

# MESSIAH'S DEITY AND MICAH 5:2

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

Micah 5:2 (5:1 in the Hebrew Bible) was regarded by some ancient and medieval Rabbis as having to do with the Messiah and His deity. The Scripture reads,

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be *ruler* in Israel, *whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*” (Micah 5:2)

A Jewish version of the text from *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, is slightly different. Note the last two phrases, especially, “from ancient days” instead of “from everlasting:”

“But thou, Beth-Lehem Ephrathat, Which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, Out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be *ruler* in Israel; *Whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days.*” (Micah 5:1)<sup>1</sup>

As accurate as both translations are, translating it in a dynamic way<sup>2</sup> makes them even clearer, that the *ruler* being spoken of would be deity because he existed *before* Creation. This is why some Jewish Sages recognized the deity of the Messiah:

“and his goings forth are from the East,” meaning *before the sun was rose or was created*, and “from the days of eternity past” (וּמִצְאָתָיו מִקְדָּם מֵיָמֵי עוֹלָם).

The text presents someone who “will come” and rule, stating that his *origin* was “before the sun rose.” In other words he existed *before* Creation, or “In the Beginning,” as the Septuagint translates it; “Beginning” referring to the very first words of Genesis 1:1 (In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth). This speaks of the deity of Messiah (the coming ruler King of Israel).

Micah 5:2 is recognized by the Jewish Rabbis as pertaining to the Messiah. A Jewish man who gave his life to Messiah Yeshua and went on to be the recognized authority in his day relating to Jewish matters such as the Talmud with the Gospels, Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) wrote,

“The well known passage, Micah 5:2, is admittedly Messianic. So in the Targum, in the Pirque de R. Eliez. c. 3, and by later Rabbis.”<sup>3</sup>

Risto Santala states that even Rashi,<sup>4</sup> one of Judaism’s greatest rabbis, saw the passage as speaking of Messiah’s deity:

“Rashi refers to psalm 72 in his exposition on Micah chapter 5 verse 2, which says of the *Ruler* of Israel, who will be born in Bethlehem that his “origins are from old, from ancient times.” According to Rashi he is, “the Messiah, the Son of David, as Ps. 118 says,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), pp. 1478-1479.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Kasparek, *The Translators Endless Toil* (1983) *The Polish Review* XXVIII (2): 83-87. Dynamic equivalence (also known as functional equivalence) attempts to convey the *thought* expressed in a source text. In other words, it translates what the phrase or word means, not necessarily translating it literally, which might not have a meaning for us that the author intended.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 1,005.

<sup>4</sup> *Rashi* is an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo ben Itzhak. He lived from 1040-1105 AD.

he is the “stone which the builders rejected” and his origins are from ancient times, from “before the sun was, his name was *Yinnon*.”<sup>5</sup>

Rashi believed that the Messiah of Israel existed before creation. They based it on Micah 5:2, and other texts. This is because there was nothing *before* creation *except* God.

David Kimchi, another rabbi highly revered in Judaism, also known as Radak,<sup>6</sup> realized this too, and *specifically* spoke of Messiah’s deity from the passage in Micah. The Rabbis praised Radak for his understanding of spiritual matters and said that without his insight into Scripture, “there is no correct biblical exegesis.”<sup>7</sup> Radak said of Micah 5:2,

“It will be said in the Messianic age that his “origins are from old, from ancient times ...from Bethlehem,” means that he will be of the House of David, because there is a long period of time between David and the Messiah-King; and *he is El (God)*, which is how he is “from old, from ancient times.”<sup>8</sup>

Rashi and Radak taught that the Messiah would be deity. Although both Rashi and Radak lived a thousand years after Messiah Yeshua, neither of them believed in Yeshua, and so what they said takes on tremendous significance because they knew that Jesus was seen by the Christians as being the Son of God. Two of the greatest Jewish authorities deemed the Messiah to be deity because of what Micah 5:2 says about him. Santala adds,

“Again it is worth recognising that when looking at, for example, Psalm 118 we saw that Rashi identifies this ruler” (of Micah) “with the “cornerstone” *which will be rejected*, and with the *Yinnon* or the “flourish” idea in psalm 72:17. The *Yinnon* Messiah was *before* the sun.”<sup>9</sup>

The *Cornerstone* of Psalm 118 that Rashi spoke of, is seen in the midst of a *salvation* psalm:

“Open to me the *Gates* of Righteousness. I shall enter through them. I shall give thanks to Yahveh! *This is the Gate of Yahveh!*<sup>10</sup> The righteous will enter through Him!”<sup>11</sup> I shall

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<sup>5</sup> Risto Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 1992), p. 115. *Yinnon* is one of many “names” of Messiah. The term *yinnon* is found in Ps. 72:17: “His name shall endure forever. His name shall continue *as long as the sun*. Men shall be blessed in Him and all nations shall call Him blessed.” Literally, the phrase is, “*before the sun, Yinnon* was His name.” *Yinnon* is a messianic title. The word *yinnon* means, to sprout and flourish, and is one of a number of Hebrew words relating “to shoots and sprouting” that combine to form the messianic English title of “Branch.” See Zechariah 6:12-13, and also [The Branch](#) for other terms associated with “Branch” as a name for the Messiah. See [The Names of the Messiah of Israel](#) for all the rabbinic and scriptural names of the Messiah.

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) lived from 1160-1235 AD.

<sup>7</sup> Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. In note 6 Santala writes, “The interpretations of both Rashi and Radaq” (Radak) “can be found in the *Mikraoth Gedoloth* commentary.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> This “Gate of Yahveh” speaks of both the time when Jacob saw God and said that the place was nothing less than the “House of God” (Bethel), and Yeshua speaking of Himself being the Gate of the Sheepfold (John 10:12; some translations have “door” but sheepfolds don’t have doors—they have gates).

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely Yahveh is in this place, and I didn’t know it!” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the *Gate of Heaven!*”” (Genesis 28:16-17)

“Then Yeshua said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the Gate of the Sheepfold...I am the Gate. *If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*”” (John 10:7, 9)

give thanks to You for You have answered me and You have become my salvation! *The Stone which the Builders rejected has become the chief CornerStone.* This is Yahveh's doing! It is marvelous in our eyes! *This is the day* which Yahveh has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in Him! (Psalm 118:19-24)

The *day* that the Psalmist spoke of is the day that Messiah was crucified. God's Lamb, the Messiah, died (Is. 53:7), but salvation was poured out to both Jew and Gentile through Him that Day. *Yeshua* is the *Gate* of/to the Father. When we enter into *Yeshua* we enter into God's presence. Messiah *Yeshua* was the *Stone* rejected by the Builders (of Israel; i.e. the Rabbis). Santala writes more about how the Rabbis saw the Messiah's origin, saying:

“The main theme running through the oldest strata of the Jewish literature concerns the origin and birth of the Messiah. We do, of course, already know from Micah 5:1 that “the origins” of the ruler who will be born in Bethlehem “are from old, from ancient times” ...and so it was that in the Middle Ages the interpretation was still given that he “was *before the sun*, moon and the course of the stars” and that “his contemporaries called him by the name “El,” which means, “God.” This also agrees with the name “the LORD our righteousness” in Jeremiah” (23:6; 33:16) “and with Isaiah”'s various epithets applied to the Messiah.””<sup>12</sup>

*Yeshua* claimed to be the Messiah and equated himself with God. He was crucified because of these claims under an evil Sanhedrin.<sup>13</sup> The New Covenant presents *Yeshua* as deity,<sup>14</sup> and as such, lines up with what Micah 5:2 speaks of the Messiah being *from eternity past*. Many ancient Rabbis saw the Messiah as “so close to God” that there was little difference between the two. Alfred Edersheim exposed many flaws in rabbinic writings and was not one to praise rabbinic nonsense, but nonetheless, he presents the ancient Rabbis as seeing that the Messiah existed *before* creation. Edersheim writes,

“in strictly Rabbinic documents, the premundane,<sup>15</sup> if not the eternal existence of the Messiah appears *as a matter of common belief*. Such is the view expressed in the Targum on Isa. 9:6, and in that on Micah 5:2. But the Midrash on Prov. 8:9 (ed. Lemb. p. 7a) expressly mentions the Messiah among the seven things created before the world.<sup>16</sup> The passage is the more important, as it throws light on quite a series of others, in which the Name of the Messiah is said to have been created before the world.<sup>17</sup> Even if this were an

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<sup>11</sup> Both here and in v. 24, the word “it” should be translated as “him,” pertaining to the Messiah, because the Hebrew word for “it” doesn't exist. The word is always “he.”

<sup>12</sup> Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*, p. 191. In Isaiah 9:6 the Messiah is seen as *Wonderful*, Counselor, *mighty God* and Prince of Peace. When Samson's father asks the name of the person who spoke of his wife conceiving, the reply was, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is Wonderful?” It's written that Samson's father realized after that, that the person was the so-called Angel of the LORD, which was none other than *Yeshua*. For why Angel of the LORD is a horrendous translation of the Hebrew phrase, see [The Angel of the Lord](#).

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 26:63; Luke 21:8; 22:70; John 8:24, 28; 10:33; 13:19; 19:7.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; John 9:35; 10:36; 11:3, 27; 20:31, etc.

<sup>15</sup> *Premundane* pertains to things that were *before* Creation.

<sup>16</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 123, note 62: The seven things are, “the Throne of Glory, Messiah the King, the Torah, ideal or glorified Israel, the Temple, repentance and Gehenna” (*Pesachim* 54a and *Nedarim* 39b).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123. Pirqé de R. E. 3; Midr. on Ps. 93:1; Ps. 54a; *Nedar.* 39b; Ber. R. 1; Tanch. on Numb. 7:14, ed. Warsh. vol. 2, p. 56b, at the bottom.

ideal conception, it would prove the Messiah to be elevated above the ordinary conditions of humanity. But it means much more than this, since *not only the existence of the Messiah long before His actual appearance, but His premundane state are clearly taught* in other places. In the Talmud (Jer. Ber. 2.4, p. 5a) it is not only implied, that the Messiah may already be among the living, but” that he “had actually been born in the royal palace at Bethlehem.””<sup>18</sup>

“In another passage the Messiah is expressly identified with *Anani*,<sup>19</sup> and therefore represented as pre-existent long before his actual manifestation.<sup>20</sup> The same inference may be drawn from His emphatic designation as the First.”<sup>21</sup>

“Lastly, in Yalkut on Isa. 60, the words “In they light shall we see light” (Ps. 36:9) are explained as meaning, that this is the *light* of the Messiah—the same” (Light) “which God had at the first pronounced to be *very good*,<sup>22</sup> and which, before the world was created, He had hid beneath the throne of His Glory for the Messiah and His age. When Satan asked for whom it was reserved, he was told that it was destined for Him Who would put him to shame, and destroy him. And when, at his request, he was shown the Messiah, he fell on his face and owned that the Messiah would, in the future, cast him...into Gehenna (Yalkut 2, p. 56c).”

“Whatever else may be inferred from it, this passage clearly implies not only the pre-existence, but the premundane existence of the Messiah...indeed, it carries us much farther. For, a Messiah, pre-existent, in the Presence of God and destined to subdue Satan and cast him into hell, could not have been regarded as an ordinary man.”<sup>23</sup>

Today, the Rabbis teach that the Messiah is an ordinary man whom God will cause to be great (i.e. to become the Messiah), but that isn’t how the ancient Jewish Sages thought of the Messiah. Yeshua was deity in the flesh—God the Son. He was no ordinary man. This is evident from any honest reading of Micah 5:2 and the New Covenant, which is the bastion of biblical belief in Jesus of Nazareth being God the Son before He became Man. Yeshua was the living, dwelling place of both the Father and the Holy Spirit while He walked in Israel (i.e. the living Tabernacle of Moses) and is now the God-Man glorified, the first of many. The awesome beauty and gift that our God holds out to us is to become like His Son.<sup>24</sup>

Some today try and pervert this great truth of Messiah’s eternal existence expressed in Micah by saying that the prophet wasn’t speaking about the Messiah, but about King David. They say that the phrase, of “old and ancient,” just refers to what Micah thought about David because David was the one who ruled

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 124, note 66: “Mentioned in 1 Chr. 3:24. The comment on this passage...clearly implies not only the pre-existence, but the super-human character of the Messiah.” *Anani* refers to the vision of Daniel (7:9-14) and speaks of the One (Messiah) who came to the Ancient of Days on the *Clouds of the Heavens* (the *Shekina* Glory Clouds). *Anan* is Hebrew for cloud (*anani* is in construct form; Cloud(s) of Heaven).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., note 67: “Tanch. Par. *Toledoth*, 14. ed. Warsh. p. 37b.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., note 68: “*Ber. R.* 65, ed. Warsh. p. 114b; *Vayyikra R.* 30, ed. W. vol. 3, p. 47a; *Pes. 5a.*”

<sup>22</sup> For more on what this *Light* is, see [Yeshua—God the Son](#).

<sup>23</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> For the Glory that awaits all Christians, see [Salvation—The Promise!](#) Psalm 2:7 speaks of God *begetting* (not creating) His Son when it says of Messiah saying, “I will declare the decree! Yahveh has said to Me, “*You are My Son! Today I have begotten You!*”” Also, Proverbs 30:4 asks, “Who has ascended into Heaven or descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the Earth? What is His name, and *what is His Son’s name*, if you know?”

Israel and had been born in Bethlehem. Aside from the obvious flaw in their position, that the text is a *future* prophecy, declaring that the one to rule *was to come* (*shall come forth to Me*), perhaps *today*, in the 21st century, we can say that the days of King David were of “old and ancient” times, but the prophet Micah prophesied from 758-710 BC. This was only 200 years after King David. Micah and his Hebrew brethren would hardly have considered the days of David as being, of “old and ancient” times.

In my translating Micah’s phrases as meaning “from the days *before* the sun was created,” and “from the days of eternity past,” I used what is known as *dynamic translation*. As has been shown above, the connection of “the sun” to creation is a biblical and rabbinic idea. The English Bibles that we have today go from literal translation to paraphrase. *Dynamic translation* seeks to give the *meaning* of the words and the thought behind the words.

The passage in Hebrew that I translated as “before the sun was created” is מִקֶּדֶם (*mih’kedem*), where we see a prefixed preposition (*mih*) to the Hebrew word *kedem*. *Kedem* is generally translated as “east” or the orientation that “is associated with the sunrise.”<sup>25</sup> It’s related to an Akkadian word that means, “existing from ancient times.”<sup>26</sup> *Kedem* can mean something “earlier” in human terms, but also something “absolute in the sense of “prehistoric times, primeval time” and “even as *the age preceding creation itself*.””<sup>27</sup>

Benjamin Davidson defines the word *mih’kedem* as “on the east” and “beginning” (speaking of wisdom being at creation; Prov. 8:23).<sup>28</sup> The *Theological WordBook* states that *kedem* means, “east” and that in poetic passages it “describes the created state” at Creation, and “it should be compared with *mizrach* (where the sun rises).”<sup>29</sup>

C.F. Keil writes of Micah 5:2 that both קֶדֶם (*kedem*; before/east) and יְמֵי עוֹלָם (*yih’may olam*; days of eternity) are used “to denote hoary antiquity” and that *both words together* are used to denote *the eternity preceding the creation of the world*.<sup>30</sup> Micah’s prophesy speaks of the “*origin of the Messiah before all worlds*” and that the,

“announcement of the origin of this *Ruler* as being before all worlds unquestionably pre-supposes his divine nature.”<sup>31</sup>

The Messiah of Israel, being God the Son, existed “before the sun was created,” which is a Hebraic way of saying that the Messiah existed before Creation. As *nothing* existed before Creation except God, Messiah Yeshua has to be God the Son, as Scripture from Genesis to Revelation presents Him:<sup>32</sup> “Yeshua said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”” (John 8:58)

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<sup>25</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, Editors; John Willis, Translator, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XII (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), p. 506.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 505.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 508-509.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 653.

<sup>29</sup> R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 787-786.

<sup>30</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 10, *Minor Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 324.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

<sup>32</sup> Genesis 1:3-5 speaks of light *coming forth* from God (see John 8:42; 16:27-28, 30; 17:8). That Light is the Messiah, the living Word of God. Revelation 21:22-23 speaks of both God the Father and the Lamb (Yeshua) being the Light of the New Jerusalem.

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