

The Hebraic perspective - Who the Messiah?

Since the days of Moses, what were the people expecting from the Prophet that Moses foretold would appear (Deut 18). Were they expecting a King, a Prophet, or a Priest. Were they expecting 1, 2 or even 3 Messiahs?

Today there is a common Jewish understanding that there will be two 'end-times' Messiah's:

"A Kabbalistic tradition within Judaism is that the commonly-discussed messiah who will usher in a period of freedom and peace (Messiah ben David) will be preceded by Messiah ben Joseph, who will die sacrificing himself while uniting all of Israel in preparing the world for the arrival of Messiah ben David." – see <http://www.aish.com/tp/i/moha/48909612.html>

The Qumran scrolls, the Book of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Tribes—all of which are close to the Essene¹ worldview and written prior to the first century of the Common Era, reflected the belief in **three messiahs: an eschatological messiah, along with the messiahs of Aaron and Israel.**

So what were the characteristics of this eschatological (end-times) Messiah?

Messiah is the English transliteration from the Hebrew 'Mashiach' meaning 'anointed one' i.e. someone chosen specially by God for some purpose. This term is translated into 'Christos' in Greek and then to 'Christ' in English. The term occurs some 37 times in the Hebrew Scriptures (KJV OT version - Strong's #H4886) and is not always a prophetic reference to the eschatological Messiah.

It is used to refer to the kings of Israel, the high priest, the patriarchs, as well as the Assyrian Cyrus (see Isaiah 45).

Look at Isaiah 11 where we read of his characteristics. His seven main attributes are described in Isaiah 11:1-10 and they are:

- (1)... and the spirit of Adonai will rest upon him,
- (2) the spirit of wisdom,
- (3) and understanding,
- (4) the spirit of counsel,
- (5) and might,
- (6) the spirit of knowledge,
- (7) and the fear(awesome respect) of Adonai. ...

He was also to redeem the Land of Israel; remove the oppressors and return all of Israel from the four corners of the Earth. He was to introduce a time of great peace, a time when all would know the Almighty, as per the New/Renewed Covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31. This would also involve the cessation of war; the universal conversion of the world to Judaism or ethical monotheism; the rebuilding of the Temple; the recognition that it is the Jewish people who know God as prophesied in Zechariah 8:23, and the 'swallowing up of death' (Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:12)!

Consider this list detailing who and what the Mashiach will be from JewFAQ.org:

- 1 He, a man, and not a God, will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5).
- 2 He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2-5).
- 3 He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example.
- 4 He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for [Israel](#).
- 5 He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15).
- 6 Before the time of the Mashiach, there shall be war and suffering (Ezekiel 38:16)
- 7 The Mashiach will bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the [Jewish people](#) by bringing us back to [Israel](#) and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5).
- 8 He will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1).
- 9 He will rebuild the [Temple](#) and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18).
- 10 He will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).
- 11 He will be anointed as king in the End of Days.

Clearly, at this stage, we could only establish that Yeshua meets point 2, 3 and 6, and to a degree perhaps point 5.

So when we turn to Yeshua's time, we see these factors as forefront in the minds of faithful and zealous Jews.

¹The Essenes were a fringe sect of the 'proto' -Judaism of Yeshua's time.

Being literate people (in a world of mass illiteracy), they knew their Scriptures, their Tanakh and so they knew many of the possible and potential prophecies that pointed to the Messiah, such as the prophecy that Elijah must come first. They looked for a man with great authority from God; a man clearly in communion with the Almighty; a man who, as a matter of course, had the power and authority from God to work miracles².

For the disciples, Yeshua fitted the bill.

Much was expected of him (consider the list above) when he entered Jerusalem on the first day of that most fateful Passover/Pesach week. The great crowds that came out to greet him saw the redemption of Israel as at hand; they hoped for an end to the Roman oppression and the institution of the Kingdom of God; a time like the time of the Kingdoms of David and Solomon, but an even greater degree of peace and harmony with HaShem.

The Romans were clearly concerned. He was not the first Jewish agitator, and he would not be the last, who sought to remove their control. In fact, historically Bar Kochba, who the great Rabbi Akiva thought at one time was the eschatological Messiah, had more success in removing the hand of the Romans, but in ultimately failing and being killed, Akiva recognized that he could not have been the Messiah.

Why then did Yeshua's followers (after their initial despair at his death), continue to believe that he was the Messiah when he had not fulfilled the promise to restore God's rule to Eretz Israel?

They continued to believe because of the resurrection!

In the 37 days that Yeshua spent with them before his ascension; he spoke mostly of the Kingdom of God; both its current manifestation in their hearts, as well as its future covering of the whole earth with the glory of God.

I believe that it is the proof of the resurrection of Yeshua that is the most significant proof for his Messiahship, even though this was not obviously a criteria³. If the resurrection of Yeshua is true, he is the only man⁴ who has died to be raised from the sleep of death to permanent and eternal life. Thus no other man can claim to be the Second Adam (the first-born of a new humanity) or the eternal High Priest in the likeness of Malki-Tzedek (Melchizedek). Please see my article on the resurrection for more on the validity of this belief.

When we turn back to the Tanakh though and look for proof of his claims to be the end-times Messiah, we run into something of a difficulty. The fact is that most of the Messianic prophecies relate to the great Day to come and thus can not be shown, at this time, to apply to Yeshua.

It is important to appreciate that the awesome prophecies of the Coming Age, of the New/Renewed Covenant have not yet come to pass. I strongly recommend Pastor Aubrey Burt's series of teachings on the New Covenant for details on this⁵.

Given the fact that most of the significant prophecies of the end-times Messiah have not yet been fulfilled through any man, including Yeshua, we should recognize with some humility and vital appreciation, that most knowledgeable Jewish scholars and Rabbi's will, for some good reasons, reject the argument that Yeshua is this end-times Messiah.

However, as these Jewish scholars know better than most what the real qualifications of the end-times Messiah are, they will surely be among the first to recognize him when he arrives to usher in the Coming Age!

Some of the other significant prophecies that Christianity uses as proof for Yeshua's Messiahship are also problematic as they appear to have been somewhat twisted to fit.

For example, Psalm 22: 16 is often incorrectly translated to read "*For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet*", whereas the proper translation from the Hebrew is more like "*Dogs are all around me, a pack of villains closes in on me like a lion [at] my hands and feet.*", that is that his hands and feet are captured in the way a lion traps its prey.

Or Zec 12:10 (see John 20:27) "*9 When that day comes, I will seek to destroy all nations attacking Yerushalayim; 10 and I will pour out on the house of David and on those living in Yerushalayim a spirit of grace and prayer; and they will look to*

² There were miracle workers and miracles both before (see the Tanakh) and after (not just the Apostles of Yeshua, but others like Honi Ha' magil - the Circle Maker) the times of Yeshua.

³ With the proviso that Psalm 2:6 may have indicated that it was – see <http://circumcisedheart.info/Christian%20site/Psalm%202%20verse%206%20commentary.pdf>

⁴ There are some Jewish scholars who argue that Elijah was resurrected and even that Moses was.

⁵ Available from pfherring.podomatic.com

me, whom they pierced." They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son; they will be in bitterness on his behalf like the bitterness for a firstborn son."

The Hebrew translation of this phrase is more like *"and they will look to me regarding those whom the nations have thrust through"*.

Similarly, the Dan 9:24-27 prophecy that we love, if understood in its Hebraic context and language actually appears to be speaking about King Cyrus!⁶

Another problematic prophecy is in Isaiah 9:6.

The Hebrew word here for child is 'yulad' which is the past tense. In other words, when Isaiah spoke this prophecy, this child had already been born. This prophecy was fulfilled in Isaiah's day.

Isaiah 9:6: *"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; dominion will rest on his shoulders, and he will be given the name Pele-Yo'etz El Gibbor Avi-'Ad Sar-Shalom [Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace], 7 in order to extend the dominion and perpetuate the peace of the throne and kingdom of David, to secure it and sustain it through justice and righteousness henceforth and forever. The zeal of ADONAI-Tzva'ot will accomplish this."*

If we are then looking for a second fulfilment of this prophecy, and recognize that these titles are titles given to a man, a Messiah whose authority comes from God, the question then is how to we understand a man being described as 'Mighty God' (El gibbor) and 'Everlasting Father'.

The Hebrew Lexicon defines 'Mighty God' as "Divine Hero, reflecting the divine majesty"⁷. The Hebrew word 'Elohim' (God) occurs some 3500 times in the Tanakh and is sometimes used as a title for a human leader – for example in Ps 45:6 where it refers to the Messiah and in Exodus 7:1 where it refers to Moses.

Ps 45:6 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Ex 7 1 So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus came to recognize the one who was to be 'god' of the Coming Age, replacing the evil one, HaSatan, the 'god' of this present age.

2 Cor 4:4 "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God, should shine on them."

What of 'Everlasting Father'? The Jewish people understood 'Eternal or Everlasting Father' to mean father of the Coming (Messianic) Age.

The Messiah is the parent of the Coming Age on earth " ... when all things are made subject to Him, then the son himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor 15:28)

The Jewish people recognized that a human political leader could be called father. Isaiah states of a leader in Israel *"I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah."* (Isaiah 22:21)

Just as the first Adam was the father of all human beings, this Messiah, the 'second Adam' will be the father of the new creation - those who are resurrected to life in the Kingdom of God. While this may seem a little confusing it is similar to the situations where, just as Abraham is called *"the father of all who believe"* (Rom 4:11) and yet will be under the Lordship of the Messiah in the Coming Age (and therefore the Messiah will be his 'everlasting father'); and David also called the Messiah his Lord in Psalm 110:1 even though this Messiah, born after him and of his line is his 'son', his descendant by birth.

Mark 12: 35 Then Yeshua answered and said, while He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is the Son of David? 36 For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: ' The LORD said to my Lord, " Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" 37 Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly.

⁶For these examples and more see 'The Teacher and the Preacher' by Rabbi Moshe Avraham Kempinski

⁷Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Brown, Driver and Briggs 1961 p 42

Clearly, any secondary fulfilment of Isaiah 9 by an end-times Messiah has not occurred as yet and so this passage can not be used to prove Yeshua is that Messiah.

Further though, I now see this translation as not ideal. Uriel Ben Mordechai has translated it as:
"... For unto use a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders. A Wonder, a Counselor, Mighty G-d, my Father in perpetuity, shall call him ... 'Prince of Peace'".

This paints an entirely different picture. See my article '[A different take on Isaiah 9:6](#)' for more on this.

Also there are issues with Isaiah 7:14-17 *"Therefore Adonai himself will give you people a sign: the young woman will become pregnant, bear a son and name him 'Immanu El [God is with us]. 15 By the time he knows enough to refuse evil and choose good, he will [have to] eat curdled milk and [wild] honey. 16 Yes, before the child knows enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be left abandoned. 17 ADONAI will bring the king of Ashur on you, your people and your father's house. These will be days worse than any you've known since Efrayim broke loose from Y'hudah."*

While most Christians would like to cite this prophecy (in their versions that read 'virgin' rather than young woman) as one of the most significant prophecies, unfortunately it just doesn't stack up. The Hebrew word 'almah' is translated as 'virgin', but it actually means 'young woman' or maiden'. The Hebrew word for virgin is 'bitulah'.

The Dead Sea Scrolls also helped deflate the argument that Isaiah 7:14 used a Hebrew word for 'virgin' rather than maid.

Further, this helped scholars recognize that Matthew had never in fact argued for a virgin birth after-all! He had clearly quoted from the Hebrew.

"In the 2nd century AD it was joined by three other Greek translations, those by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian. These four works translated the Hebrew word 'almah' in Isaiah 7:14 into Greek as follows.

Greek translation:	Word used
<i>Septuagint</i>	<i>parthenos</i>
<i>Aquila:</i>	<i>neanis</i>
<i>Symmachus:</i>	<i>neanis</i>
<i>Theodotian:</i>	<i>neanis</i>

*Only the Septuagint translated the word as 'parthenos' (which means virgin), while the three other recognized Greek translations of the Old Testament available in the 2nd century AD translated the word as 'neanis' (which means young woman)."*⁸

That is, many were aware of this false interpretation. Within such an environment, I believe any redactions, to be accepted at all, would need to be minor. Once the availability of Jewish texts was severely restricted and the 'church' was almost entirely Gentile, only then could more major redactions be considered and enacted.

Also amongst the considerations then, is that if the original authors of the books of the NT were to have written clearly non-factual accounts, there were many who would have corrected them or even shown them contempt and ridicule. For example, in the first decade or so after the crucifixion of Yeshua, if these authors had written blatantly false statements, there were plenty of devout Jewish men and women who would have rejected their claims and severely limited their impact.

Such community correction and eye-witness verification is limited though to the first years of the growth of this Jewish sect, 'The Way'. Such a natural self-correcting mechanism would have been increasingly unavailable from 70 CE onward and especially after the death of all the original disciples and apostles.

Thus, when we see a clear case of incorrect quoting of the Tanakh, it is much more likely that it is a late redaction and most likely only after, or on translation from Hebrew. As far as the Gospels go, The Jerusalem School for Synoptic Research has made a very good case for an original Hebrew narrative of Yeshua's story, along with some thematic versions existing before any of the Gospels that we have were written. They also make a very good case for Luke being written first and in many ways being the most reliable.

⁸See http://www.wallsofjericho.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=31)

So what prophecies can be properly applied to Yeshua?

Before answering this question and looking at the Hebraic perspective, should we not just point out that the disciples and the Apostle Paul were all good Torah observant Jews and they said Yeshua was the Messiah so that's all we need to know?!

I wish it were that simple!

First, could they have been genuinely mistaken? Should we not also ask why the disciples still believed after the death of Yeshua, and why the Apostle Paul came to believe, and still believed despite the failure of this brilliant man to convince many, perhaps even most, of his brethren?

But before we even address these questions we should acknowledge that the NT as we have it today has some serious translation errors, some serious corruptions and distortions and even more serious interpretative errors. (see my book *'The New Testament: The Hebrew Behind the Greek'*⁹ for more details on this).

Given all this, the New Testament is not ideal as our primary source for determining the criteria to judge who the Messiah is or will be.

Rather, the Messiah, the concept of an 'Anointed One' is very much a Hebraic concept, very much an understanding and ideal from the Tanakh. So surely, we need to turn to the Tanakh, to see what the expectation was, but also, to help with our own potentially flawed interpretation, we should factor in the Jewish writings prior to Yeshua's day to see what understanding the Jewish people had from their Tanakh, and their Rabbi's etc.

In fact the brilliant Prof David Flusser stated that the times of Yeshua were vital to a proper understanding of Yeshua. *"In the fullness of time the Christian religion sprang out of Judaism; as a fact, indeed, of divine revelation, ... No incident in the gospel story, no word in the preaching of Jesus Christ, is intelligible apart from its setting in Jewish history, and without a clear understanding of that world of thought ... Thus ... is it not enough to know simply that older literature which has been collected together in the ... Old Testament. On the contrary, the gospel of Jesus Christ is much more closely connected with its immediately contemporary surroundings, and the tendencies of thought prevailing in that particular age."*

To better appreciate the 'world and tendencies of thought' of Yeshua's day we need to study at the very least these sources:

- The Tanakh (OT);
- Jewish apocalyptic literature from 200 BCE – 100 CE – books such as 1 Enoch, Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, and the Psalms of Solomon;
- The Dead Sea Scrolls – The Manual of Discipline, The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness and the Temple Scroll having particular significance,
- The Apocrypha – 1 & 2 Maccabees (esp. regarding Hanukah), & Sirach,
- The Targums – Aramaic paraphrases of books or passages of the TaNaK (300 BCE – 300 CE),
- The Works of Josephus,
- Talmud – Mishnah (Oral Law) – written down from 200 CE and Gemara – commentary on Mishnah from around 500 CE plus midrash (commentary) on Tanakh passed orally until recorded around 100-300 CE.
- And of course the Messianic/Apostolic Writings, the B'rit Hadashah or New Testament!

If you haven't listened to my talk on the '*Times of Yeshua*'¹⁰, I would strongly recommend this for much of the important contextual background. For now though, let's turn to the Tanakh and try to flesh out a little what we can see there as regards the expected Messiah. We should then consider how this was understood by the contemporary (to Yeshua) Jewish writings and those of the inter-testamental period.

To put it another way, the Apostle Peter's recognition that Yeshua is the Son of God, the Messiah, is most likely an application of his understanding of the Tanakh and comparing the attributes and behaviour of Yeshua to the prophecies in the Tanakh.

⁹ <http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Testament-Hebrew-Behind-ebook/dp/B009XO0NQU/>

¹⁰ http://pfherring.podomatic.com/entry/2011-12-30T04_18_57-08_00

As the power of God's Spirit had not fully come upon the disciples at this time, it was unlikely just from a 'spiritual' revelation (if such a thing is possible in isolation from his previous understanding and experience). So if from the Tanakh, what did Peter see?

That is, what prophecies and descriptions of the Messiah can we consider and evaluate purely on the evidence we have as the Apostle Peter did, and not on our suppositions of what occurred after Peter's revelation, and on what we still hope will come to pass?

Some of these prophecies are:

Num 24:17 *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not soon - a star will step forth from Ya'akov, a scepter will arise from Isra'el, to crush the corners of Mo'av and destroy all descendants of Shet."*

This is understood to be a prophecy about the Messiah – at this time though all we can apply to our question is that the Messiah must be from the tribe of Jacob. Was Yeshua from the tribe of Jacob? How is this determined; how sure can we be of this claim?

There are a number of similar passages such as **Gen 49:10** "The scepter will not pass from Y'hudah, nor the ruler's staff from between his legs, until he comes to whom [obedience] belongs; and it is he whom the peoples will obey.", which may well apply, but which are difficult to be at all sure of at this time.

Micah 5:2-3 *"But you, Beit-Lechem near Efrat, so small among the clans of Y'hudah, out of you will come forth to me the future ruler of Isra'el, whose origins are far in the past, back in ancient times. Therefore he will give up [Isra'el] only until she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his kinsmen will return to the people of Isra'el."*

From this prophecy, we may assume that the Messiah is either born in Bethlehem or grows up there.

Hosea 11:1 *"When Isra'el was a child, I loved him; and out of Egypt I called my son."* – referred to in Matt 2:14

Again, this verse of Hosea is in the first instance speaking about the Nation of Israel being called out of Egypt. Matthew appears to make a secondary application of this verse to Yeshua. That is, he uses this verse in an allegorical sense. While this appears valid, it in no way is exclusive to Yeshua, so in itself it does not carry a lot of weight as prior evidence.

Isaiah 40:3-5 (quoted in Luke 3:3-6): *"A voice cries out: "Clear a road through the desert for ADONAI! Level a highway in the 'Aravah (desert) for our God! 4 Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill lowered, the bumpy places made level and the crags become a plain. 5 Then the glory of ADONAI will be revealed; all humankind together will see it, for the mouth of ADONAI has spoken."*

Luke describes how Yeshua's preaching on repentance was a fulfilment of this prophecy. Certainly, I see the power and clarity and strength of Yeshua's preaching as at least the beginning of such power from the Almighty.

Malachi 3:1 (quoted by Luke in Luke 7:24; 27) *"Look! I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. Yes, the messenger of the covenant, in whom you take such delight - look! Here he comes," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot (Lord of Hosts)."*

While we are relying on the confirmation of Luke for the appropriateness of the fulfilment of prophecy, it would certainly appear to have some historical validity.

Mal 4 (quoted in Matt 11:13-14): *For the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the proud and evildoers will be stubble; the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot, "and leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But to you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will break out leaping, like calves released from the stall. 3 You will trample the wicked, they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I take action," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. 4 "Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, which I enjoined on him at Horev, laws and rulings for all Isra'el. 5 Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land with complete destruction."*

This is a fascinating, but yet to be fulfilled prophecy for Israel and the world. In this prophecy though, we see that Elijah (Eliyahu) in some way precedes the great Day and the sword of the Messiah. In Yeshua's day, those who considered his

credentials clearly looked for a 'Elijah' to precede him – in some way it appeared that Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) fitted the bill. He certainly was calling the Jewish people to repentance and thus to obedience and the turning of their hearts towards his other, etc. As the great and terrible Day has not yet arrived though, we must also suspend judgment on this prophecy as well I think.

Isaiah 9:1-2 (quoted in Matt 4:13-16): *“But there will be no more gloom for those who are now in anguish. In the past the land of Z'vulun and the land of Naftali were regarded lightly; but in the future he will honor the way to the lake, beyond the Yarden, Galil-of-the-Goyim. The people living in darkness have seen a great light; upon those living in the land that lies in the shadow of death, light has dawned.”*

Matthew certainly saw Yeshua's preaching in the region of Capernaum and the Galilee (a region with many Gentiles) as a fulfilment of this prophecy. Given the context of this prophecy, it should carry some weight.

Ps 78:2-4 (cited in Matt 13:34): *“I will speak to you in parables and explain mysteries from days of old. The things which we have heard and known, and which our fathers told us we will not hide from their descendants; we will tell the generation to come the praises of ADONAI and his strength, the wonders that he has performed.”*

Clearly Matthew saw that the Messiah would and did use parables. The use of parables though is a very common Jewish approach to presenting an argument. In fact, parables were such a core part of Hebraic teaching that even centuries later when many Jewish writings were recorded in Aramaic, the parable was still recorded in Hebrew. A number of the parables that Yeshua used were commonplace. That is, he was not the first Hebrew teacher/rabbi/prophet to share them. So this prophecy helps to validate Yeshua's claim, but again it is not an exclusive prophecy.

Ps 41:9 (see Luke 22:47 – Judas betrayal): *“Even my close friend, on whom I relied, who shared my table, has turned against me.”* In it's original context this is a reference to King David. It may have a secondary fulfilment in relation to Judas, though there are even some questions raised by some scholars over the validity of the whole betrayal narrative.

Psalm 22: (see Matt 27:35,36, 46, Luke 23:35)

“For the leader. A psalm of David: My God! My God! Why have you abandoned me? Why so far from helping me, so far from my anguished cries?

6 But I am a worm, not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. 7 All who see me jeer at me; they sneer and shake their heads: 8 “He committed himself to ADONAI, so let him rescue him! Let him set him free if he takes such delight in him!” 9 But you are the one who took me from the womb, you made me trust when I was on my mother's breasts. 10 Since my birth I've been thrown on you; you are my God from my mother's womb.

14 I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart has become like wax it melts inside me; 15 my mouth is as dry as a fragment of a pot, my tongue sticks to my palate; you lay me down in the dust of death. 16 Dogs are all around me, a pack of villains closes in on me like a lion [at] my hands and feet. 17 I can count every one of my bones, while they gaze at me and gloat.

18 They divide my garments among themselves; for my clothing they throw dice. 19 But you, ADONAI, don't stay far away! My strength, come quickly to help me! 20 Rescue me from the sword, my life from the power of the dogs.”¹¹

We certainly can see some evidence for the fulfilment of this prophecy from the accounts of the crucifixion; though again this Psalm finds a first fulfilment in King David.

Ps 34:20 (cited in Jn 19:32,33,36) *17 [The righteous] cried out, and ADONAI heard, and he saved them from all their troubles. 18 ADONAI is near those with broken hearts; he saves those whose spirit is crushed. 19 The righteous person suffers many evils, but ADONAI rescues him out of them all. 20 He protects all his bones; not one of them gets broken. 21 Evil will kill the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. 22 But ADONAI redeems his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.*

Interesting, but again a hardly conclusive prophecy, as this passage does not refer exclusively to the Yeshua, it refers to all mankind in a general sense.

Ps 16:10 (see Mark 16:6-7) *“I always set ADONAI before me; with him at my right hand, I can never be moved; 9 so my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, and my body too rests in safety; 10 for you will not abandon me to Sh'ol, you will not let your faithful one see the Abyss. 11 You make me know the path of life; in your presence is unbounded joy, in your right hand eternal delight.”*

¹¹Also refer to earlier comment on this Psalm

Ps 49:15: *“But God will redeem me from Sh'ol's control, because he will receive me.”*

These Psalms would certainly help explain some of the prevalent views in Yeshua's time that argued for resurrection and even for the potential that King David would be the Messiah and had, along with Moses, already been resurrected and stood beside the Throne of the Almighty. It would not have been considered relevant when the first disciples met Yeshua before his crucifixion though, and therefore would not have contributed to their criteria and conclusions as to Yeshua's status as the Messiah.

Among the most recognized and perhaps most significant scriptures would be Deuteronomy 18; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 61:1-2 (because of Yeshua's reading it in the synagogue in his home town and declaring part of this prophecy to be fulfilled in their hearing), Psalm 110 and after his resurrection, Psalm 2.

The fact that Yeshua stated that he only spoke what the Father gave him, would appear to be evidence that Yeshua saw himself as a prophet in the likeness of the one prophesied by Moses in Deut 18. Yeshua's own references to Ps 110 would also lend some weight to his appreciation of himself as a priest in the order, or likeness of Malki-Tzedek (Melchizedek).

Psalm 110 as the most quoted and alluded to passage from the Tanakh in the NT, must be considered crucial in the understanding of the first disciples (although this reference is mostly post-resurrection). Along with **Psalm 2** and the understanding of verse 6 I learned from Frank Selch (see my Psalm 2:6 article), I see these two prophecies as significant in the thinking of the early believers.

Isaiah 53 though would have to be one of the most used, and most significant prophetic passages about the end-times Messiah and the Nation of Israel. More than most, it has been used by Christian theologians and preachers a great deal. It has also been studied a great deal by Jewish Rabbi's and theologians who have argued that it is being mis-applied by those who argue for it's application to Yeshua.

Consider Nachmanides commentary on Isaiah 53. Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) (1194-1270 CE) was a Spaniard who was both a physician and a great Torah scholar.

Below (extracted from 'The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah according to the Jewish Interpreters'¹²) is a part of a commentary on Isaiah 53 by Nachmanides. The conversion has a few errors but you should still get the general thrust of his commentary. It is then most informative to see why he does not regard this scripture as a prophecy about Yeshua:

“The right view respecting this Parashah .יִשְׁבִּיל עֲבָדִי הִנֵּה is to suppose that by the phrase ‘my servant’ the whole of Israel is meant, as in xlv. 2, xlix. 3, and often. As a different opinion, however, is adopted by the Midrash, which refers it to the Messiah, it is necessary for us to explain it in conformity with the view there maintained. The prophet says, The Messiah, the son of David, of whom the text speaks, will never be conquered or perish by the hands of his enemies. And, in fact, the text teaches this clearly. ...

In agreement with the words of Daniel, Isaiah says the Messiah, the servant of the Lord, will *understand*: he will perceive the end, and forthwith will rise up and be exalted, and his heart will be ‘lofty in the ways of the Lord’ (2 Chron. xvii. 6) to go and gather together the outcasts of Israel, ‘not by strength and not by might, but by his spirit’ (Zech. iv. 6), trusting in the Lord, after the manner of that first redeemer who came to Pharaoh with his staff and scrip (cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 40), and smote his land with the ‘rod of his mouth’ (Is. xi. 4).

And so it is said in the Midrash, ‘He will be higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, and loftier than the ministering angels;’ the Messiah, that is, will be higher than Abraham, who was an expounder of the belief in God, and, in spite of the opposition of the king, gained proselytes in the land of Nimrod: for the Messiah will do more than he did; he will proselytize many nations.

And he will be more exalted than Moses: Moses went in unto Pharaoh, that great and wicked king, who said, I know not the Lord (Ex. v. 2), and, although only a shepherd and the humblest of men, was not afraid of him, but brought forth his people out of the ‘furnace of iron’ (Deut. iv. 20, Jer. xi. 4). But the Messiah will do more than Moses: for he will stir himself up against the kings of the whole world, so as to bring forth Israel from their hands, and to execute vengeance upon the Gentiles.

And he will be loftier than the ministering angels, for although these exert themselves diligently in the redemption of Israel (like Michael, Dan. x. 20, 21), yet the Messiah will achieve more than the whole of them together. And wisdom will accompany this elevation of the Messiah, and his nearness to God: for neither Abraham, whom the glorious and fearful Name speaks of as *his friend* (Is. xli. 8), and with whom also he made a covenant; nor Moses, who was nearer to the Deity than any man; nor the ministering angels, who ‘stand round about him on his right hand and on his left’ (1 Kings xxii. 19),

¹²Copyright © 2005 by Varda Books. (An electronic edition based on the printed edition originally published in 1876). This book contains a large number of Jewish commentaries on Isaiah 53.

approach so closely to the knowledge of the Almighty as the Messiah; for of him it is written that he ‘*came to the Ancient of days,*’ and that they ‘*brought him near before him*’ (Dan. vii. 13), but of the angels it is only said that ‘*ten thousand lii. 13.]* times ten thousand *stood before him.*’

And hence Isaiah writes that *he will be high* in the understanding enabling him to comprehend the Deity, and *exalted and lofty* in the knowledge of his blessed name, more than all who were born before him: though to be ‘*greater than the angels*’ is said also of others, besides the Messiah, who are righteous. The text continues, referring still to the Messiah, *As many were astonished at thee.*

Their astonishment was shewn by mocking him when he first arrived, and by asking how one ‘*despised,*’ ‘*meek and riding upon an ass*’ (Zech. ix. 9), could conquer all the kings of the world who had laid hold upon Israel, and rescue him from their hand: so acted Pharaoh towards Moses, when he mocked him, as he says (Ex. vi. 12), ‘*How will Pharaoh listen to me?*’ As they said. The visage of this man is marred, *so* they will say now that his upon them, and they will open their mouth (יפה) speech will drop wide for the rain of his word (Job xxix. 22, 23). ...

Further, the wealthy Israelites, who take no pleasure in him, will give him many forms of death, for he will expect them to slay him by stoning, or burning, or murder, or hanging, like those who perished during the three days’ darkness in Egypt. And this is *deaths*, is plural. Yet *he did no violence*, מורתי, the reason why viz. to the wicked who are mentioned, i. e. to the Gentiles, for he never attempted to rob them of anything that belonged to them; neither was *there any deceit in his mouth* towards wealthy Israelites.

But the Lord was pleased to give him happiness through the distress which he endured, so that recognizing in himself the presence of guilt and sin, *his soul might make a trespass-offering*; but his merit was imperfect, and so all this befell him in order that it might become complete as are the words of God, and express his wish: ...

And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: because he will accomplish the Redemption in which the Lord finds his pleasure, and will teach all the Gentiles to ‘*understand and know*’ the Lord: this is what is meant by the *pleasure of the Lord*, as it is written, ‘*In these is my pleasure*’ (Jer. ix. 23)

Because of the labour which he *saw* (experienced) in himself, and because he *was satisfied* with ‘*shame instead of glory*’ (Hab. ii. 16), therefore *by his knowledge he will justify the just*, he will know and recognise who are the just that ought to be redeemed; and so in all his judgments he will find out the just, as it is written, *He will not judge by the sight of the eyes*, etc. (Is. xi. 3, 4, etc.); ...

Therefore I will divide him a portion *with the many*: because ‘*the whole of many nations*’ (Ps. lxxxix. 51) will be his portion and inheritance, *and* from among the Gentiles *he will divide the strong as spoil* for his people and servants, *because he emptied his soul* of everything for death, i. e. he resolved in his mind and resigned himself to die as Ps. cxli. 8, ‘*Do not pour out my soul,*’ ...

There is, however, no mention made in the Parashah that the Messiah would be delivered into the hands of those who hated him, or that he would be slain, or hung upon a tree; but that he should see seed and have long life, and that his kingdom should be high and exalted among the nations, and that mighty kings should be to him for spoil.” (end of commentary)

Firstly, Nachmanides was known for his strong refutation of Christianity so we could certainly expect some bias in this commentary. Overall though I read it as very much supporting my understanding of Yeshua as the ‘Anointed One’ referred to here.

In his refutation of the argument that Isaiah 53 is referring to Yeshua, note that Nachmanides had earlier said “*Further, the wealthy Israelites, who take no pleasure in him, will give him many forms of death, for he will expect them to slay him by stoning, or burning, or murder, or hanging, like those who perished during the three days’ darkness in Egypt.*”. He is arguing here that the Messiah expected his death by one of these methods but that he wouldn’t actually die as further on Isaiah has stated that the Messiah would see his seed and have long life etc.

I would argue that while Isaiah 53 may be first and foremost a reference to Israel it is also clearly pointing to both the death of the Messiah and to his long life. Therefore, if the Messiah were to die (to be hung on a tree or stake) and then to be resurrected to a long life and to have many become his followers (his seed) this would appear to satisfy some of the contradictions apparent here. Nachmanides also states that “... *no mention is made ... that the Messiah would be delivered into the hands of those who hated him*” and yet “*He was oppressed, ... As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, ... and as a sheep that before its shearers is mute, ... (and) ...He was taken away by oppression and judgment;*” would all seem quite clearly and explicitly to refer to being delivered into the hands of those who hated him.

Nachmanides also refers at the very beginning to a Midrashic comment that the Messiah will never be conquered or perish by the hands of his enemies. I believe this is true. Yeshua obeyed that will of his Father that he go to the cross. God had planned that his Lamb would be slain before the foundation of the world, so Yeshua was never really conquered. After all,

he even said he could call down legions of angels at any time to defend him. Also, his very quick death (crucifixion was normally a very slow death), suggests that he gave up his life and/or that God took it rather than that he died as a direct result of his being hung on a cross.

So in conclusion I find this commentary by Nachmanides is actually, to a large extent quite supportive of the belief that it is being fulfilled in Yeshua.

Clearly, some of this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled in that Yeshua is yet to return and have “...a portion with the great” (v12).

So in summary, while I have not referred to all the apparent prophecies, none of these prophecies we have looked at, from the perspective of the knowledge and understanding of the Jewish people in the times of Yeshua are conclusive, and slam dunk proof at the time, that he was the looked for eschatological Messiah.

And yet, many believed. Clearly his character; his Torah obedience; his words; his authority and miracle working were a very powerful testimony.

Consider also that recent evidence from the Qumran Scrolls suggests a greater Gentile presence in the Galilee than was once thought, and a number of NT passages allude to his attraction to the Gentiles (even though Yeshua himself declared no obvious and direct interest in them).

This should lead us to reflect on Isaiah 11:10 *“On that day the root of Yishai, which stands as a banner for the peoples — the Gentiles will seek him out, and the place where he rests will be glorious.”*

While he may thus have been a banner, an ensign or flag (meaning a pointer; a sign to follow), there is a suggestion here that something even greater and more amazing happens that means this ‘Anointed One’ of Israel will be sought out by the pagan world, by the Gentiles!

What is more amazing than the resurrection!

Regarding the resurrection Prof. Flusser writes in ‘Judaism and the Origins of Christianity’ (p 429):

“The Oracles of Hystaspes¹³ and the Book of Revelation reflect the idea that the eschatological prophet will be killed; they also speak about his resurrection. It was almost inevitable that such a belief arose: the idea of resurrection became for many part of the Jewish faith; at that time not only Jews believed that a wondermaker could raise a man from the dead; one could learn from the Bible that Enoch and Elijah were brought up to heaven, and there were some Jews who thought that this was also true of Moses' end. As it was difficult to accept that at the End of Days the great prophet will come to a tragic end, it was easier to assume that he will finally resurrect and ascend to heaven. There existed a living faith that the prophet of the Last Days, having been killed, will rise to life, as can be seen from the example of John the Baptist. He was executed by Herod Antipas, but many believed that he was the prophet Elijah who was to reappear at the End. "It was at that time that reports about Jesus reached the ears of Prince Herod. This is John the Baptist", he said to his attendants, 'John has been raised to life' " (Mt. XIV: 1-2 and parallels). Not only Herod believed it. One day Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do the people say I am?" They answered: "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others one of the prophets" (Mt. VIII: 27-8 and parallels). Here also we find the belief that John the Baptist, who had been killed by Herod, was raised to life. It is also clear enough that the people thought that Jesus was the eschatological prophet. Later, as we know, Jesus himself was killed, and, as Christianity believes, "he was buried and was raised to life on the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. XV:3-4)... The cases of John the Baptist and of Jesus show that the motif of the violent death and resurrection of the prophet was then well known among the Jews.”

Flusser also states:

- *‘The fact of the resurrection is often mentioned: it is both an historical experience and a cornerstone of Christ's metahistorical biography.’* ‘Judaism and the Origins of Christianity’, David Flusser, p 621
- *‘Is it indeed credible to suggest that when the Synoptic Gospels are studied scientifically they present a reliable portrayal of the historical Jesus’* ‘Jesus’, Flusser p 21
- *‘Hence, Luke and Matthew together provide the most authentic portrayal of Jesus' life and teachings’.* ‘Jesus’, p22.

Another Jewish inter-testamental writing is the Book of Enoch, or I Enoch (a collection of apocalyptic – revelatory - texts that were composed between roughly 350 BCE and 50 CE - mostly 2nd century).

Of central importance for this author is a sequence of vignettes that depict the great judgement, and the events leading up

¹³ Written around 40 BCE, Flusser is quite certain that this book is of Jewish origin.

to it. The principle figure in these vignettes is a transcendent heavenly being who is called variously the Son of Man, the Chosen One, the Righteous One, and the Anointed One.

He is the agent of God's great judgement, who vindicates the righteous and chosen and condemns the kings and the mighty.

Also the orthodox Jewish theologian Pinchas Lapidé¹⁴ points out that two centuries before Yeshua was born, Judaism began believing in a future, generalized resurrection of believers, which became a tenet of Orthodoxy. In addition, the Jewish tradition includes six accounts of God reawakening the dead, three of them in the Tanakh (I Kings 17: 22, II Kings 4: 35 and 13: 21).

Lapidé in his book on the resurrection of Yeshua also states: "*I accept the resurrection of Jesus not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event.*"

Another excellent example of the explanatory power of a real resurrection is the life of one of Jesus' brothers: '*The Lord's brother, James, came to believe as a result of a resurrection appearance. In 62 AD James died for his faith in his brother; he was murdered by a Sadducean high priest. The other brothers were later converted to faith, and with their wives they accepted the hospitality of the congregations.*' 1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9; - see E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha I, Gospels and Related Writings* (Westminster, 1991), pp. 470-88.

To sum up then, the prophecies are not conclusive, though importantly they do not invalidate Yeshua and certainly give strong circumstantial evidence for his credentials.

The beliefs and actions of his early followers, especially after the resurrection give much greater credence, though it should be appreciated that this evidence is only by inference, and can not carry as much weight, especially when contrasted with the great weight of unfulfilled prophecy. It may surprise many, but there are Jewish theologians like Pinchas Lapidé who accept the resurrection of Yeshua, but yet still reject his Messiahship (again based on the great many unfulfilled prophecies).

It is therefore, I think important to recognize that many intelligent, knowledgeable and faithful Jewish people will still reject the Messiahship of Yeshua (as well as some very knowledgeable Gentiles). They are not rejecting the greatness of the man; and recognize that he was a Torah observant Jew. Even more important, we should recognize that Yeshua never demanded that others follow him, but that they follow his example; his faithfulness to God (Romans 3:22)¹⁵.

So I would plead with those who are true followers of Yeshua, both Jew and Gentile, to respect the faithful Jewish people who are not as convinced as you, and give them the freedom of their convictions, and join them and Yeshua, their brother, in seeking to honour and worship the One True God, the God of Israel, the Creator and King of the Universe!

If Yeshua will one day soon, on that great and awesome coming Day, return to be the judge of the whole earth, surely we should leave that very role to him and not try to force any 'Christian' form of exclusive salvation criteria¹⁶ on the Jewish people.

Rabbinic Issues with Yeshua as the Messiah:

One of the most well know 'anti-missionaries' is Rabbi Tovia Singer. In his presentation '*Confused Texts and Testimonies*' (see <http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/confused-part-1/>), Rabbi Singer gives his main arguments as to why Yeshua cannot be the eschatological Messiah.

While I have a lot of respect for Tovia Singer and find a lot of his arguments disputing many of Christendom's doctrines, very accurate and powerful, I do find at times that he addresses a 'straw-man', particularly when it comes to the question of Yeshua's potential to be the end-times Messiah.

So here is a short commentary on where I see Tovia going astray in this presentation, most commonly in his mischaracterisation of the New Testament (NT), predominantly because he tackles the false Hellenistic interpretation of the NT, rather than what I believe the NT actually says.

¹⁴Lapidé lived from 1922- 1997. The author of some 35 books, in discussing the holocaust he wrote: "*The primary guilt for the slaughter of a third of my people is that of the Nazis who perpetrated the holocaust. But the secondary guilt lies in the universal failure of Christendom to try and avert or, at least, mitigate the disaster; to live up to its own ethical and moral principles, when conscience cried out: Save!, whilst expediency counselled aloofness.*"

¹⁵Please see my article 'The Faith of Jesus'

¹⁶For an in-depth treatment of this issue please see my 'The Tripartite Salvation Paradigm'

For example, take the very first verse he quotes (which being the first is perhaps most typical of his whole approach). He quotes Mark 16:16, after stating that the text argues that you must believe that *'Jesus is the Messiah to be saved and that you are condemned if you don't believe this'*.

But the text doesn't actually state this. This verse is part of a final entreaty by Yeshua to the disciples to proclaim the Gospel, (the good news of the Kingdom of God) to all, and call people to trust in this good news (and that if they don't trust it, they will not enter the Kingdom).

For example the CJB has: *"Then he said to them, "As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. Whoever trusts and is immersed (baptised) will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned."* — Mark 16:15-16

This is a very significant distinction. Yeshua never argued that people need to believe in him, but that instead they believe in HaShem, repent and so enter the future age, the Kingdom of God or Olam Ha'Bah.

Similarly, the next verse he quotes is 2 Thess 1:8.

2 Thessalonians is one of 4 epistles of Rav Sha'ul (the Apostle Paul) that many scholars believe is pseudepigraphical (not written by Sha'ul).

Regardless of whether it is a genuine epistle of Rav Sha'ul or not, what it actually states is that *"those who don't listen to the Good News of our Lord Yeshua ..."*, are not going to enter the Kingdom.

This verse then, just as with Matt 16:16, is speaking about the 'Good News' or Gospel, that is, about the Olam Ha'Bah and not specifically about (believing in) Yeshua.

Yet Tovia argues that this verse is stating that those who don't accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour are damned. It simply doesn't say this.

Tovia's argument is false, and in fact I suspect perhaps even blatantly and blindly so. While there is much wisdom in what Tovia Singer shares, I am not convinced from all the messages and articles of his that I have read that he has really tried to honestly and critically approach the actual text, rather than just addressing the false interpretations of the 'text' by Hellenistic Christianity.

Tovia next quotes Yochanan (John) 15:6, which is part of the *'fruit of the vine'* message. While this passage is closer in alignment and agreement to Tovia's argument, the context though is that it is only addressing those who are Yeshua's followers or disciples, so it still doesn't fully fit Tovia's argument.

Tovia argues that the Christian argument based on these verses is that 'if you believe in Jesus you are saved and if you don't you are going to hell'. The problem is that, while this does indeed represent the standard Christian message, it is NOT the message of these New Testament!

He then refers to Yochanan (John) 14:6, where on face value he is correct in what he contends it states, except that again, Yeshua is speaking specifically to his disciples, not to all Israelites or to Gentiles.

This is one passage though that I suspect has been corrupted in some way or to some degree. It seems to almost be a reference to 'the Way' so powerfully expressed through Psalm 119.

Ps 119 speaks repeatedly of 'the way, truth and the life', which is through obedience to Torah (not to following or obeying a man, even the man, the Messiah).

John 14, and specifically 14:6 as we have it, seems almost in total contradiction to the rest of the words and deeds of Yeshua as declared in the Synoptic Gospels, where he nowhere puts the focus on himself, but only on the God of Israel and His Message of the Coming Age.

Tovia then uses as a (counter) example the contrast of the Nazi Eichmann versus all the innocent Jewish people he sent to the gas chamber. Apparently Eichmann 'accepted Jesus' 2 days before he was hanged, and according to the (Hellenistic) Christian take, is now 'saved' whereas all the Jews he murdered are (apparently) condemned to Hell.

I agree with Tovia that this stark contrast is indeed unacceptable in its message of injustice and inequality. I too would reject the message if this were the proper import and typical conclusion of the Gospel message.

Tovia asks a very good question: ‘Why does the Tanakh not state that when Mashiach (Messiah) comes you should accept him? Why does Judaism not argue this as well?’

Both Deuteronomy 13 and 18 state that we should indeed listen/heed the words of God’s prophets and especially THE prophet: *“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I order him. Whoever doesn’t listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me.”* – Deut 18:18-19

However, as Tovia proclaims, when the Mashiach (Messiah) comes, it will require no ‘faith’ or belief to know he is here and who he is, as the whole earth will know.

He refers to Jeremiah 31: *“No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, ‘Know Adonai’; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more.”* – Jer 31:33

But, to be more accurate, this passage, as part of a whole Messianic prophecy that starts with the final return of Israel to the Land of Israel (which I believe has already occurred or is occurring – see my *‘Return to Israel in Belief or Unbelief’* article¹⁷), is part of an unfolding of this revelation and so it does not state that when the Messiah first comes he will immediately be recognized, only that with the full and climatic arrival of the Coming Age will all the earth acknowledge and know him and the Almighty who sent him.

Tovia refers to a number of Messianic Prophecies that are universal, and exclusive in scope, such as universal peace (Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 11); universal knowledge of YHVH (Jeremiah 31); the Resurrection of the dead (Dan 12:2, Is 26:19) and the Building of Final Temple (Ezek 36, 43:7, etc.).

Tovia makes the very valid point that these events, when they occur will be very unique and conclusive. When they occur, there will be no question. There will be no debate. The reality will be absolutely plain for all to see.

Tovia goes on to state that: *“Jesus did not fulfil even one of these prophecies”*.

This is correct. No-one has fulfilled even one of these conclusive end-times prophecies as this Great Day of the Resurrection of the dead and World Peace has not yet dawned. Most Christian scholars would most likely accept this critique, but argue that the answer is that Yeshua will bring these prophecies to pass at his Second Coming.

How often though does the Tanakh describe a ‘Second Coming’ – Tovia argues that there are none. Yet, this is not what many other Jewish scholars argue. There is instead a common view that there needs to be two end-times Messiahs, a ‘son of Yosef’ and a ‘son of David’, one to fulfil the prophecies that speak of a Messiah acting with humility, meekness and the sword of speech, and another to bring the sword of Judgement, rule with an iron fist in a theocratic government and fulfil Messianic prophecies like Psalm 2 and Psalm 110.

He also makes the point that the prophecies that he did fulfil (Tovia – *‘assuming he did’*) were not exhaustive and exclusive, yet the ones to be fulfilled which are exhaustive and conclusive have not been fulfilled.

Tovia asks *‘is this just a co-incidence?’*

I believe Tovia is really miss-classifying these prophecies, because the final acts of the Messianic Age, can only happen at the very end of the present age, which clearly has not yet arrived (for those into Preterism, please see my article *‘Preterism: Not Even On Judaism’s Radar’*¹⁸)

Those prophecies that are fulfilled though do statistically add together though to give a reasonable claim based on the approach of the best fit for the evidence available at this time.

Next Tovia argues that Yeshua deliberately separated himself from his family – he gives two examples that he contends indicate this; the wedding in Cana and arrival of his family when he is preaching that is described in Matt 12.

To suggest that Yeshua’s reluctance to heed the request of his mother to perform some action to help with the lack of wine at the wedding (whether she envisaged a miraculous event or not, we do not know), indicates that he desired to separate himself from his family, seems to me a very large and fanciful stretch, that really does not fit the evidence.

17 <http://circumcisedheart.info/Israel%20-%20return%20in%20belief.pdf>

18 All articles at circumcisedheart.info

The case in Matthew 12 where he appears to not be interested in the arrival of his family is also a real stretch and forcing the evidence. When told that his family had arrived, he used the occasion to teach the strong Torah-centric principle that all who do the will of the Father are really part of the family of God, and hence the family of Yeshua, himself a strong advocate and representative of the Almighty.

We are also not told here what happened after he gave this teaching/comment, but the most likely and 'normal' event when not viewed through antagonistic eyes is that Yeshua did indeed invite his family in and make them very much welcome.

Tovia next argues that the Hellenistic Jew, Philo of Alexandria (approx. 25 BCE - 50 CE) doesn't mention Yeshua and the sect of his followers.

I am not sure where Tovia is trying to go with this argument – perhaps he is trying to deny the very existence of Yeshua. If so I would refer you to my article '*The Resurrection and Jewish Scepticism*'.

Regarding Philo, it appears he never travelled to Israel (though this is some evidence that he may have met the Apostle Peter in Rome). The sect of Judaism that believed Yeshua was the end-times Messiah though, was still entirely Jewish and Israel-based until after 45 CE. It was not until the Cornelius House event (circa 45 CE) and the activities of Rav Sha'ul (perhaps begun a little earlier than this but initially in Asia Minor and nowhere near Egypt, or Rome). Based on this timing and the rather limited expansion of this sect in the first 10-15 years, it is really not that surprising, nor improbable that Philo may not have heard of Yeshua.

Alternatively, as a Hellenistic Jew (who apparently didn't even know Hebrew), it is also not improbable that if he did know of Yeshua, he did not have much desire to write about him.

Tovia next goes on to discuss a couple of significant discrepancies in the NT's re-telling of some of the most famous and significant events from the Tanakh. For example, he spends some time showing the errors made by NT translators in Acts 7, where they have the re-telling by the Stephen, (the first martyr from amongst Yeshua's followers) of the Exodus events etc. where the number who 'went down' to Egypt was actually 70, but the standard NT version is 75.

While I agree with Tovia on these errors which show a number of problems in the serious redacting of the NT, as well as the LXX, they do not ultimately invalidate either the NT or the reality of Yeshua. They are however further good evidence for the central argument of my book '*The New Testament: The Hebrew Behind the Greek*' – see <http://goo.gl/W3oQQ5>.

The next topic Tovia Singer raises is the very important but seriously complex issue of the genealogy of Yeshua.

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 class¹⁹

¹⁹ Sign on here <http://www.ntcf.org/register.html>

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, Yosef²⁰.

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 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)²¹. 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.

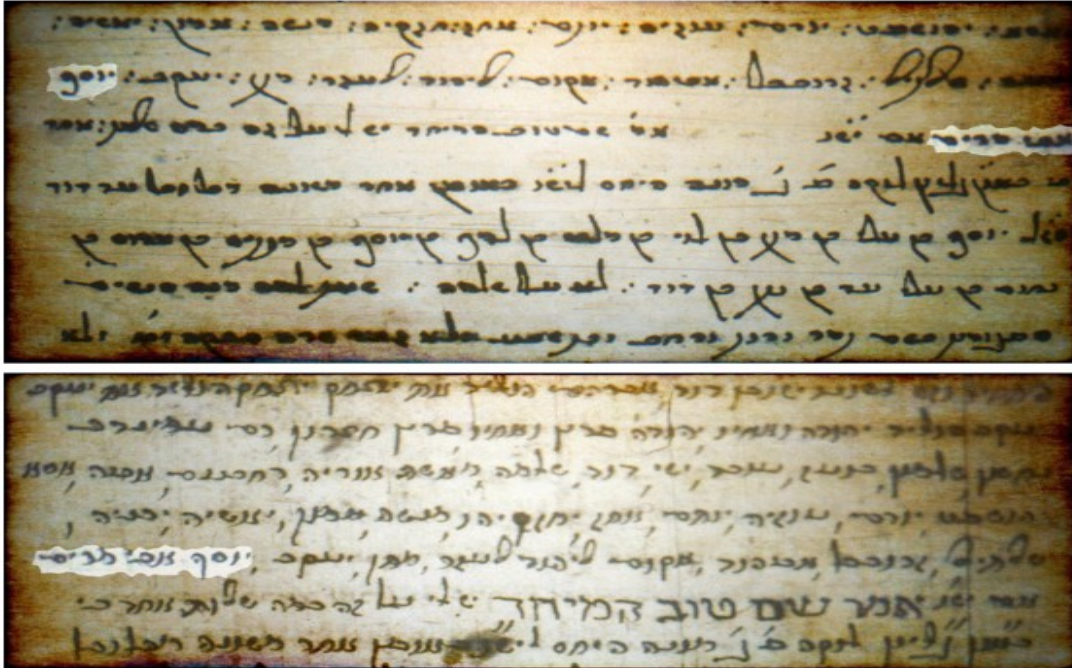
*The Greek translators chose to render both Aramaic words **gevra** and **ba'ala** as the Greek word '**aner**', which simply*

20 For 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 מרים, 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.

21 For a son of Jewish parents to be 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.

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)

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, Rehoboam²², Avi'yahm²³, Asa²⁴, Yehi'shafat²⁵, Ye'horam²⁶, ... ,Azar'yah²⁷, Yotam²⁸, 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

22 Or Rechav'am

23 Or Abijah

24 Or Asaph

25 Or Jehoshaphat

26 Or Jehoram or Joram

27 Or Uzi'yahu or Uzziah or Azariah

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

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 Jehoniah 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'²⁹.

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 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 name³⁰, 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'babel³¹, 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.

²⁹ <http://circumcisedheart.info/Christian%20site/Are%20There%20Gaps%20in%20the%20Biblical%20Genealogies.doc>

³⁰ 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 Jehoram 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.”*

³¹ Uriel 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.”*

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*'³² 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.

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'³³, 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)³⁴ and then Matthew³⁵.

³² 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>

³³ <http://circumcisedheart.info/James%20the%20Just%20%E2%80%93%20Reevaluating%20his%20legacy.pdf>

³⁴ These datings from p16 'Chronological ad Background Charts of the New Testament (2nd Ed.) by H. Wayne House

³⁵ H. 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

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 teaching³⁶ 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 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 Alcmene).

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) auditors³⁷ 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."*

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ i.e. not the original author(s), but later translators and editors.

Mark does not have a birth narrative. Irenaeus (late 2nd century) even wrote about the believer, Cerinthus³⁸ (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 'in-errant' and inspired by some within the church only a matter of decades after the autographs of the Gospels.

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 to 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 Pamphilius: 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.

38 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 (I.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>

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)³⁹.

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'⁴⁰, 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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January 2016

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³⁹ This 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 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>

⁴⁰ <http://globaltruthinternational.com/2013/04/04/deeds-matter-more-than-creeds/>