

The Genealogy of Yeshua:

The genealogy of Yeshua is a very interesting but complex issue. On the one hand we have Christian apologists who argue for a virgin birth and on the other, orthodox Jewish scholars who argue that if such an event did actually occur this would invalidate the Messiahship of Yeshua, that is, the Torah is very clear that the Messiah needs to be a literal descendant of King David through his human father.

Further some 'anti-missionaries' like Michael Skobac argue that the genealogy of Yeshua given in the the New Testament invalidates Yeshua's right to a future reign as the King in the Olam Ha Bah (the World to Come), as the genealogy shows that he was descended from the cursed line of Jeconiah and thus cannot qualify to ever become King.

Also there is some serious confusion surrounding the genealogies. Most Christian scholars/theologians argue that Matityahu's (Matthew) version is that of Yeshua's father Yosef (Joseph) rather than Miriam (Mary), and that Luke's is that of Miriam rather than Yosef. This leads to some serious difficulties as will be discussed.

Add to this the theological problems involved in that the 3 sets of 14 names listed in Matthew are actually not 3 sets of 14 to start with, as well as the fact that they actually contain a number of well-verified omissions, including a gap of some 76 years in which no names are listed.

Given the enormity and complexity of this issue, I wish to provide only a very basic overall here of the incredible insights and truth that Uriel Ben Mordechai in particular, and even others like A.B. (Bruce) Barham and Nehemia Gordon, have found and shared on this whole question.

If you really wish to study this issue in any serious depth I would strongly recommend signing on to Uriel's on-line class¹ when he is next covering this topic (it took around 2 hours a week for months for Uriel to 'unpack' the truth and uplifting reality of what is really revealed in the genealogies of Yeshua). I would also recommend the articles by Bruce Barham (see links below).

Matthew: '... Yosef is the father of Miriam...':

Firstly then, Uriel shows most clearly that Matthew's (Matityahu) genealogy is of Yeshua (Jesus) through Miriam (Mary) and her father, who was also named Yosef (Joseph) and that Luke's genealogy is of Yeshua's biological father, Yosef².

This is far from the accepted understanding reflected in our Bible translations, where almost every English version has the Yosef, son of Ya'acov in Matthew noted as the 'husband' of Miriam. These same translators and Christian theologians also try to find fanciful ways to get around the issue that Luke's genealogy is clearly than of Yosef, the husband of Miriam and gives Eli (some have Heli) as his farther, which of course is clearly in conflict with Matthew (if Mathew's Yosef is the husband) as Matthew explicitly states that Ya'acov is Yosef's father.

While I personally learned of the reality that Matthew's genealogy is that of Miriam, not Yosef, through Uriel's class, this has been argued for sometime by those familiar with some of the early Hebrew translations of Matthew which clearly have that Yosef was the father of Miriam (see below for details).

This is also detailed in some depth in '*The Chronological Gospels: The Life and Seventy Week Ministry of the Messiah*' (2013) by Michael John Rood.

Another argument against the claims that Yeshua is the end-times Messiah is that the genealogical record in Matthew passes through the 'cursed line' of Jeconiah, and so, any of his ancestors can not lay claim to David's throne. Uriel also shows that the lineage does not pass through the line of this cursed king.

With regard to Matthew's 'Yosef' and his relationship to Miriam, Uriel ben Mordechai uses the facts of Greek grammar (in particular the feminine singular genitive of 'ἧς' ('eese') meaning "of whom/which"), to argue that the reference to

¹Sign on here <http://www.ntcf.org/register.html>

²For the most part I will use transliterations of the Hebrew, especially Hebrew names, which better reflect the sound of the actual names. For example, Yeshua's mother was מִרְיָם , and Miriam or Miryam, sounds a lot closer than Mary! This does get confusing though when we list the genealogies in Matthew and Luke as they can (and do) have several acceptable alternatives.

Yeshua can only refer to being born via his mother, and that therefore the Yosef mentioned is not his father.

He also explains how the being a "son of David", and thus qualifying as a potential future King and Messiah can come through the mother's line, provided that the mother's father is a 'son of David' (ie. A direct descendent)³. The proof of Matthew's genealogy being that of Miriam rather than Yosef is best established through some ancient Hebrew versions, as Michael Rood explains:

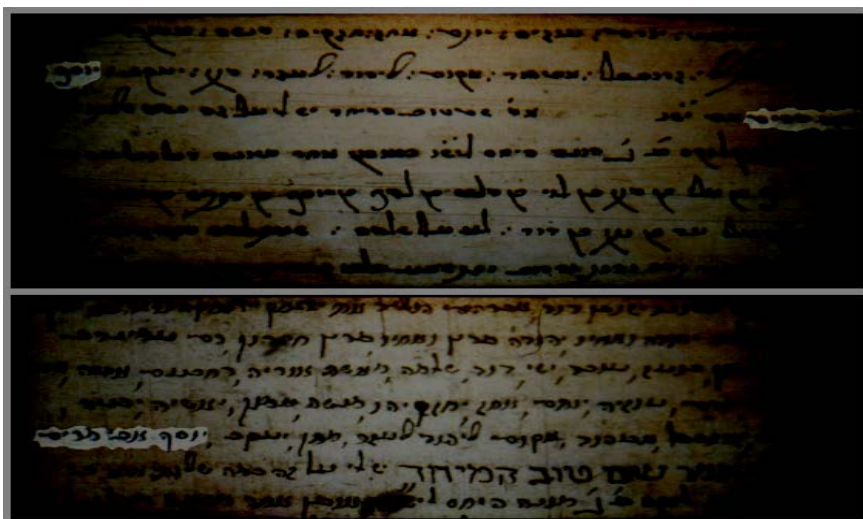
*"... The Messiah must be from the lineage of King David (Jeremiah 23:5). Though translations derived from the Greek text of Matthew confuse the genealogy, the Ancient Hebrew text of Matthew's Gospel, from which the Aramaic and, later, the Greek were translated, clearly details **Miriam's lineage** through her father **Yoseph ben Yaakov** through the kingly line of David through Solomon.*

*Luke's Gospel, on the other hand, details the lineage of Miriam's husband **Yoseph ben Eli** through **David's son Nathan**. ... It is clear that the Yoseph ben Yaakov mentioned in Matthew 1:16 and the Yoseph ben Eli cited in Luke 3:23 (which is the Yoseph who is Miriam's husband in Matthew 1:19) are two different men with two distinct genealogical lines back to David - yet they both bear a very common Israelite name. A woman marrying a man with the same first name as her father is very common in every culture - this led a careless translator into profound error.*

*... The Peshitta Aramaic texts of Matthew 1:16 (which was translated from a latter Greek text) indicates that Miriam's '**gevra**' (mighty man) was named Yoseph, and Matthew 1:19 specifies that Miriam's '**ba'ala**' (husband) was also named Yoseph. Yoseph is a very common name in Israel. Miriam's husband Yoseph had three grandfathers with the same name. This undoubtedly led the translators to make "a mistake of familiarity," thinking that the two "Yosephs" of verses 16 and 19 (in Matthew) were one and the same.*

*The Greek translators chose to render both Aramaic words *gevra* and *ba'ala* as the Greek word '**aner**', which simply means "a person of full age." The English translators then chose to translate the singular Greek word '**aner**' as "husband." - http://thechronologicalgospels.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/TCG_NativitySample.pdf (p45).*

For further manuscript support for this, see the two images below (courtesy of Nehemia Gordon). These two, of the oldest manuscripts of the Ancient Hebrew Matthew were copied into the appendix of Shem Tov Ibn Shaprut's "Even Bochan", and show that the text reads "*Yoseph avi Miriam*". The Hebrew and Aramaic '*avi*' means 'my father', so the meaning here is that '*Yosef is the father of Miriam*' and not the husband, and therefore Matt 1:16 ends with "**...Yosef the father of Miriam of whom was born Yeshua**".



(The words, "yoseph avi miriam" are highlighted in these two manuscript photographs)

³ For a son of Jewish parents to be able to have a rightful claim to the 'throne of David' and thus to be a King of Israel, either (or both) parent(s) needs to be of the tribe of Judah (Yehudah). In the case of a woman though, she can only pass this tribal claim on to her son, if she herself is the daughter of a father who is from the tribe of Yehudah. That is, her tribal identification is not sufficient for her grandson, if neither of the grandson's parents are from the tribe of Yehudah.

The Cursed King & the missing Kings and Queens:

Any serious and in-depth investigation of the 3 sets of '14' generations in the Matthew genealogy will show that they are not strictly equivalent, that is each set does not start and end in the same place, and thus the equivalence is quite arbitrary (indicating that it is a literary device rather than an accurate and totally factual record). Also, the 2nd set (from King David to the Babylonian exile) has 4 descendants missing. I would argue that the first set has even more, but that is not really relevant or necessary for this discussion.

Again, without detailing how these lists of derived, here is the list from the Tanakh (mainly 1 Chronicles 3) for the 2nd set, the 'House of David' down to the exile:

David, Solomon Rehoboam, Avi'yahm, Asa, Yehi'shafat , Ye'horam, Achazyah, Athaliah (Queen), Jehoash, Amaziah, Azar'yah (Uzziah), Yotam, Ahaz, Hizki'yahu, M'nasheh, Amon, Yoshi'yahu ...

And here is Matthew's List:

David, Shlomo, Rehoboam⁴, Avi'yahm⁵, Asa⁶, Yehi'shafat⁷, Ye'horam⁸, ... ,Azar'yah⁹, Yotam¹⁰, Achaz/Ahaz, Hizki'yahu/Hezekiah, M'nasheh/Manasseh, Amon/Amos, Yoshi'yahu/Josiah (exile to Babylon).

Here's the listing in the CJB:

“David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asaph. Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was the father of Uzziah. Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amos. Amos was the father of Josiah. Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers.” - Matt 1:6-11

Missing are: 1) Achaz'yahu, 2) Atal'yah(Queen), 3) Yo'ash/Jehoash, 4) Amatz'yahu/Amaziah.

These Kings and a Queen represent some 76 years. We are not told why they are missing, as we can be fairly confident that the original author of Matthew (of the Hebrew version written before the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE), would have had access to these records. One of the suggestions presented by Uriel is that the Kings and Queen missing had not been buried with their 'fathers' in the graves in Jerusalem and that this 'dishonour' may have been a factor in their not being included.

Some have used this 'error' though to argue for that the whole genealogy and Gospel is inaccurate and invalid. The skipping of some ancestors in genealogical recountings by the Jewish people was not uncommon though. Prof WH Green gives some good examples in his paper 'Are There Gaps in the Biblical Genealogies'¹¹.

Just for completeness, here is Luke's genealogy of Yeshua's father Yosef via King David's son Natan. As Uriel points out and contrary to what some have argued, the eschatological Messiah does not have to be a descendant of Solomon as well as David, as is inferred in Amos 9:11:

“Yeshua was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

It was supposed that he was a son of Yosef who was of Eli, of Mattat, of Levi, of Malki, of Yannai, of Yosef, of Mattityahu, of Amotz, of Nachum, of Hesli, of Naggai, of Machat, of Mattityahu, of Shim'i, of Yosef, of Yodah, of Yochanan, of Reisha, of Z'rubavel, of Sh'altiel, of Neri, of Malki, of Addi, of Kosam, of Elmadan, of Er, of Yeshua, of

⁴ Or Rechav'am

⁵ Or Abijah

⁶Or Asaph

⁷Or Jehoshaphat

⁸Or Jehoram or Joram

⁹Or Uzi'yahu or Uzziah or Azariah

¹⁰ Or Jotham, etc. I hope you get the idea! Transliterations are often different, even when the original Hebrew name is spelt exactly the same!

¹¹<http://circumcisedheart.info/Christian%20site/Are%20There%20Gaps%20in%20the%20Biblical%20Genealogies.doc>

Eli'ezer, of Yoram, of Mattat, of Levi, of Shim'on, of Y'hudah, of Yosef, of Yonam, of Elyakim, of Mal'ah, of Manah, of Mattatah, of Natan, of David" - Luke 3:23-31

Some try to make an issue of the 'supposed' that he was a son of Yosef', yet Luke thought enough of this genealogy to actually list it, so he clearly did not have too much doubt. Note that this genealogical record is given in the context of the question as to whether Yeshua was the long awaited Messiah, and some had witnessed a declaration to this effect from heaven. So to give this list of ancestors back to King David would seem in this context to clearly be intended to establish that Yeshua also qualified on the grounds of his tribal affiliation and being a 'son of David'.

One of the other issues with Matthew's list is the apparent inclusion of the 'cursed King' Jeconiah. Some try to argue that the curse was removed, though this seems a very fanciful interpretation lacking any serious validity. Instead Uriel shows that the Jeconiah (Yechon'yahu) included is a different one.

King Yoshi'yahu had a son named Yeho'yakim, who in turn had a son named Yechon'yahu, who was the 'cursed' King.

This is not the Yechon'yahu in Matthew's list. Uriel argues with some great detective work from the Tanakh, that King Yoshi'yahu's first-born son should have been King. While he was originally named Yochanan, Yochanan was given a new name¹², Yechon'yahu, and then deported to Babylon (along with the famous Daniel) and served in the palace of Nevuchad'netzar. This Yochanan aka Yechon'yahu then has a son, named She'alti'el, who in turn fathers Z'ru'bavel¹³, who is the one who leads the Jewish people back to Eretz Israel, to rebuild the Temple, and become the first governor of the people of Yehudah, back in the Land of Israel.

Interestingly, none of the names in Matthews list after Z'ru'bavel were ever recorded in the Tanakh or the Chronicles of the Kings (as none were Kings). However, their names would have been recorded in the Birth Registry in the Temple in Jerusalem and the author of Matthew would have had access to these records before 70 CE when they were destroyed.

Other Genealogical Issues:

There is good evidence that some sects of 'The Way' (the followers of Yeshua) had versions of Matthew/Matityahu that contained no genealogical record and birth narrative at all.

For example, there was a 'sect' known by some as the Ebionites (who some of the early 'Church Fathers' considered to be two distinct groups, one of which may have been actually been the Nazarenes).

At least one of these groups had an early version of Matityahu in Hebrew and labelled the '*Gospel According To The Hebrews*'¹⁴ and which omitted the birth narrative and opened with the ministry of Yochanan (see Epiphanius' Pan. 30:13:6).

Note also that the Gospel of Mark does not include Yeshua's genealogy either.

¹² In the Babylonian Talmud, Kritot 5b we can read of a discussion about the sons of Yoshiyahu and how their names were changed. Here's part of it "*And Jehoahaz by reason of the claim to the throne by his brother Jehoiakim who was two years his senior'. 'Was he indeed older, is it not written: And the sons of Josiah: the first-born Yochanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah and the fourth Shallum; upon which R. Johanan remarked that Johanan was identical with Jehoahaz and Zedekiah with Shallum! — Jehoiakim was indeed older, and [the other] was called first-born, because he was first in succession. But is it permitted to install the younger son in preference to the older? Is it not written: And the kingdom he gave to Jehorom for he was the first-born? — That one followed in his forefather's footsteps. The Master said: 'Shallum is identical with Zedekiah'. But are not the sons enumerated in numerical order? He [Zedekiah] is called 'the third' because he was the third among the sons, and he is called 'the fourth', because he was the fourth to reign, for Jeconiah reigned before him: Jehoahaz was the first successor, then followed Jehoiakim, then Jeconiah and then Zedekiah. Our Rabbis taught: Shallum is identical with Zedekiah; and why was he called Shallum? Because he was perfect ['shalem'] in his deeds; or according to another explanation, because the kingdom of the House of David ended [shalem] in his days."*

¹³Uriel also gives good evidence to suggest that this man is the 'Branch' of Zechariah 8:23 "*Listen now, Yehoshua the high priest, both you and your colleagues who are sitting before you, all of you are a symbol that I am about to introduce my servant, the Branch."*

¹⁴ Epiphanius calls the Gospel according to the Hebrews' "their Gospel" (Pan. 30:16:4-5) and Jerome refers to it as "the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Ebionites use". The actual document has been lost to history, but about 50 quotations and citations of this document are preserved in quotations and citations from the so-called "Church Fathers" and other commentators even into the middle ages. - see James Scott Trimm - <http://nazarenespace.com/profiles/blogs/the-gospel-according-to-the-3>

So, if the first version, the autograph of Matthew did not contain the genealogical record, nor the birth record, then we have no record of this particular aspect of the Messiah's record anywhere in the NT except in Luke. This may suggest that this requirement was not seen as a crucial one of record, or that the many other references to the 'son of David', especially in Matthew, Mark and Luke (along with references in Romans 1:3; Acts 13:23 & 2 Tim 2:8), were considered sufficient testimony that Yeshua was a descendant of King David.

So without the single reference in Matthew, while we have many other references that inform us of Yeshua's qualification for the King Messiah role as a 'son of David', we have no other clear and unquestionable reference to the 'Virgin Birth'.

What about the birth narrative and the 'Virgin Birth':

I strongly recommend the writings of A B (Bruce) Barham on the whole Virgin Birth issue. Here is part of how he introduces this issue:

"If Messiah was born of a "virgin" with no earthly father, why is it so rarely mentioned in the New Testament? IF such an event occurred, it would have been an astounding miracle and a subject of frequent discussion! Yet, the New Testament authors virtually never even mention it! This fact alone makes its actual occurrence unlikely.

1. *It is NEVER mentioned in ANY of the epistles.*
2. *It is NEVER mentioned by Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah.*
3. *It is NEVER mentioned in ANY recorded presentations of the "gospel" in Acts or the epistles.*
4. *It is NEVER mentioned ANYWHERE as part of a necessary belief a person must accept! EVER!*
5. *The ONLY place it is mentioned, or even hinted at, is in the alleged (and contradictory) birth accounts of Matthew and Luke!*
6. *Yet Christianity, counterfeit Messianism, and many monotheistic Messianics consider it a crucial doctrine even though Scripture most certainly shows it to NOT be crucial!*

- see <http://torahofmessiah.org/the-birth-of-yeshua-messiah-jesus-christ/>

Rather than go into detail, I refer you to Bruce's great articles on this topic.

Another often ignored, but very revealing aspect with respect to this question is the chronology of the NT books.

As I argue in my 'James The Just - Re-evaluating his legacy'¹⁵, I believe 'James' was the first recorded book of the NT canon (around 37-40 BCE). Next in chronological order we have Galatians (~49 CE), 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, & Romans (~50-57 BCE) and the Gospel of Mark (late 50's – early 60s), then Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Luke, Acts, Philippians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 & 2 Peter (60-68 BCE)¹⁶ and then Matthew¹⁷.

So what this chronological order (as opposed to the theological order given in the NT) reveals, is that there is no mention of the 'Virgin Birth' until some 40 years after the event, despite over half of the NT canon having been written by then! This appears to be a serious indictment of this doctrine.

And Ya'acov (James) was Yeshua's own brother, yet even he didn't see fit to mention something which, if true to any degree (i.e. even as a whispered possibility), would seem to have earth-shattering consequences.

Overall, this is a very telling historical reality. Some scholars have tried to argue that the NT versions of Matthew (used by the Ebionites and others) that did not contain the Virgin Birth narrative, did so because it had been removed. It seems far more likely based on this chronological reality that the exact opposite is true. That is, the Virgin Birth narrative was a later addition, a redaction by Greek scribes and translators.

Uriel Ben Mordechai also has a great teaching¹⁸ on this topic. In his classes on the genealogies he also made the point that according to Torah rulings (Jewish Halacha), if the 'Holy Spirit' had somehow impregnated Miriam, who was

¹⁵<http://circumcisedheart.info/James%20the%20Just%20E2%80%93%20Reevaluating%20his%20legacy.pdf>

¹⁶These datings from p16 'Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament (2nd Ed.) by H. Wayne House

¹⁷H. Wayne House has 40-60 CE but Prof. David Flusser and many others date the first Greek version of Matthew as definitely after the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. I discuss this in my book 'The New Testament: The Hebrew Behind the Greek' available via Amazon.com

¹⁸ Uriel Ben Mordechai also argues that the text of Matthew, properly understood, without the standard Hellenistic church pre-supposition of the Virgin Birth, does not imply with any certainty that Yosef and Miriam had never had sexual relations. The text indicates that at the time of the angel's visitation Miriam had not yet slept with a man, but we are not privy to what exactly took place after that.

already betrothed to Yosef then the 'holy Spirit' had committed adultery!

In *'The Historical Jesus in Context'* (Amy Jill Levine, Dale C Allison and John Dominic Crossan Editors), there is a chapter *'Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity'* by Charles H. Talbert, in which he discusses the many stories of miraculous conceptions and births from the last centuries BCE to the second century CE.

He writes that many of these stories that were commonplace in the first few centuries of the Common Era, especially within Hellenistic society, were of Greek mythical past as well of some of the famous Greek figures.

Amongst these stories of individuals born to a divine mother and a human father, were Achilles (son of the divine Thetis and the human Peleus), and Aeneas (son of Aphrodite and the mortal Anchises).

Those believed to be the offspring of a god and a human mother included Asclepius (son of Apollo and the mortal Coronis) and Hercules (son of Zeus and the human Alcmena).

Stories of miraculous conceptions and births were also told about rulers and philosophers in historical time. Among the philosophers, Pythagoras was said to be the offspring of Apollo and the human Pythais. Plato was believed to have been the son of Apollo and Amphictione; and Apollonius of Tyana was thought to be the son of Proteus, a divinity of Egypt, or Zeus.

He writes that these traditions were still common in the 2nd century CE and gives a number of examples including the apparent miraculous conception of Alexander the Great.

He also notes a second tradition where a number of these miraculous conceptions involved some form of spiritual encounter with the virgin mother, with Aeschylus an early example. *"In "Suppliants" 17-19, lo is said to be impregnated by Zeus in the form of the 'on-breathing of his love'."*

In the Greek historian Plutarach's 'Life of Alexander' (written around 100 CE) we read *"it happened not through semen but by another power of God (dunamei tou theou) that God begot in matter the principle of generation, ... not by a physical approach, like a mans, but by some other kind of contact or touch that a god alters mortal nature and makes it pregnant with a more divine offspring"*.

Plutarch also writes: *"Nevertheless the Egyptians make a plausible distinction in such a matter. A woman can be made pregnant by a spirit (pneuma) of a god, but for a human there is no physical intercourse with a god"*.

Talbert states that the two main reasons for such stories about great individuals was that firstly, they were a way to explain these individuals superiority above other humans. The second was as a form of veneration of these great figures of history.

So Talbert argues that early (Hellenistic) auditors¹⁹ of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke may well have felt that *"Jesus' divine begetting were certainly needed to explain his marvelous life. A divine origin was appropriate for their chief benefactor and founder."*

Mark does not have a birth narrative. Irenaeus (late 2nd century) even wrote about the believer, Cerinthus²⁰ (of late first century CE) *"who believed Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary according to the usual manner."*

I believe this is a significant comment that shows that the birth narratives do not appear to have been seen as 'inerrant' and inspired by some within the church only a matter of decades after the autographs of the Gospels.

¹⁹ i.e. not the original author(s), but later translators and editors.

²⁰ Here's a few excerpts from The 1911 Classic Encyclopaedia: *"CERINTHUS: ... There can be no truth in the notice given by Epiphanius (Haer. xxviii. 4) that Cerinthus had in earlier days at Jerusalem led the judaizing opposition against Paul. (why not?!) ... The difficulty of defining Cerinthus's theological position is due not only to the paucity of our sources but to the fact that the witness of the two principal authorities, Irenaeus (1.26, iii. 11) and Hippolytus (Syntagma), does not agree. ... It would appear, ... that Cerinthus laid stress on the rite of circumcision and on the observance of the Sabbath. (sounds like a Torah observant Jew just like Yeshua and all his apostles and disciples!) He taught that the world had been made by angels ... (and that) Jesus was the offspring of Joseph and Mary ... Cerinthus, if we may trust the notices of Gaius the Roman presbyter (c. 290) and Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 340), he held a violent and crude form of chiliasm (the belief that Christ will return to reign in the body for a thousand years)"* -<http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Cerinthus>

He argues that such a non-miraculous understanding of the conception of Yeshua would have led to the conclusion that Yeshua's followers would also need to lead meritorious lives (i.e. be Torah observant). With the rejection of such an understanding by the Hellenists, it then went hand-in-hand with the 'grace only', anti-Torah position of the Hellenistic church to write into the gospels a miraculous birth narrative to be able to reject the previous conclusion regarding the need for Torah observance.

Talbert concludes in this manner by stating that *"The Greco-Roman conviction that a human's superiority can be explained only by a divine creative act is used to establish the prevenience of divine grace in the divine-human relation. This is what an ancient auditor would have heard."*

So while such evidence of this Hellenistic, or Greco-Roman mythical narrative to explain and venerate the great figures of their history does suggest strongly that such a mythical narrative was likely adopted and redacted into the Gospels, it does not of-course prove that such typology is not purely co-incidental.

It is, I think most significant to appreciate though, that the Jewish people of Yeshua's day NEVER expected the Messiah to be virgin-ally conceived. In fact, this understanding of the Messianic prophecies has remained the consistently held view of Judaism ever since.

The evidence regarding Cerinthus does indeed appear confusing, especially though, in that those trying to either lay claim to him (the Gnostics) or reject his authenticity as a believer (the Hellenists), can't even agree (and certainly have different criteria to me) on what a follower of Yeshua in those early decades typically looked like.

For me the evidence is extremely strong that all the early Jewish followers were Torah observant (including a significant number of Pharisees). After some 12-15 years when the Gentiles began to join this movement, they too were often Torah observant, or at the very least observed the Ten Words and the Noahide Laws (as much as detailed in Acts 15 at least).

Therefore the fairly clear indication from a number of sources that Cerinthus was circumcised and at least in some ways a strong supporter of Torah would suggest he was a follower of Yeshua.

What does make it a little difficult is that all the commentary on him comes from the Hellenistic Christians such as Eusebius, who believed in such falsehoods as the divinity of Yeshua, the Trinity and that the Kingdom of Heaven was not to be on the earth!

So to me, the best approach seems to be, to believe that if these Hellenists had a problem with Cerinthus and thought him a heretic, it is more likely that he was much closer to be a real believer, as they certainly weren't!

For example, Eusebius condemns Cerinthus because *"the doctrine which he taught was this: that the kingdom of Christ will be an earthly one."* – from Eusebius Pamphilus: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine – (circa 260 - 340 CE)

Some, such as a second century sect, even believed that Cerinthus wrote the Gospel of John! Wouldn't that be ironic if it turns out to be true.

Others argue that he disagreed with the Apostle Paul because he thought all Gentiles who became followers of Yeshua should be proselytized and become Jews. Again, this makes him more likely a follower of the early church in Jerusalem rather than a Gnostic or Hellenistic heretic.

Here is an interesting and informative quote from 'How Jesus Became Christian':

"...they [the Ebionites] did not accept the virgin birth story at all since this MYTHOLOGY does not find its roots in Jewish thinking. So, unlike later Christians [of the Roman Catholic variety], they did not see Jesus as a divine being. Nor did they think that Jesus 'preexisted' his human form in any fashion...He was, like you and me, HUMAN IN ALL RESPECTS, feeling our pain, joy, sorrow, and gladness. He became God's CHOSEN Messiah because God judged him more righteous than any other person" (Barrie Wilson, 'How Jesus Became Christian', St. Martin's Press, N.Y. 2008, p. 100)²¹.

²¹This quote came from the website 'Hope of Israel': Here's a little more of the excellent article on their site on the question of the Virgin Birth: *There is a lot of evidence to show that the original Hebrew or Aramaic forms of both Matthew and Luke were -- like the present Gospel of Mark - WITHOUT the first two chapters, starting their accounts of the Messiah's ministry with John the Baptist's calling. It is a fact that the Ebionites of the second to fourth centuries after the Messiah, used the Gospel of Matthew written in Aramaic but WITHOUT the Virgin Birth narrative -- unlike our version of this gospel that, like Luke, includes the Virgin Birth story.... The New Testament we have today is at least a THIRD LEVEL translation of the original Apostolic Writings and Epistles that have mysteriously vanished. These Gospels and Epistles were originally translated*

I have not discussed here Luke's annunciation (the angelic announcement of the birth of Yeshua) narrative. Luke also wrote Acts. There is no reference to the Virgin Birth at all in Acts, which is very much a narrative that informs followers of Yeshua in how they too should act. As per the great Jewish maxim 'Deeds matter more than Creeds'²², this is also quite telling.

For a great treatment of Luke's annunciation narrative, I recommend Chapter 5 in particular, of Prof. Andrew T. Lincoln's, '*Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition and Theology*'.

In this book Professor Andrew Lincoln argues that the notion of the 'virgin birth' was promoted to enhance the Hellenistic argument for Yeshua's divinity. Lincoln instead argues that the earliest, most primitive historical New Testament witnesses do not affirm the historicity of the virgin birth.

In conclusion, the genealogical records of Yeshua are certainly no impediment to his qualification to be Messiah King, and in fact, they appear to offer some strong confirmation, not only of the validity of his claim, but also the difficulty for any future prospective claimants (after the destruction of the birth records in the Temple in 70 CE) to present evidence that they possibly qualify for the role.

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Appendix: More on the Virgin Birth – addressing some counter arguments

After further discussion on the Virgin Birth I would like to add a few further clarifying points:

The 'Old Roman Creed' states: *"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, **Born of the Virgin Mary:** Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried ..."*

Some have argued that because this creed that accepts the Virgin Birth doctrine was a very early document it is likely to be an authentic explanation of what the first disciples believed.

However, most scholars date the "Old Roman Creed" to no earlier than 140 CE.

By this time the 'church' had totally severed ties with its Jewish roots (this really started around 70 CE, but was fairly well done and dusted by 135 CE), and was really now a Hellenistic institution.

So this creed is really a creed of the Hellenists (and even some Gnostics), that is a creed of those who also argue for the Trinity, etc.

Some might argue that Ignatius of Antioch's (who did live and write before 10 CE) statement that: *"For our God Jesus Christ was conceived by Mary according to God's plan, of the seed of David **and of the Holy Spirit;** who was born and was baptized that by his passion He might cleanse water."* is an argument for the Virgin Birth, though it could be interpreted in other ways.

Worse though Ignatius of Antioch also apparently wrote:

"Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from the beginning and is at last made manifest — Letter to the Magnesians 2, 6:1

And *"There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, even Jesus Christ our Lord."* — Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 7, (shorter version, Roberts-Donaldson translation).

from the Aramaic or Hebrew by uninspired Hellenized Judahites -- followed by pagan Greeks and canonized by the equally paganized ancient Roman Universal (Catholic) Church and government of the Roman god and Emperor Constantine "the Great."

- from <http://www.hope-of-israel.org/originsVBmyth.html>

²²<http://globaltruthinternational.com/2013/04/04/deeds-matter-more-than-creeds/>

He (apparently) argued for the deity of Yeshua and many other Hellenistic doctrines.

What is more likely though is that the Ignatian epistles, beginning with that to the Romans, were pseudepigraphically composed in the early 3rd century (this was actually a very common approach as Bart Ehrman's details in some depth in books like his 'Lost Christianities'). This was the argument presented by biblical scholar, Professor William P. Killen (1886)²³.

So the Old Roman Creed is more an argument against the Virgin Birth than for it, because if the Virgin Birth is SO important that it was stated in a very brief creedal formula, then why is it NOT stated likewise in the NT?

The absence of explicit Virgin Birth teachings in the NT (outside of Matthew, and possibly Luke) sharply conflicts with the alleged importance shown in this very questionable document, a document from a time when the *'fox was guarding the hen house'* (that is, when the church has severed links with its Jewish foundations)!

If we are going to use such extra-Biblical quotes as evidence for or against the Virgin Birth it would seem the words of Cerinthus are more relevant than the questionable Ignatius of Antioch or the Old Roman Creed. For example, Irenaeus (late 2nd century) wrote about the believer, Cerinthus²⁴ (of late first century CE) *"who believed Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary according to the usual manner."* – I think this is more telling as an historical reality than the Old Roman Creed.

Another argument presented for the Virgin Birth is the inference from the phrase 'the son of Miriam' in Mark 6:3, that Yeshua was not the son of Yosef as well (i.e. that those who used this phrase did not think Yosef was the natural father of Yeshua).

Mark 6:1-3 *"Now Jesus left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did he get these ideas? And what is this wisdom that has been given to him? What are these miracles that are done through his hands? 3 Isn't this the carpenter, **the son of Mary** and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?" **And so they took offense at him.** (NET)*

Part of the argument here is that this phrase is not used anyway else in the Bible.

But this is not the case. A number of verses in the Tanakh show that there were a number of instances where a man was described as the 'son of X' where X is his mother, rather than father.

For example, Psalm 69 contains: "I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.", and Genesis 37:2 has "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, being still a lad even with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought evil report of them unto their father."

But perhaps even more relevant is 2 Chron 24:7, which states: "For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the hallowed things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon the Baalim".

It could be argued that in the cases of Bilhah, Zilpah, and Athaliah as they were not the only wives of their husband then this description, 'son of ...' clarifies this. But it is also possible that the same reasoning or some other (unknown to us) reason is behind the same reference to Yeshua's mother.

For example the apocryphal *'The Proto-Evangelium of James'* (dated around 130 CE) identifies Miriam's husband, Yosef as an old man with at least one other wife. While I don't find this apocryphal writing convincing overall, there may be some truth in it, as it is possible that Yosef was already married and much older (there are other factors that support this inference). If this were so, or even alleged to be so by some of the community at the time, then the use of 'Son of Miriam' in Mark 6 may be because of this very reason.

²³ <http://www.depts.drew.edu/jhc/KillenIgnatius.pdf>

²⁴ The 1911 Classic Encyclopedia: "**CERINTHUS**: ... *It would appear, ... that Cerinthus laid stress on the rite of circumcision and on the observance of the Sabbath.... He taught that the world had been made by angels(and that) **Jesus was the offspring of Joseph and Mary** ... Cerinthus, if we may trust the notices of Gaius the Roman presbyter (c. 290) and Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 340), he held a violent and crude form of chiliasm (the belief that Christ will return to reign in the body for a thousand years)" -<http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Cerinthus>*

It is also possible, if this verse from 2 Chronicles is at all indicative, that stating that someone was a 'son of X' where X is a woman may have been a chauvinistic insult of some sort. This would also appear to fit the context of the Mark 6:3 narrative, where the speakers are clearly offended by the authority and wisdom that Yeshua displays (a good example of Yeshua's statement that 'a prophet is not honoured in his own country' – Yochanan 4:44).

I have argued that the only apparent reference to a Virgin Birth in Luke is Luke 1:34 *"And Mary said unto the messenger, 'How shall this be, seeing a husband I do not know?'"* - YLT.

A common retort is that Luke 1:35 explicitly refers to the Virgin Birth: *"And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."*

While most English readers may be quick to assume that the 'overshadow'(ing) of the Spirit of God means that the child is conceived miraculously without sexual relations (i.e. a virgin birth), but the problem here is the English translation.

The Greek word 'ἐπισκιάσει' used here does mean to 'overshadow', or 'to protect, to surround, or to cover over, but it does NOT mean to have sexual union or to create a human being!

It is used 5 times in the New Testament: Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34, (all translated into English as 'enveloped'); also in Luke 1:35 & Acts 5:15, and 4 times in the Tanakh (LXX version): Ex 40:35; Psa 90:4; 139:8; Prov 18:11. And in none of these uses is there any implication of a sexual union or conception of a child.

Also Luke 1:35 does not inform us of when the Ruach HaKodesh (the Spirit of God) will 'overshadow' Miriam (implying instead perhaps a sense of 'surrounding' or 'protecting the conception' so that a special child is conceived). This could be before she had sexual relations with Yosef, when she did, or after the event. But what it does tell us is that the power and purpose of HaShem is involved in this conception so that the child born will be a very unique 'son' of God.

And this is where another translation problem arises. Our English translations have the phrase '**only begotten son**' in reference to Yeshua. 'Only begotten son' entails an adjective (only) followed by a verb (begotten), followed by the noun (son) it applies to. 'Begotten' comes from the root word 'begat' which means to create a child (and there is only one way to do that – with the seed of a man impregnating or fertilising the egg of a woman).

This phrase in such verses as Yochanan (John) 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* (NASB), and may seem to imply that this son has been created by God, especially when we first read similar passages such as Hebrews 11:17 *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his **only begotten son**."*

But with respect to Hebrews 11:17 we know that Isaac was not Abraham's '**only created son**', as he had many more, including Ishmael who was born before Isaac.

The problem here is that the single Greek word 'μόνογεννη' is deceptively translated as '**only begotten**' when it is better translated as '**unique**', which most significantly is an adjective which describes the son's role.

As I stated, when '**only begotten**' is used it implies as action (as it is a verb) by the father, rather than its proper role as an adjective which describes the unique role of the son, whether Isaac or Yeshua in these two examples.

This is the reality in all 6 cases where this word, and its derivatives are used, namely John 1:14 & Jn 3:18, where it is a genitive adjective (and 'son' is implied); Jn 1:18 where it is a nominative adjective; and Jn 3:16, Heb 11:17 and 1 John 4:9, where it is a masculine accusative adjective. To repeat, in all these uses of this Greek word 'μόνογεννη' it is an adjective and not a verb, and therefore it describes the noun, that is, the son and his uniqueness, not some action of the father or Father.

This deceptive translation of '**only begotten**' clearly leads to the incorrect pre-suppositions and inferences about the birth of Yeshua.

Many Hellenistic Christians argue that the Virgin Birth is a necessary reality to overcome the problem of Original Sin, a doctrine invented by Augustine²⁵.

²⁵ See Frank Selch's article on this doctrine - <http://circumcisedheart.info/christian/Original%20Sin%20and%20the%20Fall%20of%20Adam.pdf>

But even some of those who reject the full implications of the false doctrine seem to still be under its Hellenistic sway.

One argument for example is: *"If Jesus had been conceived and born the usual way he too would have inherited Adam's mortality. From the moment of his miraculous conception Jesus was free from the drag, the bias, the ballast of Adam's legacy of death operating in him. ... The Virginal conception of Jesus was therefore essential if he was to avoid entering this world as a man already under the reign of death! Fact of the matter is this: If Jesus had been born of natural processes, he could not be our Saviour for he would have been "in Adam" and unfit to be the Head of God's new and redeemed humanity."*

What is this declaration, if not a declaration of a form of Original Sin? This is one of the most serious flaws in the whole Virgin Birth argument in my opinion.

I would argue that the truth is the exact opposite. If Yeshua was born in some special, totally unique way he could not be the example for us and thus he cannot be our future High Priest²⁶ able to make any sort of atonement for us.

Yeshua was mortal and died. It was an act of God that raised him to eternal life, not some inherent 'immortality' gene (or attribute) that he had and no-one else had. It was because he had been chosen and was obedient to the point of death that HaShem raised him up to demonstrate that we too, could one day be raised to life eternal, if we are faithful and obedient to HaShem.

What we have all inherited from Adam is the reality of our nature to make mistakes (to act in Torah-less ways) and the reality of physical death. But Deuteronomy 30 makes it abundantly clear that we can overcome our Yetzer HaRa and act righteously²⁷.

Yeshua, a real human being proved this. He grew in obedience and then lived a life of Torah obedience and demonstrated the ultimate love in laying his life down for his friends. A Virgin Birth takes from us the trust and faith that we can follow his example, because it makes him more than, and different, to us. Our promise of resurrection is then also questionable, because we are not like him.

Another common argument put forward by those who still cling doggedly (and perhaps emotionally) to the Virgin Birth doctrine is that if Yosef and Miriam has slept together and conceived Yeshua, then they had committed 'fornication' and seriously flaunted the Torah's commandments. The argument is that such an action would not be fitting of these two very Torah obedient Israelites.

The problem with this argument is that such an act would not be fornication. Yosef and Miriam (his betrothed) were perfectly within Torah to have sexual relations before the marriage ceremony. The Torah considers them married as soon as they are betrothed. See Lev 18 for what instead does actually constitute 'fornication'.

However, it may well have been seen as culturally inappropriate before they had the marriage ceremony and began to live under the same roof. This may have been why Yosef was initially reticent.

Instead of approaching this whole situation from the standard Christian pre-suppositional position, consider instead the expected response of this young Jewish maiden when being told she would bear this very 'unique' child. She would have reacted in some disbelief like Sarah did with Abraham, but then her whole life's experience, and her knowledge of the Tanakh would inform her that if she was to have a special child, she would need to go and 'sleep' with her husband, Yosef.

What actually occurred here none of us are privy to, but it does appear that once Yosef had had his angelic visitation they did not have sexual relations again until after Yeshua's birth.

At the time of Miriam's angelic visitation she was a virgin, but this does not necessarily infer that she would become pregnant before having sexual relations with her husband, Yosef.

I would also argue that the fact that the other book written by Luke, namely the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, does not have any reference to the Virgin Birth is very significant.

²⁶ See my article 'Yeshua: The High Priest' - <http://circumcisedheart.info/Yeshua%20the%20High%20Priest.pdf>

²⁷ See my article on 'The Practicality of Torah' - <http://circumcisedheart.info/Christian%20site/The%20last%20Torah%20portion%20before%20Yom%20Teruah.pdf>

Acts is in many ways the most important book in the NT²⁸ (along with the Epistle of James²⁹) because it tells us how the followers of Yeshua behaved and sets the example for us.

The fact that there is no Virgin Birth narrative should demonstrate that, even if it were somehow a reality, it is not that important in matters of faith and obedience.

²⁸ A great article that makes this point very powerfully is <http://torahofmessiah.org/under-the-microscope-the-book-of-acts/>

²⁹ See 'James the Just: Re-evaluating his Legacy' - <http://circumcisedheart.info/James%20the%20Just%20%E2%80%93%20Reevaluating%20his%20legacy.pdf>