

RECOGNIZE THIS MAN?

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There are many Jews who are so very insistent, for our good of course, that prophecies about Messiah in the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) don't relate to Jesus. They tell us emphatically that Jesus can't be the Messiah! Why? Because...

'the lion hasn't laid down with the lamb, and the nations haven't beaten their swords into plowshares and there is not peace in this world. Also, when Messiah comes, he will rule and reign forever in a Kingdom of Peace.'

You would think after hearing them that they held the definitive answer on whether Yeshua (the Hebrew Name for Jesus) was our Messiah or not, but those people who proclaim this are only telling us half the truth. Perhaps some of our leaders, in their ignorance, have just echoed and parroted what they have heard from others, but I cannot believe that all our leaders are ignorant. An authority is supposed to know something of the subject that he is an authority about.

A question I have for you my Jewish brother or sister: do you know that two thousand years ago our Rabbis spoke of *two* Messiahs? In the *Tanach* there are two streams of messianic thought that are so *different* that the Rabbis could not reconcile them. For instance, one passage of Messiah contains that He will rule forever (2nd Sam. 7:13-16). Another passage has Messiah dying (Is. 53:4-9). That's why the Rabbis thought that there would be two Messiahs and they named them accordingly: Messiah the Son of David who would rule and reign and raise Israel up among the nations, the lion and the lamb lying down together, etc., and Messiah the Son of Joseph, who, like Joseph, one of the 12 sons of Jacob, was *rejected* by his brothers (Ruben, Simon, Levi, etc.), but not only did God raise him up to be 'second in command' under Pharaoh, Joseph was also a haven for his family, providing his brothers, the sons of Israel, with food, safety, shelter and *forgiveness*. He could have killed them all, but he forgave them. Have you ever heard of Messiah, the Son of Joseph? The Rabbis also call him the Leprous Messiah.

In Isaiah 53:3-4 the Messiah is seen as being despised and rejected by us, but nonetheless would carry our diseases (sins) and our sorrows. The Rabbis, seeing that the word נָגַח *nah'gu'ah*¹ is used, called him the Leprous Messiah. The word *neh'gah* is used over and over again in Lev. 13-14 in relation to leprosy (Lev. 13:2-3, etc.) This is what the prophet Isaiah said about our Messiah:

'He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, well familiar with suffering, and *we* hid our faces from him. He was despised and *we* esteemed him not. Surely our diseases he took upon himself, our sorrows he carried, yet *we* thought that he was *stricken* (*nah'gu'ah*), struck by God, afflicted' (Is. 53:3-4).

Please note well: 'and *we* hid our faces from him' 'and *we* esteemed Him not'; '*we* thought that He was

¹ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 533-534. *Nah'gu'ah* derives from the verb *nah'gah* which means 'to touch with force and violence, to strike, to smote' as when God smites with disease. The word used in Lev. 13-14 for leprosy is *neh'gah* (from *nah'gah*) and means 'strike, blow, infliction of evil,' 'a plague, especially as divine judgment,' 'spot, mark, as of leprosy.' The fact that Isaiah says Messiah would carry our diseases and our sins (v. 5) and be struck by God (v. 4) and that the word 'to strike' is associated with leprosy is why the Rabbis also named him the Leprous Messiah.

stricken, struck by God'. Doesn't this describe the traditional stance toward Messiah Yeshua for the past 2,000 years by the Jewish Community? Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki: 1040-1105) whom many Orthodox Jews venerate, determined for us that the Messiah spoken of here actually meant 'Israel.' So today, this passage from Isaiah, held by Rabbis and Sages for 1,500 years before Rashi to be speaking of Messiah was changed to mean us Jews.

I know. It doesn't make any sense. Why did Rashi do it? I'm not certain, but in his time anti-Semitism 'in the Name of Jesus' was rampant. Many Christians were using this passage in Isaiah to proclaim Jesus on one hand, and murder Jews on the other who wouldn't accept Jesus. Rashi, I imagine, not in his role as scholar, for in that role he knew better, but in his role as shepherd, changed it so that we would have a defense. I admire his heart to help us, but not his ethics. It is totally unethical to twist and distort Scripture, for whatever the ends might be. In his time, most of the Rabbis came against his new interpretation, but Rashi's interpretation of Isaiah 53 is what you will find in most Jewish commentaries today. Is it valid? I invite you to determine if Rashi or the Rabbis before him were right. In the very next verse of Isaiah 53 he says...

'But *he* was pierced through for *our* open rebellions, *he* was crushed for *our* perverse hearts, the punishment upon him, brought *us* shalom (Peace with Papa God) and by *his* stripes, *we* are healed' (Is. 53:5).

There is really no reasonable way to get around that Israel's sins were being transferred to the Messiah. He would die in our place. That a literal *piercing* is meant, is supported by the Prophet Zechariah, 300 years after Isaiah spoke:

'And I will pour out on the House of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that *they* will look upon *Me* whom they have *pierced*' (Zech. 12:10).

Why did Messiah have to be pierced and die? This was God's Way of making His People Israel righteous. I don't understand it, but I know that it's the Love of God for us. Messiah dying has provided the blood to cover, or to atone for our sins, what the Day of Atonement pictured. Aaron, our first High Priest, would enter the Holy of Holies, one day a year, with the blood of the goat, that Israel might be cleansed of all her sins (Leviticus 16). Why? So that God could dwell among us. The Blood of Messiah is the Fountain that Zechariah prophesied about just five verses later:

'In *that* Day, a *Fountain* will be opened for the House of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for *sin* and for *impurity*' (Zech. 13:1).

This is exactly what Isaiah was speaking of, that Messiah would take our sins upon Himself. What will you do when you stand before our Holy God on Judgment Day? Do you think that prayer, fasting and the doing of good deeds will be enough for you to stand in His Presence? Where is that written? Isaiah states that 'all *our* righteousness is as filthy rags' (Is. 64:6). He goes on to say that:

'the LORD was pleased to *crush* him (Messiah), He caused Him to suffer, making Himself a *guilt* offering, He will see His Seed, His days will be prolonged and the Will of the LORD will prosper in His Hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied. By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as *He* will *bear their iniquities*.' Isaiah 53:10-11

The guilt offering was established by God to be a sacrifice where an Israelite could come and be forgiven of his sin (Leviticus 5). This was a picture of **why** the Leprous Messiah would die. Isaiah says the Messiah was a guilt offering (sacrifice), for Israel. And that the Servant of the LORD, Messiah, would make us righteous (justify us), bearing our iniquities. Jewish commentators now will tell you that Israel would bear its own sin and die for itself. But this is not what God says. Messiah ben Yosef, the Leprous Messiah, as

the Rabbis call him. Can you even begin to fathom it? That our Messiah would be crucified?, by our own leaders? And that God would allow it? And yet, many times in our history, our leaders have rebelled against our God. Look at the Prophet Jeremiah and what our leaders did to him. And look what our leaders are giving you concerning Isaiah 53.

A Virgin?!

Many laugh at the virgin birth of Messiah, and say that ‘it’s not only impossible, but that isn’t what Isaiah meant at all! The word for virgin that the Christians use, doesn’t really mean virgin, but a young maiden.’ Isaiah wrote,

‘Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the *maiden (almah)* will conceive and bear a son and she will call His name *Immanuel*’ (Is. 7:14).

Many Rabbis teach that Miryam (Mary) was raped by a Roman soldier and that’s how Jesus came to be. That is not true. The Rabbis obviously made that up. It’s certainly not what is written in the New Covenant, but it was designed to keep Jews from checking out the claims of Yeshua being Messiah. Why? Because once a Jew hears that this is how Jesus was conceived, he would know that he couldn’t be the Messiah. The Law of Moses states that no one of illegitimate birth could enter the Assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:2). How could one born like that be Messiah then? That’s why I know it *is* a very deliberate falsehood by the Rabbis.

Most traditional Jews who have studied this prophecy about our Messiah will say that the Hebrew means ‘a young maiden,’ but *every* place in the *Tanach* where *almah* (or its plural) is used it *always* refers to young maidens who are *virgins*. One such time is when Father Abraham sent his servant to get a wife for Isaac. Rebeka is called both an *almah*, translated as a young maiden, and a בְּתוּלָה *betulah* (literally a virgin) in the same chapter:

‘Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a *virgin (betulah)*; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up’ (Gen. 24:16).

‘behold, I am standing by the spring and may it be that the *maiden (almah)* who comes out to draw (water) and to whom I say, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your jar’ (Gen. 24:43).

Abraham’s servant wasn’t looking for a woman who had been married before or who had known a man before. *Almah* here must be understood as a young maiden who was a virgin. This understanding will bear itself out in every Scripture reference for *almah* where it can be determined if the maiden was a virgin or not.

Another instance where *almah* is used is the time when baby Moses, about three months old (Ex. 2:2), was floating down the Nile in his hovercraft. When Miryam, the sister of Moses, suggests to the daughter of Pharaoh that she would get a woman who could nurse the baby, the Scriptures call Miryam an *almah* (Ex. 2:8; see 2:4, 7 for it being the sister of Moses; i.e. Miryam). No one would suggest that Miryam had already known a man. She was a virgin. The third instance of *almah* is found in Proverbs 30:18-19:

‘There are three things that are too amazing for me; four things that I don’t understand: The way of the eagle in the sky; the way of the snake on the rock; the way of the ship in the heart of the sea; and the way of a man with a *maid*’ (*almah*).

Here, too, one would be hard pressed to say that the woman is anything but a virgin. These three times

(excluding Is. 7:14) are the only places in the Bible where *almah* is used. Just from a biblical perspective, one cannot force *almah* in Is. 7:14 to mean anything but a virgin.

The plural of *almah* (*alamot*) is used in three places and points to *alamot* as virgins, also. Song of Songs 6:8 states, ‘Sixty are the queens; eighty are the concubines; and virgins (*alamot*) without number.’² Rashi, in his comment on Songs of Songs 1:3 explains that ‘*alamot*’ means *b’tulot* (virgins).³ There are two other places⁴ where the plural is used, that argument can be made that it can’t explicitly be seen to be a reference to virgins,⁵ but one would be hard pressed to emphatically declare that these women were married. The text may not emphatically declare them to be virgins as Genesis 24 did for Rebecca, but the context, as well as *almah* signifying a virgin in every place that it’s used, does.

These are all the times where either *almah* or its plural, *alamot*, is used in relation to women. From the Hebrew word itself and the Hebrew texts, *almah* is always used to refer to a young maiden who is obviously a virgin. There is nothing in any text to show us otherwise.

The Septuagint, the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek by the Rabbis 250 years (250 BCE) before Jesus came, is a very valuable tool. The Rabbis who created it used the *specific* Greek word for virgin⁶ (*parthaynos*)⁷ in Isaiah 7:14. Therefore, before any controversy about Jesus being born of a virgin came into Christian understanding, the Rabbis believed that a *virgin* would conceive and bear a son and that He, the Messiah, would be *God with us* (*Immanuel*). Isaiah’s prophecy is cognizant of the impossibility of a virgin conceiving, but offsets it with the understanding that it will be a miracle:

‘Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a *sign* (תֹּטָא *oat*); Behold! The *virgin* shall conceive and bear a son’ (Is. 7:14).

The Hebrew word for ‘sign’ means ‘miracle.’⁸ Now, it’s no miracle for a ‘young maiden’ who has known a man to conceive. Young maidens who are married and unmarried conceive all the time, but it is a miracle for a virgin to conceive. Is it coincidence, deliberate fraud or divine inspiration that the New Covenant proclaims this about Miryam, the mother of Jesus?

‘The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Miryam, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him,

² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament*, vol. 6: *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), p. 579, for ‘virgins’. See also the NKJV and the KJV for ‘virgins’.

³ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 7.

⁴ ‘among maidens (*alamot*), playing tambourines’ (Psalm 68:26 Hebrew; 68:25 English); ‘because of this, the maidens (*alamot*) love you’ (Song of Songs 1:3).

⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, p. 513. For Songs of Songs 1:3, *alamot* is translated as virgins and that they are ‘maidens growing to maturity.’ The NKJV and the KJV have ‘virgins.’

⁶ Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, sixth printing, February, 1997, originally published in London, 1851), p. 842.

⁷ Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 314. ‘a virgin, maid’ ‘chaste’.

⁸ R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 18. Most of the 80 occurrences of *oat* refer to miraculous signs: all the plagues of Egypt; Isaiah 7:11, 14; the shadow advancing on the palace steps for King Hezekiah: 2nd Kings 20:9; Is. 38:7), etc. *Oat* is used as ‘sign’ in both a concrete sense, as when it is used as a banner for each Tribe (Num. 2:2ff), and in a conceptual sense when it is used referring to the sign of Noah, the rainbow (Gen. 9:12-13, 17), circumcision (Gen. 17:11) and the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13, 17; Ezk. 20:12), etc.

Yeshua. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. And the Lord God will give Him the Throne of His Father David and He will reign over the House of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will have no end.' Miryam said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a *virgin*?' The angel answered and said to her, 'The Spirit of the Holy One will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High God will overshadow you. For this reason, the Holy Child shall be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:30-35).

Rashi, in his commentary on Isaiah 7:14 wrote:

“Behold, the *almah* shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanu’el.’ This means that our Creator will be with us. And this is the sign: the one who will conceive is a girl (*na’arah*) who never in her life has had intercourse with any man. Upon this one shall the Holy Spirit have power.’⁹

It is often pointed out that Rashi did not call the woman in Isaiah 7:14 a virgin. He does, however, refer to her as ‘a young girl (*na’arah*).’

“It must, though, be noted that Rashi’s commentary on Exodus 21:7 removes any doubt as to whether or not this is in fact a virgin. Exodus 21:7 deals with the selling of a maid servant under Jewish law. Here, Rashi refers to the maidservant again as a *na’arah*, specifically that she ‘has signs of initial puberty,’ but that she is still ‘under her father’s jurisdiction.’ This must be, according to Jewish Law, a virgin, for one married would not be under their father’s authority.’¹⁰

When Jewish leaders tell our People in their treatment of the text of Isaiah 7:14, that the word *almah* doesn’t mean ‘virgin’ but a ‘young maiden,’ implying that the woman is married or has known a man, they are being both dishonest and deceptive. I don’t expect them to know much about the Greek Septuagint, but I do expect their knowledge of Hebrew to be adequate. For them to say that *almah* doesn’t mean a virgin is nothing less than manipulative and untrustworthy. They should be trying to come to the Truth, even if it means laying down their prejudices about Jesus. They should be telling us what our Hebrew Bible is declaring about Messiah, ‘both’ Messiahs. After all, if Jesus is our Messiah they are fighting God Himself and keeping our people away from the Life that only Messiah can give us.

Read the *Tanach*, especially the prophecies about Messiah, the Son of Joseph (Ps. 22, 118:22-24; Is. 42, 49, 52:13-53:12, 61, etc). Ask God, with all your heart, to lead you in this. He will. He delights in revealing His Truth to His people Israel. It isn’t easy to overcome deep seated prejudices, but what value is there in holding onto religious ideas that are anti-God? When Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt they didn’t recognize him whom they had despised and rejected, but Joseph provided for them and he forgave them. You may not have recognized Messiah until now, but He desires to give you forgiveness for all your sins, Life today and true hope for tomorrow. Because He knows pain and rejection He is able to heal all broken hearts and to love you. He came once as the Leprous Messiah, dying for our sins. He will come again as Messiah, the Son of David, to rule from his Throne forever. This is the Word of God.¹¹

⁹ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 46-47. His site is from *Mikra’ot Gedolot*, ad loc.

¹⁰ K. Daniel Fried, Dr., *The Hebrew-English New Covenant* (Powder Springs, GA: Hope of Israel Publications, 2003), p. 3 (at the back of the book). Quotes from Rashi are taken from, *Complete Tanach with Rashi* by The Judaica Press.

¹¹ Revised on Tuesday, March 17, 2020.