

Session 5

Messiah through Jewish Eyes

Who is the Messiah?

Jewish scholars identify a great many references to the Messiah in the Tanach.

Christians find many prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament.

Jewish scholars are much in agreement with Christians as to the character of the Messiah, but most are strongly opposed to identifying him with Jesus of Nazareth. This is the fundamental issue between Jews and Christians, so we need to find an explanation.

Jewish understanding

Sources - Torah = Pentateuch; Tanach = OT (Torah + Prophets + Writings)
 - Talmud = Mishnah (Oral Law) 200CE + Gemara (commentary on Mishnah) 500CE
 - Targums = Expositions of Aramaic translation of Tanach (predates Talmud). Has precedence over

Prophets.

- Midrashim = Understanding the Bible through stories/hints from text/word associations/logical

connections

- Gematria = Numerical calculations that support interpretations of the text

Divinity/Creation. "All the prophets prophesied not but for the days of Messiah ... the world was not created but only for the Messiah" *Talmud* "The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters" Gen 1:2; This was the spirit of the Messiah, as it is written "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, Isaiah 11:2" *Midrash Rabbah*
 The creation of the two great lights, Gen. 1:14-19, is understood as referring to the light of the Messiah, falling on the congregation of the LORD, c.f. Psalm 36:10, "In your light we see light". One of the secret names of Messiah is "Nehora" the Aramaic word for light, linked by a Midrash to Dan. 2:22, "And Nehora dwells in/with him". This is your Messiah-King, for it is written "Arise, shine, for your light has come, (including the Gentiles), Isaiah 60:1-3".

Psalm 72 is considered thoroughly Messianic. The Rabbis interpret v17 as indicating that the Messiah had the name "Yinnon" (Sprout/Shoot) before creation.

The Targum commentary on Isaiah 9:5 states "His (Messiah's) name has been from ancient times ... "Everlasting Father" indicates that Messiah has been forever".

Scholars were aware of the possible implications of the plural "Elohim" in Genesis 1:1 as indicating three forms of revelation of God's being. Mystical Judaism (Zohar) refers to "the mystery of the number three".

Names. A great many names are ascribed to the Messiah in Jewish understanding, including the following:

Anointed (Mashiah), Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:26, **Second Moses**, Deut. 18:18, **Angel/Prince of the Presence**, Is. 63:9, **Yinnon (Sprout)**, Ps. 72:17, **The LORD our Righteousness**, Jer. 23:6, 33:16, **Cornerstone**, Ps. 118:22, **Son of David**, Hos. 3:5, **Nehora (Light)** Dan. 2:22, **Messiah Son of Joseph**, Jer. 31:9, **Bar Enash (Son of Man)**, Dan. 7:13.

The Promised Seed from the line of Judah. The seed of the woman in Gen. 3:15 is considered to be the Messiah King. In discussing Perez in Ruth 4:18 he is called "another seed from another place". The story of Perez, son of Judah, Gen. 38:27-30, is very important in relation to the Messiah, "When Perez arose history began to be fulfilled through him, because from him the Messiah would arise and in his days the Holy One would cause death to be swallowed up, as it is written, "He will destroy death forever", Isaiah 25:8", *Midrash Rabbah*, c.f. Matt. 1:3. This is linked to Micah 2:13 by the explanation "This is the Messiah, who will soon appear, because it is written of him that "One who breaks open the way will go up before them"".

Some consider Elijah (as in Mal. 4:5 c.f. Is. 40:3) to be the breaker and Messiah, the Branch, the Son of David to be the King, the one who will give back his Holy Spirit to Zion.

The Rabbis frequently speak about the hedge of the Law. In Deut. 27-28 God erected an enormously high and thick hedge around Israel with very severe consequences for transgressing it. The original Sinai code was augmented by the oral law and many other traditions had accumulated by the time of Jesus and had become legalistic and oppressive, Matt. 15:8-14.

The time had come to break through the protective but confining hedge into the freedom of the promise, the New Covenant, Matt. 11:12. The purpose of the hedge around Israel had been realized in the Messiah Jesus, Gal. 3:19-25, 4:4-5, 5:1, and Jewish and Gentiles become one people in Messiah, Eph. 2:14-15.

Jacob prophesied over his sons concerning "what would befall them in the last days" - i.e. in the far distance, Gen. 49:1. "Everywhere that mention is made of the last days, the days of the Messiah are intended", *Rabbi D Qimhi*. The Rabbis had much to say concerning the prophecy about Judah, Gen. 49:8-12, seeing reference to the Messiah King as a descendent of Judah.

"**Until Shilo comes**". This is a mysterious name for Judah's sceptre - the Messiah King and Lawgiver to whom it belongs and who will then exercise power and authority. It has linguistic connections with Peace (shalem - Prince of Peace Is. 9:6), "their Ruler" (moshlo - "to him shall be the obedience of the people", v10), Sovereign power (shai loh - "gifts for him", Ps. 76:12, *RaSHI*).

The Rabbis interpreted "Judah's sceptre" as the authority of the Great Synagogue (Sanhehrin). Most of this, including the power to execute, was removed by Quirinius after AD 6, Luke 2:1-2.

The Sanhedrin were distressed "Woe to us! The sceptre of Judah has been taken away and the Messiah has not yet come", *R. Rahmon*. The genealogies were destroyed in AD70 with the destruction of the Temple, having survived the earlier exile, Ezra 2, Neh. 7& 11, so Messiah must come before that time.

The Rabbis say that Ps. 118:26 will be sung to the Messiah when he comes, "From the House of the Lord we greet you".

In Mal. 3:1-3 "The LORD whom you seek and the Angel of the Covenant" are interpreted as the Messiah-King, *R. D Qimhi*, or as Messiah and Elijah respectively, *Metsudat David*. Again this refers to the Temple as still standing.

The Shoot/Sprout/Branch. This is a picture commonly associated with the Messiah. The whole of Psalm 72 is regarded as Messianic; "Before the sun his name was Yinnon" ("may it sprout"), v17, a name given before the creation of the world. By association it is linked with Isaiah 11:1; he would shoot from the stump of Jesse (after the tree (Israel) had been reduced to a stump, Is. 6:13). Matt. 2:23 uses Is. 11:1 in a "midrashic way" - netzer is the word "to shoot" and is linguistically related to Nazareth, "to watch/observe". Messiah is a guardian/protector.

The Messiah would come like a root from dry ground, Is. 53:2, c.f. John 1:46. He would be the Priest King described in Zech. 6:9-13, who would build the temple of the LORD etc. His name will be "The LORD our righteousness", Jer. 23:5-6, 33:15-16. The Rabbis were aware of this, connecting with other indications of the divine nature of the Messiah.

The Second Moses. Moses in many ways foreshadowed Jesus, and he had a unique revelation of God, Num. 12:6-8, beyond that experienced by the Patriarchs, Ex. 6:2-3. Moses saw the form of the LORD - "form" (temunah) means "a drawing". The *J. Talmud* said that he saw the LORD's MIMRA - a name associated with the Messiah, (corresponding to "Logos", The Word, John 1:1).

Moses spoke of the rising of a prophet like himself, Deut. 18:15, 18-19. There are repeated references to Moses in the life of Jesus, John 1:17, 45, 3:14, 5:45-46, 6:32, 9:28-29, Mark 12:26, Luke 24:27, 44. Jesus was the WORD - Torah incarnate. The Rabbis believed that the Torah only applied to "those who ate the Manna", (Israel). There are many statements implying that in the Messianic age the Messiah will give a new Torah and that the old one will lose its significance. Jesus took on that role - "You have heard it said ... but I say to you", Matt. 5. In Galatians Paul deals at length on how the Law of Moses has been superseded by the Law of the Messiah Jesus. He is the "Lawgiver" of Gen 49.

The Prince of the Countenance. Jacob had a glimpse of the Angel of the Countenance/Face at Jabbok, Gen. 32:30, c.f. the Angel of His Presence, Is 63:9, who accompanied Israel in the wilderness. He is also called the Metatron (One who sits on the throne) and is identified with "the Angel of the LORD", Judges 6:14, 16, 22. In Ex. 23:20-21 God said of "His angel" that "My Name is in Him" ("He and I have the same Name", *RaSHI*). Israel is to present all its prayers in the Name of the Prince of the countenance, the intercessor who can approach the throne of God.

When the shofar is sounded at Rosh Hashana (New year) the prayers include "That the blast from this horn should carry to the tabernacle of God ... through Jeshua the Prince of the Countenance and the Prince Metatron, and may grace be our part", *Sidur ha-Shalem*. All of this speaks of the Messiah. The "Messenger of the Covenant" is the same as "The Lord whom you seek", Mal.3:1, *R.D.Qimhi*.

Son of David. Commenting on Messiah son of David from Micah 5:2 *RaSHI* said "His origins are from ancient times, for before the sun was, his name was Yinnon.

Another very respected Rabbi commented "He will be of the house of David, because there is a long period of time between David and the Messiah-King; and he is El (God), which is how he is "from old, from ancient times"", *R D. Qimhi*.

Balaam's prophecy, Num. 24:13, concerning the latter days, is interpreted as referring in the first place to David but also, via Dan. 9:24-27, to the Messiah, (*Ibn Ezra/most Jewish commentaries*).

Psalm 89 is thoroughly Messianic. "This is a covenant of grace that has been given to the seed of David forever, and will not be abrogated even in their dispersal, as it will be returned in the days of the Messiah and will never again cease" *Metsudat David*.

The Suffering Messiah.

Psalms. Here are some examples. Psalm 21(p112), Psalm 22 - Rabbis only treat vv22-31 as Messianic but much earlier tradition also included the whole psalm (p130). Reference is made to Messiah son of Joseph, referring to a tradition that the sons of Ephraim were killed in a premature attempt to conquer the Promised Land. The apparent contradiction between a victorious and a suffering Messiah led to speculation about two Messiahs.

RaSHI said that v16 depicted someone whose hands and feet are as if they had been mangled by a lion's mouth (ka'aru/pierced, ka'ari/lion).

Prophets. There is a widespread denial that prophecies such as Zech. 12:9-14, 13:6-7, and Isaiah 53 refer to a suffering Messiah or associating them with Messiah son of Joseph, although it is not clear what this means in practice. Isaiah 53 is omitted from the cycle of readings. A popular explanation is that Israel has suffered on behalf of the nations. There are exceptions - see Moses Alshekh, p209. There is an old prayer read at Feast Days (p207-8), c.f. the Rosh Hashanah prayer and Sidur prayer "May it be Thy will ... that we would ... see ...blessing on the two days of the Messiah".

The Chief Cornerstone Psalm 118:22-24 is frequently quoted in the NT. It embodies the issue between synagogue and church, p138-139.

(Page numbers refer to "The Messiah in the Old Testament in the light of Rabbinical writings" by Risto Santal).