Nathaniel Fintz

The Biblical story of Joseph in Egypt	"The Jewish Pope" from the Mayse-bukh	"Zeydlus the Pope"
Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers.	Elhanan, son of R. Simeon the Great, is stolen by the "*Sabbath Goyah*" and baptized; he winds up in the hands of priests.	Zeidel voluntarily converts to Christianity after being swayed by Satanic persuasion.
"**6** …And Joseph was of beautiful form, and fair to look upon." (Gen. 39)	"His fame spread far and wide … and he was handsome besides" (411).	Zeidel is physically ugly and sexually impotent. "His limbs were hairless; by seventeen his pointed skull was bald; only a few hairs grew on his chin. His face was long and still; three or four drops of perspiration always hung on the high forehead; his crooked nose was strangely naked, like that of a man who is accustomed to wearing glasses but has just taken them off…" (36).
Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers after they had become exasperated by **what they had regarded as his aspirations to be revered by them.**	Elhanan remains a Christian **because he likes being honored.** Elhanan "remembered … that he had been a Jew … Yet he remained among the Christians, as one may well imagine, considering that it went well with him and that he was held in high esteem" (412). **Elhanan's intellect is indeed held in high regard by the Christians.**	Zeidel turns to Christianity **because he wants to be honored.** Zeidel has "only one passion: pride," but it is only after Satanic prodding that he acts upon it (38). Satan claims that the Christians will honor his intellect. **Yet "Zeidel began to realize that even among the Gentiles things were far from perfect.** The clergy cared more for gold than for their God. Their sermons were full of errors…" (40).
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream, advises him how to cope with future famine, and is **appointed ruler of Egypt.**	Elhanan, as a Christian, impresses his co-religionists with his intellect; he finally **rises to the Papacy.**	Zeidel is too much of a perfectionist to complete his great treatise, and he **never makes it "to the Vatican"** (39). "His hope to become famous among the nations vanished" (40).
	Even as a Pope, Elhanan **retains respect for Judaism** and Jews. Elhanan "became Pope. He remembered, however, that he had been a Jew and that he was a son of R. Simeon the Great of Mayence" (412). As a Pope, he develops a reputation for treating Jews well: "…within the memory of man they had never had a Pope who was kinder to the Jews than this one. He could not live without Jews. He often had Jews visiting him secretly and occasionally played chess with them" (413). Eventually, he contrives to lure his Jewish father to Rome, and to return to Judaism. He issues an anti-Jewish edict against his hometown, knowing that his prominent father would be sent to plead the Jews' case before him in Rome. Father and son are reunited. Elhanan cancels the edict, and finally returns home.	Zeidel **retains no respect or regard for Judaism.** "Now that he had converted and Jewish children abused him in the streets, he suddenly discovered that he had never loved the Talmud." Zeidel sets out to write a great anti-Talmudic treatise because he believes it will bring him "directly to the Vatican" (39). Only after his failure in the Christian world does he "regret his conversion" (40).
"**1** Now Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, and Jacob said unto his sons…. **2** And he said: 'Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live…'" (Gen. 42)	"Finally [the Jews of Mayence] decided to send R. Simeon the Great and two other rabbis to Rome to intercede with the Pope" (412).	
"**6** And Joseph was the governor over the land... And Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down to him with their faces to the earth. **7**	"As soon as [R. Simeon] entered the room, he fell upon his knees. The Pope was playing chess with one of the cardinals. When the Pope saw R. Simeon, he was very much frightened	
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"**1** Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; **and he cried: 'Cause every man to go out from me.'** And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. **2** And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. **3** And Joseph said unto his brethren: 'I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?' And his brethren could not answer him; for they were affrighted at his presence. **4** And Joseph said unto his brethren: 'Come near to me, I pray you.' And they came near. And he said: **'I am Joseph your brother, whom ye** sold into Egypt." (Gen. 45) "**14** And he **fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept;** and Benjamin wept upon his neck. **15** And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him." (Gen. 45)	"Finally … **the Pope sent all the cardinals away and fell on his neck with tears in his eyes** and said: 'My dear old father, do you not know me?' The father replied: 'How should I know your royal grace?' The Pope said: 'My dear old father, did you not lose a son once?' When R. Simeon heard this, he was greatly frightened and said, 'Yes.' The Pope replied: '**I am your son Elhanan, whom you** lost through the fault of the *Sabbath Goyah*'" (416).	
	Elhanan **yearns to reconnect with Judaism, and he succeeds**—through a process that seems quite convenient and easy, and devoid of any significant sacrifice of honor or pride. "'Now I wish to return to my faith…. Can you advise me how I can atone for my sin?' The father replied: 'You need not worry, it was against your will, for you were only a child when you were taken away from me.' Then the Pope said: 'My dear father, all the time that I lived among Gentiles I knew that I had been born a Jew and yet, as you see, the good circumstances in which I was kept me from returning to my faith. Do you think I shall be forgiven for that?'" (416). There does not seem to be any clear answer to this question. But Elhanan "then wrote a book against the faith, locked it in a vault and gave orders that every candidate for the papacy should read that book. It would take too long to tell what is written in that book. Soon after, taking much wealth with him, he went to Mayence and became a good Jew again. In Rome they did not know what had happened to the Pope" (417). He returns to the Jewish community and lives happily ever after.	In terms of belief or conviction, Zeidel **retains virtually no link to the Jewish faith, and he cannot find any way back to it.** "His hope to become famous among the nations vanished. He came to regret his conversion. But the way back was blocked: first because he doubted all faiths now; second because it was the law of the land that a Christian who returned to Judaism should be burned at the stake" (40). He yearns not for a return to Judaism, but only for the attainment of "truth." "He no longer had any earthly desire, but one yearning still plagued him: to know the truth. Was there a Creator or was the world nothing but atoms and their combinations? … Now that he had lost his only passion, pride, nothing material mattered to him" (41). Just before his death, he believes he has successfully found this "truth": "If Hell exists, everything exists. If you are real, He is real" (42). While this "truth" is certainly metaphysical, it does not seem specifically Jewish.
	The way Elhanan plays chess indicates that he is a Jew. "(R. Simeon could tell from the way in which he played chess that he was of Jewish descent.)" (416). "Some say that R. Simeon knew his son by a move he made in chess. **He had taught him that move while he was still young**, and he made that move on the day when they were playing together. He knew then that he was his son" (418).	Zeidel's only remaining link to Judaism is textual memory from his youth. "Passers-by thought he was praying to the Christian saints, but actually he was reciting the Gemara, the Mishnah, and the Psalms. The Gentile theology he had forgotten as quickly as he had learned it: **what remained was what he had acquired in his youth**" (41).

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