complexities of the Jewish and Christian relationship and how the relationship can be perceived differently by the two communities. The following comments are meant to help facilitators guide participants in processing the various aspects of the relationship. Bear in mind that there is no "right" answer or perfect metaphor.

The video mentions these as possible symbols of the relationship: mother and daughter, siblings, branches from a common root, First and Second Blessing, study partners, and partners-in-(active) waiting.

Some of these metaphors are familial. Mother and daughter, and elder and younger brother tend to minimize the changes of the rabbinic period and see much more of an identity between biblical Judaism and rabbinic Judaism. Thus, "Judaism" would be much older than Christianity and could properly be considered a parent or older sibling. The Pauline botanical metaphor of the good olive tree onto which the wild Gentile branches have been grafted would share this historical perspective.

The familial metaphors of siblings or cousins without the age qualifier are acknowledging the revolution brought by the rabbis, thereby stressing the rabbinic adaptations of the biblical tradition. Thus, Christianity and rabbinic Judaism are both post-Second Temple children of biblical Israel. "Sibling" stresses their close relatedness, while "cousins" places more stress on their distinctiveness. The botanical metaphor of branches from a common root (see the icon for this session) shares a historical perspective that sees the rabbis as creative adapters of the biblical traditions in a world without a Temple.

The image of study partners focuses more on the present. It sees both communities as having legitimate religious traditions that are expressed in their respective sacred texts, some of which are shared. A very rabbinic image, this metaphor also asserts that both traditions will benefit by studying their sacred texts together.

First and Second Blessing is also oriented toward the present. The word "blessing" more explicitly acknowledges a divine origin of the two communities.

Partners-in-(active) waiting looks toward the future full establishment of the Kingdom of God. That hope for the future should shape the work of Jews and Christians in the world today.