

דורשים את האמת
אודות
ישוע הנצרי

An Examination of the works of

Rabbi Tovia Singer

&

The Late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

In regard to Jesus of Nazareth

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Judaism and Christianity share a belief in a Messiah. The identity of this Messiah has been the source of much hostility and violence for almost two thousand years. The question that this study would like to answer is: **Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah?** The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament will be the primary sources used.

Such a study is not a novel thought by any means, many other attempts have been made. Usually the authors represent either Judaism or Christianity and make their

case based upon their respective religious doctrine; often times demonstrating a deep deficiency in their knowledge of the other religion.

Those who write from a Jewish perspective usually write to defend their fellow Jews. That is, they write to discourage Jews from accepting the claims of Christianity or to bring back to Judaism those Jews who have done so. Christian authors usually write from a missionary perspective; that is, to convince Jewish individuals that Jesus truly is the Messiah.

So who is right? I wish it were that simple. The problem is that Judaism has become the religion who rejects Jesus and Christianity is the religion who accepts Him. Judaism offers a great deal that Christianity has rejected and Christianity's view of the New Testament Jesus is one that Patriarchs, Moses, and the Prophets would reject. For the question, **Is Jesus the Messiah?** to be answered, one must not be bound to the traditional views of either Judaism or Christianity, but rather to the witness of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

There are two additional sources which will assist in the pursuit of this study's goal. The first is a book published by the National Conference of Synagogue Youth / Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. This book was written by the late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan and is called, *The Real Messiah?* The second is a work by Rabbi Tovia Singer entitled, "*Let's Get Biblical*" distributed by Outreach Judaism.

Throughout this study numerous misconceptions will be exposed as well as false statements that individuals have utilized in order to advance their positions. The reader will be left with Scripture alone to arrive at his or her own personal decision of the study's central question.

In order to interpret the Biblical texts properly knowledge of the historical background is needed and this is where our study will begin. Jesus did not enter into the world in a vacuum, rather He entered into Jewish history at one of its most critical time periods. Israel had been through a bitter exile in Babylon, nearly destroyed by the Greeks, both physically and culturally and now ruled by the Roman Empire. Although the Romans allowed for religious expression the religious leaders were given the responsibility of making sure such religious freedom did not threaten Roman control of Israel.

As one can imagine, no Jew liked the Roman presence in Israel and the taxes which were levied upon the people were a continued source of anger. The religious leaders,

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who were also the political representatives of the people had to make a difficult decision. Support the Roman rule in the land of Israel and receive the right to practice Judaism, or rebel and run the risk of massacre and exile. The Jewish religious leaders were not wrong in their assessment of the situation as seventy years after the birth of Jesus, a revolution took place and Israel's longest exile began.

During the time prior to Jesus' birth, Israel's leaders were instrumental in putting down religious zealots whose teaching might give rise to a revolution. It was clear by the time Jesus began his teaching that the Jewish leaders had decided to rule within the parameters that Roman Empire had established. There were two primary religious parties in leadership in Israel, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The approach of the Sadducees focused on lifestyle, they rejected the notion of a messianic kingdom and felt that true religion affected only one's moral and ethical behavior. Those who believed in a resurrection and the prophetic message of a "warrior" Messiah to restore the throne of David were scoffed at by the Sadducees. Although the Pharisees disagreed with the Sadducian theology, they too supported the status quo.

Prior to Jesus beginning His teaching a new branch of spiritual leaders surfaced in Israel. These leaders were called rabbis. Rabbis were teachers that for the most part travelled from place to place providing spiritual assistance to the Jewish population especially outside Jerusalem. It was to this relatively new movement that Jesus belonged. It must be pointed out that rabbis ranged from those who received training from some of the greatest minds in Judaism to those who were formally uneducated and whose teaching were most simplistic. It was not long after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem that the Rabbis began to be the influential sector of religious Jewish life.

Jesus, as a rabbinical leader in northern Israel, was of little importance to the religious leaders in Jerusalem at first, but as His popularity grew and when some began to herald Him as Messiah, the leadership in Jerusalem took notice.

The word Messiah had long been associated with hope by the Jewish people. Messiah represented a change, a dramatic change that would impact every aspect of the Jewish life; and not just Jewish life, but the world in general. Due to the presence of Rome in the land of Israel and the trials that occupation brought, there was a resurgence of Messianic hope among much of the Jewish population. People were suffering and the thoughts of a "Davidic leader" to deliver the populace from the Romans sounded good to the common Jew. The Jewish leadership had a much different view. They were not suffering; they enjoyed benefits of leadership in every sense. Religious life centered around the Temple and the sacrifices that the people were required to bring. Those who oversaw these practices grew wealthy and detached from the people in general. As in earlier periods of Israel's history, the leadership grew corrupt and the words of the prophets from centuries earlier were never more appropriate.

The Sadducees rejected prophecy altogether and the words of the prophets were not what the Pharisees wanted the people to hear. Rabbinical zealots rose, but were quickly crushed by the leadership in Jerusalem. In regard to Jesus, it was not just a zealot that Jerusalem had to deal with, but with one whom an ever-increasing number of people thought might be the Messiah.

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What made Jesus different from the others? The answer to this question is, what made Jesus, Jesus?

It should be stated that Jesus and the issues that surrounded Him had nothing to do with the Roman Empire until the last day of His life. Jesus was not a problem for the Jewish people during His life and not with all their leaders either. Rather, only a small, but very powerful

minority of Israel's religious leaders ended up moving one Roman leader to invoke the death penalty upon Jesus.

The uniqueness of Jesus was based in two aspects of His life, His teaching and His miracles. His teaching which spoke to the hearts of Jewish people was confirmed by the miraculous deeds He performed. These two components brought notoriety to Jesus and captured the attention of Jerusalem. Everyone was asking themselves, Could this one from Nazareth be the Messiah?

Before this question can be answered one must understand the whole concept of Messiah: A concept upon which many people disagree. What was the view of Messiah in Jesus' day and how does that differ from the view by Judaism today?

Historically Judaism has seen Messiah as a human being of Jewish decent from the lineage of King David. Messiah is an instrument of G-d Himself and is used by HaShem to bring about world peace and lead the world in Torah based government. A word that surrounds Messiah is redemption. There are many aspects to this concept, but the main point is Messiah will deal with the problem of evil (sin) and justice and righteousness will be the outcome. Some of the clear signs of Messiah is that He will gather Jewish people from around the world and return them to the land of Israel. Because Messiah's rule will be based on the Torah, the Temple must be present. The prophet Zechariah says that Messiah will build the Temple (Zech. 6:12-13).

Although this paragraph represents only a fraction of thoughts concerning Messiah, it does summarize the standard view of Messiah among the Rabbis today. Such a view does not differ significantly from the view Israel's leaders had two thousand years ago.

Are not these few statements enough to demonstrate that it is impossible for Jesus to be thought of as Messiah to any moderately educated Jew? Anyone who knows the most basic teaching of the Hebrew Bible, the writings of the Talmud, and what the greatest Jewish scholars have written throughout the ages could plainly see that Jesus is not Israel's Messiah. Right? This is exactly what the leaders of Judaism have been saying, but could it be that simple?

Rabbinical leaders emphasize Messiah bringing world peace, a Torah-based world government centered in Jerusalem and many other points that rightly have to do with Messiah, which obviously have not been accomplished as of yet and offers strong criticism that Jesus could be Israel's Messiah. What these same leaders do not share is the manner the prophets state these things will be fulfilled. These truths change the picture that the rabbinical authorities try to paint.

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The prophets reveal information about the Messiah which seems to be a contradiction. It seems that some prophets speak of Messiah (as has already been discussed in this study) as a warrior king, while other prophecies speak of Messiah as a humble servant. This contradiction is at the heart of a proper understanding of the identity of Messiah. The Talmud in tractate Sanhedrin comments on this issue.

יב וארו עם ענני שמיא כבר אינש אתה וכתוב עני ורוכב על אמר רבי אלכסנדר רבי יהושע בן לוי רמי כת
98א חמור זכו עם ענני שמיא לא זכו עני רוכב על חמור

Rabbi Alexandri said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi noted a contradiction: (it could be that Messiah will come in this manner) "Behold, with the clouds of heaven as a son of man came"(it is also) noted: " humble and riding on a donkey"; (how is this to be understood? If the Jewish people merit (Messiah will) Behold come with the clouds of Heaven. (If the Jewish people) do not merit (Messiah will come) humble and riding on a donkey. 98a

This small citation from the Talmud shows that Judaism does acknowledge two distinct manners for messiah's coming. Judaism, as pointed out in the Talmudic quotation above reveals that it is an either or proposition. That is, if the majority of the Jewish people are living a Torah-based life, then Messiah will come in the clouds; but if the world is full of evilness and Jewish individuals fall into this behavior, then Messiah will come in a lowly fashion.

Further study of the signs that will accompany Messiah's coming can be found in the Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 97-99. If one studies this material it is clear that there is much debate on what the moral status of the Jewish people will be prior to Messiah coming.

In tractate Succa 52 the dual character of Messiah is expressed not as two possibilities in regard to the manner in which He will come, but as two distinct Messiahs. Within this section of the Talmud an additional Messiah is mentioned-- Messiah ben Yoseph. The character of Messiah ben Yoseph is humble. He, according to some authorities, will begin the work that Messiah ben David will complete. The Talmud refers to Zachariah 12:10-14 in discussing Messiah ben Yoseph,

פליגי בה רבי דוסא ורבנן חד אמר על משיח בן יוסף שנהרג חד אמר על יצר הרע שנהרג בשלמא למאן
"והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו וספדו עליו כמספד על היחיד" דאמר על משיח בן יוסף שנהרג היינו דכתיב

Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis dispute it, one said (The passage from Zechariah) it is about Messiah ben Yoseph that was killed, one said it is about the evil inclination that was killed. It is reasonable that it was said about Messiah ben Yoseph that is killed, for it is written, "And they will look to me, the one who they have pierced and they will mourn concerning him as one mourns concerning an only child"

The issue of Messiah ben Yoseph adds an interesting dimension into the debate. Judaism tends not to want to enter the concept of Messiah ben Yoseph in its discussion with Christians. There are two reasons for this. First is that Messiah ben

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Yoseph is prophesied to die. The second reason is that the traditional scenerio for Messiah coming is dramatically altered. The late Aryeh Kaplan wrote about the traditional scenerio for Messiah's coming and work,

"The first task of the Messiah is to redeem Israel from exile and Servitude. In doing so, he will also redeem the entire world from evil. Oppression, suffering, war, and

forms of godlessness will be abolished. Mankind will thus be perfected, and man's sins against G-d, as well as his transgression against fellow man, will be eliminated. All forms of warfare and strife between nations will also vanish in the Messianic age."

Taken from the book, The Real Messiah page 28

There is no mention of Messiah ben Yoseph who the Talmud and other traditional sources (see the appendix II of the book **Mashiach**, by Jacob Immanuel Schochet for a list of references in regard to the concept and work of Messiah ben Yoseph pages 93-101) refer to as a precursor to Messiah ben David. A review of such sources reveals the Messiah ben Yoseph begins the work of redemption but dies in the process and an undetermined amount of time will elapse between his death and the coming of Messiah ben David. Although most scholars feel the time is relatively short, it is not clear. One thing is sure, throughout the discussions of Messiah ben Yoseph, there is an agreement that some of the prophecies of the "Suffering Servant" should be attributed to him. The thought of Messiah suffering and dying has been totally rejected by Jewish scholars who have written on the subject of Jesus being Israel's Messiah. Rabbi Kaplan summarizes this thought when he speaks of the life of suffering and death of Jesus asks the question, "How could the career of Jesus be reconciled with the glorious picture of the Messiah as taught by the Prophets of Israel" (see page 31, The Real Messiah).

There is much debate about who is the subject of the prophet Isaiah's "Suffering Servant". It is clear that much of the time the prophet is speaking of Israel, yet other times he is referring to Messiah. Why the ambiguity? The reason is simple. There is an inherent relationship between Messiah and the nation of Israel. Israel has been called by HaShem to bless the world. However, due to sin, Israel has failed in this task up to now. Messiah not only redeems Israel from sin, but will transform the Jewish people in the last days, and especially during the Messianic age into a glorious nation that will in fact fulfill its call. Careful study of prophecy reveals that Messiah will live the life that Hashem called the Jewish people to live. It is for this reason the prophets blend their words to often time relate to both the Jewish people and Messiah.

Modern Jewish scholars have strongly denied that the "Suffering Servant" could be a reference to Messiah. But has this always been the case? Rabbi Tovia Singer in his work "**Let's Get Biblical**" writes concerning the "Suffering Servant" Songs of Isaiah,

"The identity of the 'servant' in the prophet's fourth Servant Song, Isaiah 53 has already been established as the nation of Israel throughout Isaiah's first three Servant Songs"

Page 25 of Rabbi's Singer "In-depth study guide"

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"Isaiah is not, however, speaking of a crucified messiah in his 53rd chapter. The prophet is referring to the Almighty's servant Israel,..."

Page 37 of Rabbi's Singer "In-dept study guide"

While modern Jewish scholars have denied any possibility for Isaiah 53 to be a reference to anyone other than the Jewish people, the Talmud offers a different

opinion. In a debate concerning the name of Messiah several suggestions are offered. One name is Metzora (leper). What makes this passage significant is that this view is based on a verse from Isaiah 53. The Talmudic citation is:

ורבנן אמרי חיוורא דבי רבי שמו שזאמר אכן חלינו נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבננו נגוע מכה אלהים
ב98 ומענה מסכת סנהדרין

And the Rabbis say (in regard to the name of messiah that it is) Pale (meaning his skin is white because he has leprosy) of the academy of rebbi (this is) his name, for it is said (Isaiah 53:4) Indeed our sickness he bore and our pains, he suffered them, and we considered him smitten, crushed by G-d and afflicted. Tractate Sanhedrin 98b

This one Talmudic passage, which Orthodox Judaism affirms is inspired from G-d, affirms that Isaiah 53 is indeed speaking about a Messiah who suffers for the sins. Why is it that neither Rabbi Singer nor Kaplan mention this passage in debating the issue of the "Suffering Servant"? The answer is simple; it proves they are wrong on this point.

This fact does not mean that Jesus is the Messiah. What it does mean is that if one reviews authoratative material from the perspective of Judaism, the following conclusion can be reached concerning Messiah.

Israel's Messiah has two distinct purposes. One of these purposes is openly discussed by rabbinical leaders in debating the identity of Messiah with Christians, while the other is vigorously denied. The fact that Messiah is prophesied as a victorious warrior who will deliver Israel from her enemies is not disputed. Messiah will be the King of a Torah-based government ruling over all creation in Jerusalem is also affirmed, as well as Messiah gathering the exiles of the Jewish people back to the land of Israel and rebuilding the Temple. The second purpose of Messiah revealed by the prophets, denied by modern Jewish leaders is that Messiah will suffer and die. That this suffering and death is for His people and is required to deal with the problem of evil.

The Talmud, Zohar, and other rabbinical writings do in fact offer two suggestions on how two seemingly conflicting purposes can be fulfilled. Both of these explanations have been previously mentioned. However, for the purpose of review and clarification they will be restated.

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The first solution offered is based in an either or proposition. Messiah may come in a lowly fashion if Jewish people are unworthy of a victorious king at first. Messiah will then lead Israel through His humility to repent and to merit deliverance and all that which will accompany redemption. On the other hand, if Israel is worthy, those prophecies of a "Suffering Servant" will not be fulfilled by Messiah and He will not come in a lowly fashion at all.

The second suggestion is that there are two separate Messiahs; Messiah ben David, the warrior king who delivers Israel and will rule in Jerusalem and Messiah ben Yoseph, the lowly humble suffering servant who will die in battle, but who will lead Israel to repent and merit Messiah ben David to come and complete the work of redemption.

It has already been said that none of what has been written proves Jesus to be the Messiah, but what it does allow is for the following possibilities. One is that Jesus is Messiah ben Yoseph and Messiah ben David is yet to come. The second is that Judaism is not correct in view of two separate Messiahs, rather there are two separate comings of one Messiah and Jesus is the One. This would mean that Jesus has already fulfilled the prophecies of the "Suffering Servant" (Messiah ben Yoseph) and He will return and fulfill the prophecies of Messiah ben David. It is the latter possibility that this study will explore.

Does Judaism allow for the possibility that Messiah has already come to earth and was not recognized by His people? Rabbi Kaplan says emphatically No!

"The first major difference between Jews and early Christians was that Christians believed that Messiah had already come, while the Jews believed that he was yet to come."

Kaplan page 30

Rabbi Kaplan's statement is frequently stated in this debate, but is it true? Does Judaism allow for the possibility that Messiah has already come? The Talmud disagrees with Rabbi Kaplan. Once again, in Tractate Sanhedrin, the rabbis discuss Messiah and whether He will be from the living or dead.

אמר רב נחמן אי מן חייא הוא כגון אנא שנאמר והיה אדירו ממנו ומשלו מקרבו יצא אמר רב אי מן חייא הוא כגון רבינו הקדוש אי מן מתיא הוא כגון דניאל איש חמודות סנהדרין צח ב

Rabbi Nachman said, if (Messiah) is from the living, He is like it is stated, and their prince shall be among us, and their ruler emerging from their midst. If (Messiah) is from the living, He is like Rabbeinu HaKadosh (Yehuda Ha Nassi). If (Messiah) if from the dead, He is like Daniel, a man greatly desired. Sanhedrin 98b

Over and over leaders of Judaism write and teach that Messiah has not come, when the Talmud allows for the possibility that Messiah has come, lived, and died; and will return again. It is most interesting that one of the qualifications that Rashi gives for

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Messiah is, if He is someone who lived in the past, is that He suffered. In discussing this concept, Rashi speaks of Daniel. How did Daniel suffer? Rashi offers the account of Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel Chapter Six) as an explanation. A brief look at this episode offers some interesting information.

Daniel has risen to power in Media and Persia and the other officials were jealous and wanted him dead. They knew that Daniel was a man without blame, so they chose to

accuse him of a crime based on his faithfulness to G-d. Biblically, one is required to pray three times a day to the G-d of Israel, therefore the evil officials made a law which could not be changed that it was forbidden to pray to any god or man other than King Darius for thirty days. These evil officials knew that Daniel could not adhere to this so they made the penalty for any violation of this law, being cast alive into the lion's den i.e., death.

What is significant about this? Daniel suffers for his faithfulness to G-d; he is placed in a pit full of lions but comes up from the pit the next day alive. The principle is that faithfulness to G-d overcomes death.

As one studies the Bible and other materials that Judaism affirms as authoritative, it becomes clear that Jesus should be considered a candidate for Messiah. Jesus could be thought of in the likes of Daniel, who will return and fulfill the prophecies of Messiah ben David (a victorious warrior who becomes King, establishing His rule in Jerusalem and extending His kingdom throughout the world and for eternity). Or Jesus could be thought of as Messiah ben Yoseph a "suffering servant". So why has Judaism been emphatically against this possibility?

There are three main reasons for this. **One, Christianity's view of the Torah; two, the Christian doctrine of Jesus' deity; and three, the behavior of Christians toward Jews down through the ages.** Each of these three issues must be discussed in any serious debate in regard to Jesus. We shall begin with the latter first, Christianity's behavior towards Jews.

It is obvious to anyone who has examined Jewish history that Christianity has not been kind to Jewish people as a whole. The question that is commonly asked by Jewish leaders is; "If Jesus is truly Israel's Messiah, then why have his followers committed such atrocities against Jewish individuals?" To answer this question one must understand the present state of Christianity and how it arrived there.

Jesus and early leaders of His teachings did not desire to start another religion. On the contrary, they sought to return Judaism to the teaching of Moses and the prophets. Although there was resistance from within Judaism for the message that Jesus and afterwards His apostles taught, this resistance was pale in comparison to the Roman Empire's treatment of those Jews and later Gentiles who accepted the basic tenets of Jesus' message.

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The Roman Empire was pagan, and its hatred and intolerance for Judaism increased during the Jewish revolt. For the most part, Rome made no distinction between Jews who practiced traditional Judaism and those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Gentiles who accepted Christianity's message suffered too. When the Jewish revolt against Rome began, and during the early years, there was a degree of tolerance from Traditional Jews for those Jews who believed in Jesus. Traditional Jews and Jews who believed fought the Romans together. But something happened to destroy tolerance.

During the time of Rabbi Akiva there arose a great Jewish warrior who had significant success in fighting the Romans. He became known as Bar Kochvah. People began thinking of him as Messiah. Finally even Rabbi Akiva agreed and proclaimed him to be. When this occurred, those Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah stopped fighting along side their fellow Jews, knowing that HaShem would not honor their effort in the name of a false messiah. This refusal to fight the Romans led to great animosity and division between those who accepted Jesus and those who did not.

Jewish persecution spread throughout the Roman Empire as Jews, both who believed in Jesus and those who did not fled from Israel. Both groups, as well as Gentiles who accepted the tenets of Jesus' message, suffered harsh treatment from the Romans. When Rome saw the vast number of Gentiles becoming part of this Jewish sect and that persecution only fueled the spread of this religious doctrine, the Romans made an historic decision, to make this Jewish sect the official religion of the Empire. The Roman leaders instructed their religious leaders (pagans) to adopt Jesus' teaching and instruct the people in it. These pagan leaders had no background in Judaism and lacked the ability to carry on the work of the Apostles. The result was a mixture of pagan traditions with a distorted view of the Apostles' doctrine.

Due to the large number of non-Jews who embraced "Jesus' teachings" and the corrupted message of the Apostles, Rome outlawed much of the Jewish practices that the early followers' of Jesus practiced. Persecution continued against the Jews in the Roman Empire, now under the auspices of "Christianity". I would argue that the Roman "Christianity" was so distorted that Jesus would have distanced Himself from it. One thing was sure the division between Jews, who had for the most part been purged from the Roman Christianity, only widened. Throughout the centuries more and more hatred for the Jews was spread by Roman Christianity. The Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition are but a few examples of Christianity's treatment of the Jew.

Later, Protestant leaders like Calvin and Luther, to name a few, are on record espousing antisemitic remarks. These sad facts leave no doubt why so few Jews are attracted to the Church's message today.

Many Christians today do recognize the Church's horrid record in regard to its behavior towards Jews, but want to emphasize this was in the past during the "dark ages" and far from where the Church is today. I would argue that although there are some small pockets of change within the Church today, on a whole very little has changed.

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I hear Christians praise the likes of Corrie Ten Boom and Diedrich Bonhoeffer, as well as all people should, but unfortunately these courageous individuals represent the exception rather than the norm during the period of the Holocaust. Today the Church is very silent about the suffering of the Jewish people. With few exceptions the Church has sided with the Arab aggressors in the Mideast conflict. Recently the Presbyterian Church USA in their annual meeting bitterly criticized and condemned Israel's treatment of the "Palestinians" while ignoring altogether the terror that Israel has had to face. This one-sided and greatly distorted view of Israel in the world today

only underscores little has changed. I realize that when people read these negative remarks, names like Gary Bauer and other Evangelical Christians will come to mind.

Yes, such people hold a very different view of the Mideast than was previously mentioned; however, one must understand such positions represent a small minority of the Christians throughout the world. An ever-increasing number of Christians are holding to a theological position to do away with Israel's role in the last days, place no significance on the land of Israel for the future, and call G-d's promise to the Jewish people null and void. Such theological positions are not only in conflict with Old Testament prophecies, but New Testament teachings. What causes people who believe the importance of the Bible to neglect its teachings? I am afraid the same Anti-semitism that has plagued the Church for almost its entire history.

These things have provided ample reasons for the Jewish people not to inquire about the claims of Jesus. Yes such atrocities carried out "in the name of Jesus" have driven a wedge deep between the Biblical Jesus and the one that comes to mind when a Jewish individual hears this name.

The question of Jesus' Deity

The Christian position that Jesus is the Son of G-d has given not only Jews but many gentiles reason to scoff at Christianity. After all, a man being G-d is hard to comprehend. Although the Deity of Jesus is foundational doctrine of Christianity is it really what the New Testament teaches? If so, is there any support for this position in the Old Testament? Even if the New Testament reveals such a position, without evidence of this view in the Old Testament, Jews would clearly have to reject this belief. In short, a merely human Jesus renders Christianity empty on redemptive value, and should cause everyone to reject it.

However, a careful study, albeit brief, **clearly provides enough Scriptural evidence (both Old and New Testaments) to confirm the Deity of Jesus.** After a short discussion of primary issues for this topic, this study will move to the New Testament and show that there are numerous texts which affirm the Deity of Messiah. After which, it will be shown that there are several Old Testament verses to support this position.

To begin with, one must understand what this doctrine claims and what it doesn't claim. In the same way that G-d dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem, those who believe Jesus was G-d incarnate hold that G-d dwelt in the body of a man, namely Jesus of

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Nazareth. The critics who ask, "if Jesus is G-d then when He died on the cross, didn't G-d die too?" simply do not understand the issue at all. The human body of Jesus died on the cross, but in the same way the human soul continues after death, the soul of Jesus also continued. Those who ask, "if G-d is omnipresent, then how could Jesus be G-d when He was limited to being in the same location as His body?" This is no different than when the Scripture says that G-d was in the Temple, did He cease to be in the Heavens and ever where else? Absolutely not.

The Deity of Messiah teaches that although fully human, Jesus' identity is in fact G-d. First of all, let's look at New Testament verses that state that Jesus is G-d and afterwards how this took place.

The opening verse John's Gospel states, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with G-d, and the Word was G-d.*" (Jn. 1:1). Later on in the same chapter one reads, "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (Jn. 1:14). No one argues that these verses are referring to Jesus and therefore it is clear that the New Testament teaches that Jesus is G-d. When Jesus was immersed in the Jordan River, a voice was heard from the Heavens declaring, "*This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*" (Mt. 3:17, Jn. 1:34). There are two terms that play an important role in understanding the divinity issue, "*the only begotten of the Father*" and "*Son*".

The first phrase, "*the only begotten of the Father*" is used to reveal two primary aspects. One is that Jesus is of the same essence of G-d the Father; i.e. a divine essence (being) and the second aspect is His uniqueness; that is there is not any other one begotten. This truth is supported in several additional verses in the New Testament. In the Epistle to the Colossians it is written, "*For it pleased (the Father) that in Him should all the fulness (diety) dwell*". Col. 1:19

In the Epistle to the Philippians one reads, "*Who (Messiah Jesus), being in the form of G-d, thought it not robbery to be equal with G-d: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*" Php. 2:6-7

In regard to the second term, "*Son*" one must understand the significance of this word in the proper context. The term "son" is not always used in a biological sense in the Bible. II Kings chapter 6 reads, "*The sons of the prophets*". There is not any scholar that thinks that the verse is referring to the actual biological sons of the prophets, but those men who were students and servants of the prophets. The Stone Edition of the Hebrew Bible even translates the phrase "*the prophets' disciples*". The term "son" when applied to Jesus reveals that His purpose was to "serve" the Father and bring honor and glory to His Father. In the Bible "sonship" reveals a servant – master relationship. This is why Jesus said, "*...nevertheless not as I will, but as You (G-d the Father) willed.*" Mt. 26:39

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Not only does the the term "son" imply servant, but also **heir**. This is why Jesus will inherit his Father's Kingdom. The book of Hebrews says, "*(G-d) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things...*" Heb. 1:2

In returning to the Divinity issue of Jesus, the New Testament does not hint at it, but proclaims it in the clearest manner. In speaking of Jesus, Paul writes, "*Who is the image of the invisible G-d, the Firstborn (heir) of all creation.*" Col. 1:15

In order that one truly understands that Jesus is G-d, G-d inspired the writers of the New Testament to reveal that it was G-d the Son who created all things. "*For by Him*

were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him (Jesus) and for Him (Jesus). He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Col. 1:16-17

The book of Hebrews also says, "*...by Whom (Jesus) also He (G-d the Father) made the worlds."* Heb. 1:2b

The New Testament is also full of numerous examples of people confessing Jesus as L-rd. One of the most famous of these examples occurs with one of Messiah's disciples named Thomas. The context of this verse is that Thomas has heard of stories concerning the resurrection of Jesus, but has not seen the Risen Messiah and does not believe the accounts he has heard. In rejecting these claims, Thomas says, "*Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."* Jn. 20:25

Eight days after making this statement Thomas encounters the Risen Jesus Who says to him, "*Reach here your finger and behold My hands, and thrust it into My side..."* Jn. 20:21 Thomas did just that and remarked, "*...My L-rd and my G-d."* Jn. 20:21

Although only a few of many possible passages were discussed, it is clear that the New Testament proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is G-d incarnate. Nevertheless there are those who desire to bend passages to deny this fact. One such individual is Rabbi Tovia Singer. In his study guide for the "*Let's Get Biblical*" tape series, he discusses several passages which he asserts prove that the authors of the New Testament did not believe in the Deity of Jesus. An examination of the various passages that Rabbi Singer uses will now be presented.

Rabbi Singer points to Jesus' statement in Mt. 20:20-23 as proof that Jesus did not think of Himself as G-d. Rabbi Singer asserts, "*If Jesus was fully G-d, why could only the Father and not Jesus grant that the two sons of Zebedee sit at the right and left of Jesus.*" This is a perfect example of one erring in interpretation because of an absence of theological training. Yes, Jesus is fully G-d, but He is also fully man. There are many passages which emphasize the human nature of Jesus and therefore what is revealed is submissiveness. Hence, Jesus is giving an example of how man should

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respond to G-d. It is not a question of if Jesus could or could not grant this request, but if a "son" should behave in such a manner. It has already been pointed out that a "son" is like a servant, in that he is called to honor his father. Another important quality is obedience. Hence, the son is not the decision maker, but the one who responds to the commands of his father. Therefore the request by the mother of the sons of Zebedee was recorded in scripture not to point to Jesus' divinity, but His humanity. If one fails to understand the full nature of Messiah and the fact that Biblical passages often speak to either His human nature or His divine nature the novice New Testament student will reach wrong conclusions.

The same point is made in Rabbi Singer's use of Mt. 26:39. In this passage Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and says, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.*" Rabbi Singer asks the question, "*If the Father and Jesus were of the same substance, such a prayer would have been meaningless. Jesus would have been praying to himself, and his will would have necessity have been the Father's will.*" Once again Jesus is demonstrating that the call of man is to submit his will to that of G-d's will. The New Testament reveals that the human nature of Jesus is like that of any other man's and therefore Jesus struggled with doing the will of His Father. As the book of Hebrews states, "*For we do not have a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin.*" Heb. 4:15. Yes, Jesus struggled in His humanity to do His Father's will, but in the end He did it. Every time, and throughout His thirty-three years, he never sinned. What is emphasized in the New Testament is how Jesus overcame temptation and ruled His human nature and accomplished His Father's will and therefore could become the blameless sacrifice for all human sin. Rabbi Singer, in speaking on Hebrews 4:15, states that, "*G-d cannot be tempted*". He makes this correct assertion based on James 1:13. What once again Rabbi Singer misses is that it is not Jesus, the Son of G-d who is being tempted, but Jesus the man. A hermeneutical help in this passage from Mt. 26:39 is that Jesus refers to G-d as "Father".

Rabbi Singer is simply confused about Jesus' true nature; i.e., fully man and fully G-d. If one fails to recognize this truth, then statements such as Singer's on pages 52-55 of his study guide are bound to appear. Much of Rabbi Singer's assertions are the same very questions that theologians had to deal with centuries ago. Jesus being fully man and fully G-d does not mean that He is like two "beings" in one body. The doctrine of hypostatic union affirms the unity of Jesus' nature, but scripture often emphasizes one at the expense of the other. In other words, it would be wrong to say that sometimes Jesus is the Son of Man and at other times He is the Son of G-d. He is always both. However, scripture in revealing truth about Jesus, oftens emphasizes His humanity or divinity in a given passage.

Another passage that has caused much confusion concerning Jesus' identity is found in Mark 10:17-20. In these verses a man approaches Jesus and addresses Him as "*Good Teacher*", to which Jesus responds, "*Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is, G-d.*" This passage is one of the classic examples of why one must use other scripture to form the basis for one's interpretation. Rabbi Singer wants

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to say that this proves that Jesus did not think of Himself as "G-d". The problem with this is other scripture says otherwise. Therefore, if one's interpretation is in conflict with many other passages, it means this person's interpretation is wrong. Rabbi Singer ignores the fact that Jesus did not say, *don't call me good, only G-d is good*; but rather Jesus simply asks a question in his response, "*Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is G-d*". The emphasis of this verse is Jesus asking the man if he believed that Jesus was G-d. It was very common for individuals to use terms that should be reserved for G-d for their religious leaders. Jesus was challenging the man's view of Himself (Jesus). Rabbi Singer, in commenting on this passage, speaks of Jesus rebuking this man, "*If as the Trinitarians insist, Jesus was G-d, why does Jesus rebuke the man for addressing him as 'Good Teacher'*". If one studies the

passage Jesus does not rebukes the man at all, but simply asks the question, "*Why do you call me good?*" Rabbi Singer reads into the text the conclusion that he wants to find in the text.

Jesus points the man to the Torah for salvation, not because one finds salvation in the Torah, but because one of the primary purposes of the Torah is to bring one to conviction of their sins and realize one's need for a Redeemer. Although this man was at first calling Jesus "Good Teacher", in the end, this man walked away from Jesus preferring his wealth rather than obedience to Jesus. The proper interpretation of this passage is that the man really did not think of Jesus as G-d, or else he would have responded to Jesus' instruction. This is why he changed from addressing Jesus as "Good Teacher" to simply "teacher". If he had really thought that Jesus was G-d, then he would have accepted Jesus' invitation and followed Him. Rabbi Singer's interpretation does not fit the rest of the passage. If one continues to read in Mark chapter 10 Jesus tells of the rewards that one will receive for following Him. The question that should be asked is this: Does one receive rewards for following a man and doing his will? Or does one receive rewards for following G-d? The answer is obvious. Jesus not only promises rewards in the age to come, but in Mark 10:30 He promises rewards in this age as well. Jesus does not speak as a mere teacher in the following verses, but as G-d.

Rabbi Singer then goes on to Mark 13:32 and ask the question, "*If Jesus was coequal to the Father, how could the Father have information that Jesus lacked?*" This is an example of what a first year seminary student addresses in Systematic Theology. One of the first courses a seminary student will encounter is called "**The Person and Work of Messiah**". In the midst of this course special attention will be given to Philippians 2:5-11,

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Messiah Jesus: Who being in the form of G-d, thought it not robbery to be equal with G-d: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore G-d also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heaven, and of earth, and under the earth; And every tongue will confess that Messiah Jesus is L-rd, to the glory of G-d the Father."

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The New Testament only speaks of One G-d. It does not speak of three gods or even three parts of G-d. However the New Testament does reveal that the One G-d has manifested Himself as G-d the Father, G-d the Son, and G-d the Holy Spirit. G-d is eternal, therefore so is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is impossible to divide the Triune G-d in any manner, He is eternally One. Yet for the purpose of revelation, Scripture speaks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit distinctly and individually. In this passage from Philippians, Paul makes it most clear that Jesus is equal to G-d in every way, "*...thought it not robbery to be equal with G-d*". What is stressed in this passage is although Jesus is the very "*form of G-d*" He humbled Himself. The Biblical word, *Kevow* is Greek and has some most enlightening meaning. Although it is most commonly translated as "humbled", Greek lexicons provide the following definitions

for this word: "to empty", "to divest one's self" and "to deprive a thing from its proper function". In considering these definitions and usages for the Biblical word, one can arrive at some interesting conclusions.

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians in order to reveal to them that Jesus, Who in every way is G-d, "took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,..."; and as a man, Jesus divested Himself on some of the attributes of G-d. That is, as a man, Jesus did not function as G-d during His thirty-three years on earth but rather as the perfect man. **This fact does in no way lessen His identity as G-d**, but demonstrates the standard of morality, ethics, and behavior for which mankind should strive. This is why Jesus often referred to Himself as the "Son of Man". In using this title Jesus was identifying Himself as the One that Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7:13-14,

ענני שמ יא כבר-חזה הוית בח דוי ליל יא וארו עם
אנש אתה הוה ועד עת יק יומ יא מטה
ולה יב שלטן ויקר ומלכו : וקדמוה י הקרב וה י
וכל עממ יא אמיא ולשניא לה יפלח ון שלטנה שלטן
עלם די לא יעדה ומלכותה די לא תחבל

"I was watching in night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven, as a Son of Man, He came unto the Ancient of Days, and they presented Him (Son of Man) before Him (G-d). It was given to Him, dominion, honor and His Kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and languages would worship Him; His dominion will be everlasting, that it would not end, and His kingdom would not be destroyed."

Is not this exactly what Paul implies when he says, "Therefore G-d also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heaven, and of earth, and under the earth; And every tongue will confess that Messiah Jesus is L-rd, to the glory of G-d the Father." Php. 2:9-11

In concluding our study of Rabbi Singer's arguments from his study guide (pp. 52-54) he gives several examples from the book of John concerning why the New Testament authors did not believe in the Trinity. It is interesting that many of the Scripture that New Testament Theologians would use to offer evidence concerning the doctrine of Jesus' divinity, Rabbi Singer never deals with. Rather he consistently chooses to

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argue from the passages that point to His Humanity. In dealing with his examples from the Gospel of John once again Rabbi Singer fails to do what he often criticizes others for doing, taking a verse or verses out of context. Let's examine John 10:30-34.

In this passage Jesus says, "I, and My Father are One". When certain leaders heard Jesus' statement they took up stones to kill Him (see Jn. 10:31). Jesus, knowing that these leaders had been planning to kill Him for some time (see Jn. 7:1), did not want

to enter into a major theological debate at that moment, especially when the stones to stone Him were already in their hands. Therefore He quoted from Psalm 82:6,

אתם אני אמרתי אלוקים
"*I said, you are all gods (judges),... .*"

The key word at question here is "*gods*", although this is the same word for the word, "G-d" it can be used in several different ways. One is a reference to gods in the plural, another is to the One true G-d; even though the word is plural, and the final use is judges. What is the reason for the various usages? The meaning of the word's root. The root carries with it a meaning of authority. G-d is the ultimate authority. Even though the word is in the plural, the Hebrew Bible uses it to refer to the One true G-d, because His authority consists of all things. The same word can be used to refer to pagan deities (see Dt. 6:14) and there are times when the word can be used to refer to authorities (judges) which G-d has placed in power, whether on earth or in heaven.

Jesus used this verse from the Psalms to simply cause those who were ready to stone to pause and reflect for a moment. What Rabbi Singer fails to see in this passage is Jesus' ministering to these leaders. He understands that the truth of His identity is hard to comprehend. This is why Jesus says, "*If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me. But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.*" (Jn. 10:37-38). In other words He is saying, if the truth of My statements is difficult to believe, then consider the works I do, do these works not reveal the same? This is why it is recorded in this discourse that when they heard these words, (verses 35-38) they again wanted to kill Him, for verse 39 reads, "*Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hands.*"

Rabbi Singer's argument on page 53 of his study guide is flawed for the following reasons. First he says that the Greek word that Jesus uses in Jn 10:30 meaning "*one*" (also found in Jn. 17:11, 21-22) "*...does not imply being a part of the same substance.*" Rather Rabbi Singer says that this word means being "*of unified purpose, not of the same substance or part of the Trinity.*" Although this word can mean of a *unified purpose*, it can indeed mean *of the same substance* or essence. If Rabbi Singer's understanding of the Greek word is correct it would mean that the leaders who wanted to stone Jesus were equally ignorant of the proper meaning.

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Rabbi Singer is not correct when he says this word cannot mean of the same substance or essence. Consider Mt. 10:29: "*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not **one** then shall fall to the ground without your Father.*" Is this verse saying that the sparrows are unified in purpose? There is not even a hint of purpose in the context! Rather we do know that the two sparrows are indeed of the same substance or essence, namely they are fowls and nothing being inherently different in their biological make up.

Rabbi Singer quotes John 14:28 when Jesus says, "...for My Father is greater than I.", here Singer implies that this statement speaks for itself. Once again this is nothing more than Jesus demonstrating submissiveness as a "Son". The chapter concludes with these words, "*But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do...*" Jn. 14:31. What is the context? That the son should love his father, and love manifests itself in obedience. The father is the authority that the son submits to. Hence, Jesus the Son is demonstrating to His disciples that He Loves G-d the Father and obeys His commandments. Rabbi Singer simply misses and fails to understand that there is a difference between passages which speak to Jesus' identity and those that speak to His role as the Son. Little wonder that Rabbi Singer fails to deal with all the many passages that do speak to Jesus' identity as G-d.

Probably there is no more glaring misuse of the New Testament than what Rabbi Singer does with John 17:3. This verse reads, "*And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true G-d, and Messiah Jesus, Whom You have sent.*" In regard to this verse Rabbi Singer writes,

"Here Jesus insists that the Father is the 'only true G-d'. The Greek word used here for 'only' is used to exclude all others. Clearly, the Father cannot be 'the only true G-d', if there are two others who are G-d to the same degree as he is."

This is another example of reaping a verse out of context and placing upon it an interpretation opposite to the one given in the text. First of all Rabbi Singer always chooses verses where the New Testament writer is speaking about the "Sonship" of Messiah. Second, why doesn't Rabbi Singer enter into the discussion verses 4 and 5 of this chapter. In verse 1 Jesus is asking His Father to "*Glorify Your Son*" and in verse 4 Jesus says that He has "*finished the work which You (the Father) have given Me to do*", then in verse 5 Jesus says, "*And now, O Father, You glorify Me with Your Ownself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.*"

Why is it that Rabbi Singer never mentions the significance of verse 5 in any of remarks? Why doesn't he asks the implications to the the glory that Jesus had with the Father before the world was created? Why doesn't he ask about the meaning of Jesus' statement that the Father should "*glorify Me with Your Ownself*"? Is it that the fact that Jesus existed with the Father before the creation (proper theology says that there was never a time that Jesus did not exist i.e., He is eternal like the Father and not a creature) a problem for the view that Rabbi Singer wishes to expound of Jesus? Is

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Jesus being glorified with the glory of G-d Himself, a fact that Rabbi Singer does not wish to acknowledge? Is it that these opening verses of chapter 17 render Rabbi Singer's interpretation of Jn. 17:3 inaccurate while he fails to place this verse in context?

On page 54 of the study guide Rabbi Singer attacks the idea that Paul believed in the divinity of Jesus. Once more Rabbi Singer uses only thoses verses where Paul is speaking about the humanity of Jesus rather than those verses that deal with His divinity. Rabbi Singer selects verses that emphasize how Jesus brought His humanity

into submissiveness to the will of G-d, then professes that this proves that the writers of the New Testament, including Paul, were unaware of the divinity of Jesus. Rabbi Singer also states that the doctrine of Jesus' humanity was a creation of a "church" long after the first century. What Rabbi Singer successfully accomplishes in his discussion of Jesus' divinity is to show his lack of knowledge of New Testament theology. An example of this can be found on page 54 of his study guide.

Rabbi Singer comments on Colossians 1:15, "*He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible G-d, the first-born of all creation*". It is most interesting that he does not comment on the phrase, "*the image of the invisible G-d*", but chooses to speak on the meaning of the phrase, "*the first-born of all creation*". Rabbi Singer writes,

"If the earliest Christians believed in the Trinity, why doesn't the New Testament ever refer to the Father or the Holy Spirit as the 'firstborn of all creation'? Understandably, the New Testament would never refer to the Father as 'firstborn' because primitive Christianity considered the Father alone eternal."

Rabbi Singer is right that the New Testament would never use the term "firstborn" in referring to the Father or to the Holy Spirit. The problem is the conclusion that Rabbi Singer derives from this. He states that is the case because the early Christians did not accept the doctrine of Jesus' divinity. In other words, that although Jesus and the Holy Spirit existed in the minds of the early Christians, they would never have viewed Jesus or the Holy Spirit as eternal or divine.

As an Orthodox Rabbi, Tovia Singer must know that the term "firstborn" in Hebrew is primarily used within the context of the right of inheritance. Hence, it is **רִאשׁוֹן** Jesus Who will inherit the Kingdom of His Father and will rule over it. Remember what has already been said in our discussion of Daniel 7:13-14. If, as Rabbi Singer asserts, early Christians would have rejected Jesus as divine and eternal, how does he believe they would have dealt with the verses that follow Col. 1:15? Rabbi Singer never mentions these verses in this debate. They are at the heart of this issue.

"For by Him (Jesus) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the assembly: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased (the Father) that in Him (Jesus) should all fulness dwell."
Col. 1:16-19

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These verses inform the reader that Paul taught to the early church that it was G-d the Son who was the creator, it was Jesus that created all things and all things exist for Him. One also finds that Jesus is before all things, in other words, nothing existed prior to Jesus. What about the Father? Remember they are One, there is only One true G-d. Hence G-d the Father, G-d the Son, and G-d the Holy Spirit are eternal. Paul in this section of Scripture uses the clearest language to teach the Colossians divinity of Jesus and that He is Eternal. Rabbi Singer is free to reject these views, but to make statements that Paul and other New Testament writers never even were aware of

Jesus' divinity or that He is eternal, totally misrepresents the integrity of the New Testament.

The Hebrew Bible and the Son of G-d

I have already written that even if the New Testament reveals that Jesus is the Son of G-d (which it does) such a position, without evidence from the Old Testament, would not affect the Jewish community. Therefore the question arises, does the Hebrew Bible speak of the "Son of G-d"? In answering this question, a couple of observations about Scripture in general must be made. First, G-d has chosen to reveal His truth over time. Theologians call this Progressive Revelation. Although Judaism argues that the patriarchs knew the entire Torah before it was given, no Rabbi would argue that all of Israel was obligated to follow the commandments before the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. A well known Jewish tradition bears witness to this. Jews around the world have a tradition of not eating meat on Shavuot (or at least not beginning the meal with meat). Although many reasons are given for this, one of the best known is discussed in the Artscroll Mesorah series on Shavuot page 64,

"The Ten commandments encompass all 613 commandments. Thus, when the Jews returned to their tents after the giving of the Torah, they were bound for the first time by the Torah's dietary laws. Therefore, they could not eat meat, for they first had to prepare a proper slaughtering knife, remove the forbidden fats from the slaughtered meat, salt it and procure kosher cooking utensils. All this made it necessary for them to eat dairy, rather than meat, at that time. As a commemoration of this, we eat dairy on Shavuot (Mishnah Berurah 494:12).

The second observation that needs to be stated is that there are many things, especially issues dealing with Messiah, that the Hebrew Bible hints to, but does not explicitly state. The concept of the Son of G-d is such an issue that the Hebrew Bible hints to, but does not often state outright. In answering the major question of this section of our study, one will have to decide for himself whether there is enough verses in the Hebrew Bible that supports two primary matters:

- The existence of the Son of G-d
- The divinity of Messiah

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In examining these matters, several passages of Scripture on which both Rabbi Singer and Rabbi Kaplan focused, will be addressed.

Does the Hebrew Bible ever say that G-d has a Son?

In the book of Proverbs chapter 30 Agur, the son of Jakeh asks some very interesting questions.

מי עלה שמים וירד מי אסף רוח בחפניו מי צרר מים בשמלה מי הקים כל אפסי ארץ מה
אל תוסף על דבריו פן: שמו ומה שם בנו כי תדע כל אמרת אלוה צרופה מגן הוא לחסים בו
:יוכיח בכ וזכבת
ו-7:משלי ל

*"Who ascended to the heavens and descended? Who gathered the wind in his hand?
Who tied waters in a cloak? Who established all the ends of the earth? What is his
name and what is his Son's name? Because you should know. Every saying of G-d is
refined; He is a shield to ones who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest
He will prove you have lied."*

Proverbs 30:4-6

A simple reading of these verses reveals the following truths. First, human wisdom is extremely limited. Second, divine intellect is perfect. Third, man should not reject the counsel of G-d found in His word. Fourth, one should not tamper with the words of G-d, because such behavior proves that such a person is full of deceit.

In this text from proverbs, Agur (the author) speaks of one who *"established all the ends of the earth"* (see verse 4). This is clearly a reference to G-d. In this same verse Agur asks for the name of the one who *"established all the ends of the earth"* (G-d) and *"the name of of His Son"*. Please note that the next two verses (verses 5 and 6) have G-d as the primary subject of these sentences. Notice that there is no reference to Moses anywhere around the verses. Despite this fact, most Jewish commentaries interpret the one who is being referred to in Proverbs 30:4 as Moses. The Stone Edition of the Tanach comments about this verse in the following manner:

"Solomon realized that he should not consider himself greater than Moses: Moses ascended to heaven to receive the Torah and bring it down to earth for Israel (Exodus 19:3, 20-25; 24:12-18, 31:18, 32:15-16; 24:1-4; Deuteronomy 9:7ff); Moses controlled the winds (Exodus 10:13; 18-19; 14-20); Moses restricted the waters of the sea (Exodus 14:15ff); Moses erected the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:17-18), and, as the Talmud (Megillah 31a) explains, "If not for the service [of the Tabernacle and Torah] the foundations of heaven and earth would not have been established" (Rashi)."

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Although many wonderful miracles were done by Moses, as mentioned in the forementioned commentary, one should not conclude it was Moses himself, but rather G-d through Moses. Moses was only the vessel by which HaShem did these things. If HaShem so desired, He could have done them with someone else or without human involvement all together. Rashi saying that because Moses was instrumental in the establishment of the Tabernacle, that this fulfills the reference of *"establishing all the ends of the earth"* (verse 4), I believe that is a big leap in interpreting Scripture. I

believe that reading Moses into these verses is the very thing that verse 6 warns against ("*Do not add to His words, lest he will prove you have lied.*").

Why do the Rabbis go to such lengths to place Moses into verse 4? The answer is simple: if one takes the text at face value and concludes that verse 4 is speaking about G-d, then G-d has a Son and this is too problematic for the Rabbis.

One such reference concerning the "Son of G-d", is this sufficient for concluding there is a Son of G-d? Fortunately there are other verses that speak about G-d's Son. Psalm 2 offers a great deal of information in regard to the Son of G-d issue. This Psalm also unites the Son of G-d concept with that of Israel's Messiah.

Even though many of the Rabbinical Scholars believe that Psalm 2 is speaking about David becoming king and the response of the people and nations 3,000 years ago, I agree with famed commentator Rashi and think the content of the verses fits much better with the events leading up to and including the Millenium Kingdom.

Verse 1 *Why are the **nations** upset, and the **countries** murmur empty (remarks),*
Verse 2 ***Kings** of the earth take a stand, and the **Nobles** conspire together,*
Against the Lord and against His Messiah (His Anointed).

The first thing that must be pointed out about this Psalm is the nature of Hebrew Poetry. Hebrew poetry can consist of many factors. Parallelism is one of the major factors. Notice how the words "nations" and "countries" are similar in meaning. Also the words "upset" and "murmur" are also related. The same is true in verse two of "Kings" and "Nobles" and "take a stand" and "conspire". Not only are these words similar in meaning, but each pair has the same grammatical markings. We also find in the Hebrew text a rhythm to the verses in the number of words used in each phrase of a verse. What is the purpose of these factors? To help one interpret the Psalm properly. One can draw several conclusions from the first two verses.

This Psalm is one of what scholars have called "Enthronement Psalms"; that is, Psalms which were written for the coronation of a king. Although such Psalms may in fact have a fulfillment in one of the kings of Israel, i.e.; King David, ultimately these Psalms have their fulfillment when Messiah is recognized and enthroned on the seat of David inaugurating the Millenial Kingdom. It is obvious from these first two verses that the world, **Nations, Countries, Kings, and Nobles** are not very happy

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about Messiah and the Kingdom He will establish. Prophetically there is a close relationship between Messiah and Israel. Therefore, because we see prophetically that the world will resist and even **take a stand against** Messiah in the last days, it should not surprise us that we see the world strongly against Israel today.

Another interesting point is in the same way there is parallelism between **Nations, Countries, Kings and Nobles; Upset, Murmur, Take a stand, and Conspire;** one also must agree the same parallelism exists between **The L-rd** and **His Messiah.**

This fact will have important consequences as we look further into Psalms. But suffice to say now that it means more than just one in purpose and thought.

Verse 3 *Let us cut off **their bonds**, and let us cast from us **their thick rope**.*

Once again parallelism is clearly visible both in word content and their grammatical markings. So, too, are the number of words (Hebrew only) in the two phrases contained in the verse. The subject of this verse is first person plural and seems to be a reference to those in verses one and two. One must interpret this verse also in light of the following verse which will emphasize the futility of verse three's action. Most commentators understand this verse referring to the world's desire to remove the moral and ethical standards of the Torah which has impacted most of the civilized world. In fact, the word which I have translated "**their bonds**" is derived from a word that means ethics or morals.

Verse 4 ***He Who sits in the heavens will laugh, the L-rd will mock them.***

Verse 5 *Then He will speak to them in His anger, and in His wrath He will terrify them.*

The belief and the actions of those who oppose Messiah's coming and the establishment of His Kingdom are scoffed at by G-d. Those who behave in such a manner will be the recipients of divine anger and wrath. Their action and beliefs do not take into consideration the identity or the ability of the Living G-d. When such people begin to comprehend the reality of G-d, they will be utterly terrified.

Verse 6 *And I have anointed My King, upon Zion My Holy Mountain.*

This verse marks a division in the Psalm. The verses before and after this verse all follow the similar structure in regard to parallelism, grammatical markings and number of words. This verse is the only exception. Rabbis point out that this verse contains seven Hebrew words (seven being the number for "Holy" or "Sanctified"). The context of this verse is clearly Messianic as the word for anointed is literally the word for Messiah. Notice the concept of King Messiah within this verse and the reference to Jerusalem, the seat of rule for the Millennial Kingdom. This verse also emphasizes that this is the L-rd's doing and nothing can thwart its fulfillment. Finally the character of the Kingdom is revealed with the phrase "*My **Holy Mountain***".

The location of the Kingdom has been revealed, but what about the identity of the King Messiah? This is the purpose of the next verse.

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Verse 7 *I will count it as (lit. to) a law, The L-rd said to Me- My Son are You, I today have begotten You.*

This verse emphasizes the **UNIQUE** relationship between Messiah and HaShem. First, it is clear in the text that Messiah is speaking. Although many commentators such as Rashi interpret the whole concept of "Son" as nothing more than a term of intimacy, "*you are as dear to Me as a son*", (Rashi's words) I think what has already

been stated about Daniel 7:13-14 offers some helpful information in interpreting this concept.

The context is very important in understanding this passage. Daniel receives this vision of One in the heavens, coming with the clouds, Who is called, the Son of man. This One presents Himself before the Ancient of Days (a term for G-d Himself) and the Ancient of Days bestows upon Him (The Son of man) dominion, honor, and kingship, so that all people, nation, and languages should **Serve/Worship** Him. Please notice that His dominion will never pass away and His kingdom will never be destroyed (see verse 14 of Daniel chapter 7). Even Rashi says this Son of man is Messiah.

Yeshua often called Himself "the Son of Man". The reason for this is two fold. One is that He was fully human and two is the prophetic truth that He came to serve man, that is, redeeming man from sin. The term "son" has several significant nuances. One is a son is an heir. This is certainly seen in this passage from Daniel, but also in our Psalm; where Messiah is King over the nations of G-d which inherits the world. Another aspect of the term "son" is service. The father / son relationship is used in the Bible to depict the prophet / disciple relationship (see II Kings 6:1). The point being a son serves his father for the purpose of bringing him honor. We also see in the Torah the son and the father became one so much so that the words of the son are obligatory to the father whereas the words of a daughter or wife are not.

When the Psalm says, "*You are My Son...*", it is revealing many important truths about Messiah. First and foremost that Messiah is the Son of G-d. In the same way that Yeshua (the Son of Man) was fully human, He is fully G-d. We also learn that He is the rightful Heir of His Father, that Father and Son are One in purpose, and as the Son of G-d, Yeshua brings honor to His Father.

It is not enough just to say that Yeshua is one in purpose with G-d the Father, because they are One in every sense of the word, but for this study we will leave this issue and press on.

What is the significance of the phrase, "*I, today, have begotten You*"? It is clear that G-d is the One who is speaking in this verse. The conclusions one should draw from these words must be limited to the context and purposes of the Psalm. Namely that G-d Himself is the One anointing His Son as King. The word "*today*" is emphatic in the Hebrew. Although this word is referring to the day of the King's coronation in one sense, most of the commentators who see this Psalm as Messianic feel the term is

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a reference to the "Day of Judgment", when Messiah will be revealed as King in action. Hassidic thought says Messiah is in every generation; therefore it is not a question of G-d birthing Him, but simply revealing Him. Similarly, when a child is born, it is not that he did not exist before then, it is just that he was not seen or acknowledged in the same way as after his birth.

Finally, as we conclude verse seven, allow me to offer one more important aspect of the phrase, "*I have begotten you*". The purpose of such a word (one word in Hebrew) is to show that King Messiah, the Son of G-d is of the same nature, i.e. Divine.

Verse 8 *Ask from Me and I will give **the people** (as) Your inheritance, and Your possession- the ends of the earth.*

Verse 9 *Break them with a **rod of iron**, as an **earthen vessel** smash them.*

Verse 10 *And now **O kings** be wise, be disciplined, O judges of the earth.*

These verses continue to show signs of parallelism in regard to content and grammar, as well as in regard to numerical rhythm. The theme of judgment also continues as well as the Messiah's rule over the world as a fulfillment of prophecy. Terms such as "*the ends of the earth*", "*the nations*", "*rod of iron*", "*inheritance*", and "*break and smash*" all appear in prophetic writings in connection with the last days and the work of Messiah. Once again the change of leadership is mentioned and the futility of trying to stand against this change is emphasized.

Verse 11 *Serve **the L-rd** with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

Verse 12 *Kiss **XX**, lest He will be wrathful, and you all will perish (on the) way, because His anger will burn a little while, happy are all (who) take shelter in Him.*

These last two verses, and how one translates them, are key to understanding the full content of the Psalm. Interpretation is often subjective and this is most unfortunate. One needs to allow the hermeneutical aids within the text itself to offer the greatest assistance and not one's own personal theology.

I have emphasized throughout our study the importance of parallelism as a hermeneutical aid. Failure to acknowledge this within this psalm will adversely affect one's interpretation.

Notice that one of the words I did not translate, I simply wrote "**XX**". This word is

I did not translate it because of its critical role within this psalm and its large **.בר** implications to New Testament theology. One needs to know the controversy that has surrounded this word for nearly two thousand years. At the heart of the debate is how to translate the word, is it Hebrew or Aramaic. If Aramaic, then why is it in the midst of a psalm that does not have any other Aramaic words or influences. Once again context and the very nature of Hebrew poetry have to be taken into consideration.

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Verses 11 and 12 form a unit within this psalm. Parallelism makes this clear. Verse eleven begins with the phrase, "*Serve or Worship the L-rd*". Verse 12 begins with the identical grammatical construction of a parallel verb. Even this verb has been drawn into the controversy. The verb in verse twelve is usually translated "*Kiss*"; most translations within Judaism prefer the word "*worship*". The reason for this is simply that the word "*worship*" fits better for the traditional way that Judaism translates the

next word. Whether one translates the verb as "kiss" or "worship" it makes little difference. The usage of the verb is simply to show the *"highest regard for"* in every sense. It fits nicely with its parallel verb in verse eleven "serve or worship"

The next verb which most believers in Yeshua translate "Son" is normally translated as "in purity" by traditional Judaism. It is true that there is a Hebrew word, same spelling, meaning just that. It has meaning of purity in a sense of natural, as a "wild" flower or an "innocent" heart. Hence the translation of verse twelve becomes, *"Worship in innocence or in purity..."* Literally, the Hebrew word is an adverb and therefore would be translated as, "worship purely or innocently". In English most render the Hebrew adverb into a prepositional phrase. The traditional translation for Judaism, if standing alone, may be translated as such; but, when considering the influences of parallelism there becomes a problem. We have seen how there has been a congruity in regard to the construction of the verses. If the Hebrew word is translated as an adverb (purely or innocently) it is not congruent to the direct object (a noun) in verse eleven.

when used within בָּר Traditional Judaism has a bias in regard to the Aramaic word Messianic context. Remember our discussion of Daniel 7: 13. I translated the phrase, *"And behold, with the clouds of heaven, One as the Son of Man..."* The word that I translated as "Son" is the same word that appears in verse twelve. I think it is most interesting that the **Stone Edition of the Hebrew Bible** totally ignored this word altogether. Why is this? Because this section of Daniel was written in Aramaic and therefore the word would have to be translated as "son" and perhaps this was against the editors' theology. The **Stone Edition** translated the phrase simply, *"And behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a man..."*.

The fact of the matter is that those who believe in Yeshua as Messiah, and Messiah being the Son of G-d do not need verse twelve to be translated as Son. We have numerous other verses which support this. In fact, as we have seen, verse seven of this psalm is a good example of this.

Rabbi Tovia Singer points out in his study guide to the tape series, "Let's Get Biblical" that throughout the book of Psalms this word always translated as "pure" or in a natural state. I agree. Rabbi Singer also points out in the Song of Songs Chapter 6 and verses 9-10 this word is also translated in the same way. Rabbi Singer then strongly infers from this, that to translate this word as "son" in Psalm 2:12, is

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inaccurate and shows a bias. Is it not odd that Rabbi Singer never chose to interject into the discussion Proverbs 31:2, when this verse uses this word three times and each of the three times it is translated by all translations that I know, including the **Stone Edition** of the Tanach, as "son". Who really brings a strong bias in the discussion?

To fail to translate this word as "Son" simply fails to consider the full context and the nature of Hebrew Poetry.

Returning now to our study of the last two verses of Psalm two, we learn that there are severe consequences for not worshipping G-d properly. Verse twelve states in a parallel manner, the same thing in regard to the Son of G-d, Messiah. The Psalm concludes with two thoughts of Divine judgment and a final admonition to take refuge in King Messiah.

Now that a relationship has been established from the Hebrew Bible between Messiah and the Son of G-d, this study will look at a few passages assisting the reader in understanding how Messiah, the Son of G-d will be recognized.

The Birth of Messiah

Scholars on both sides of the primary question of this study agree Messiah must be born. Rabbi Kaplan say, "*The Jewish Messiah is truly human in origin. He is born of ordinary human parents, and is of flesh and blood like all mortals.*" (page 27). It has already been stated that the New Testament affirms the humanity of Jesus; that is that He was fully human. Where the conflict arises is in the question of Divinity. Much has already been said concerning this issue. In this section two things will be discussed. First, the location of Messiah's birth and second, the nature of His conception and implications from it. This section will conclude by looking at a passage dealing with an Old Testament view for Messiah that will confirm His identity as G-d among man.

Micah 5:1 (2 in the Christian Bible) is often cited as proof that Messiah has to be born in Bethlehem. Since the New Testament reveals that Jesus was born there, Christians see this as a key verse. Rabbi Singer offers two important comments concerning Christians' use of this verse. First, He points out that Micah 5:1 is only establishing Messiah's ancient ancestral origin as Bethlehem, which is where King David was born. In other words, Rabbi Singer does not see Micah 5:1 as revealing place of Messiah's birth, but only reaffirming that Messiah is from the Davidic line. Second, Rabbi Singer goes to great length to show that Christian translations of this verse are flawed.

In examining Rabbi Singer's statements, one will find an inherent relationship between them. That is, if Christian translators mistranslated the text and forced into the text an interpretation which the words do not justify, then this verse does not necessarily reveal the birthplace of Messiah. If this is the case, then the standard Christian use of this verse also to justify that Messiah is Eternal is not valid.

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The verse in Hebrew is,

ואתה בית לחם אפרתה צעיר להיות באלפי יהודה ממך לי יצא להיות מושל בישראל
ומוצאתיו מקדם מימי עולם

א:מיכה ה

"And you Bethlehem Ephratah, you are too small to be among the thousands of Judah, but from you for Me (or of Me) will go forth to be ruler in Israel and his origins are from before the ancient days."

Micah 5:1

There are several aspects of this verse that one must understand, before drawing any conclusions and even before one can comprehend the significance of some of the key words of the text. First of all the context for this verse is found in verse 1 of chapter 4 of Micah's prophecy, "*It shall come about in the end of the days...*" The rest of chapter 4 is full of prophecy that all scholars agree have to do with "last days". These factors reveal that Micah 5:1 must be seen as messianic in nature. The debate surfaces whether the purpose of this verse is only to remind the reader that Messiah is from the David lineage or is there more to this verse?

Most of Rabbi Singer's comments focus on how to translate the Hebrew phrase, **מִי עוֹלָם**. Rabbi Singer says that this phrase should be rendered in the English with the words, "*from the ancient days*" or "*days of old*". He says that this phrase is usually translated correctly in the King James Bible, "*... yet here in Micah 5:1 (verse 2 in the Christian Bible) it (Kings James) and other Christian translators renders it as 'Eternity'?*" (See page 121). Rabbi Singer says that this rendering is improper. In fact he gives examples of this from Isa. 63:9, 63:11, Amos 9:11, Micah 7:12, and Malachi 3:4 to prove his point. He also shows other Christian translations agree with him. At first glance it would seem that Rabbi Singer has provided an example of gross bias on the part of those Christians who render the phrase in question, as having eternal implications for Messiah's origin.

However, a close examination of Rabbi Singer's reasoning shows a serious error. The five examples that He gives (Isa. 63:9, 63:11, Amos 9:11, Micah 7:12, and Malachi 3:4) lack an important Hebrew word that causes many translators to render this verse with eternal implications. None of the examples that Rabbi Singer provides for the phrase in question, are preceded with Hebrew word,

מִקְדָּם

The word is actually a contraction of two Hebrew words:

מִן = from
&
מִקְדָּם = before or east

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appears in the Hebrew Bible 23 times. Of these 23 occurrences, 14 of them are **מִקְדָּם** translated with the word "east"; and 9 of them are translated with different phrases. The following is a list of the 9 occurrences that are relevant for the given issue.

*Proclaim and approach; even let (your leaders) take counsel together: who let this be heard **from aforesimes** or related it from old? Is it not I, HaShem...Isa. 45:21*

*For from the beginning I foretell the outcome; and **from earlier times**, what has not yet been; ...Isa. 46:10*

*Bethlehem-Ephratah-you are too small to be among the thousands of Judah, but from you someone will emerge for Me to be a ruler over Israel; and his origins will be **from early times**, from the days of old...Micah 5:1*

*Are you not **from the beginning of time**, O HaShem, my G-d, my Holy One?...Habakkuk 1:12*

*For G-d is my King **from days of old**, working salvations in the midst of the earth. Ps. 74:12*

*(Then) I pondered **olden** days, ancient years. Ps. 77:6*

*I recall the works of G-d when I remember your **ancient** wonders. Ps. 77:12*

*I recall days **of old**, I pondered all of your deeds, ... Ps. 143:5*

*For in the days of David and Asaph, **in former times**, there were leaders of singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving to G-d. Nehemiah 12:46*

All translation given are from the Stone Edition of the Tanach, an Orthodox Jewish translation.

It is clear that in each of these texts, the phrase in question reveals a quality of "a time before". In Modern Hebrew, the root of the word in question is used for "ancient", "previously", "before", or "pre-". If one should attach the Hebrew preposition "from" to this word as was done by Micah, it means even an "earlier time" or "from before" a given time. When Rabbi Singer asserts that the King James and other Christian translations are not true with Micah 5:1 because "*in every other place in the Bible it translates the phrase as 'Days of Old'*" he does not mention that only in Micah 5:1 there is an additional Hebrew phrase which brings a different nuance to the verse. It must be pointed out that some of the examples that Rabbi Singer uses are not exactly the same phrase as which appears in Micah 5:1; even without the additional phrase that causes the King James Bible and other Christian translations to render the two phrases as "everlasting".

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Rabbi Singer translates the end of Micah 5:1 with the words, "*and his origin is from old, from ancient days.*" The correct literal translation of this phrase should read, "*and his origin is from before the ancient days.*" What is from before the ancient days? Eternity.

There is another factor that weighs in on giving the Messiah, the one the verse is speaking about, an eternal origin. The verse contains an unusual construction:

ממך לי יצא להיות מושל בישראל ומוצאתיו מקדם מימי עולם:
...from you (Bethlehem Ephratah) of Me (or for Me) one will go out, to be Ruler in Israel, and whose origin is..."

This unusual construction may be a key hermeneutical aid in understanding the text in the proper context. First, one must ask who is speaking in this verse? A careful study of the verses prior to chapter 5 reveals that it is HaShem. The Stone Edition of the Tanach agrees with this and capitalizes the word "Me" in the verse to aid the reader in knowing that G-d is indeed the One speaking in this verse. Second, one should notice that the two phrases that are rendered "*one will go out*" and "*whose origin is*" are derived from the same Hebrew root word. There is not any disagreement that the second time this root appears in the text that it is constructed in a way that means a origin in a genealogical sense. This is why Rabbi Singer says in his study guide that this verse only speaks to "*Messiah's ancient ancestral origin...*" (see page 119).

The real issue is how one should understand this word when it appears first time in the verse. If one views the word only in the sense of "*going out*" or "*emerging*" as does Rabbi Singer, then one will be influenced to render the end of the verse without an eternal quality, "*...from old, from ancient days.*" However, if one correctly understands this verse as speaking to Messiah's ancient ancestral origin as Rabbi Singer acknowledges, then one should also understand this occurrence to have genealogical implications. When the text is speaking about ancestral origin and names a city for this ancestral origin, then the verb in question should not be thought of in the sense of simply "*going forth*" or "*emerging*", but in the same usage for this verb as the genealogy of David listed in I Chronicles 1,

*"Pathrusim, Casluhim, from whom the Philistines **came forth**, and Capthorim."*
I Chronicles 1:12

*"The families of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrite, the Puthite, the Shumanthite an the Mishraite; the Zorathite and the Eshtaolite **were descended** from them."*
I Chronicles 2:53

The phrase in verse 12 "**came forth**" and in verse 53 "**were descended**" are the same words as appears in Micah 5:1. This proves that this word often has a meaning of lineage.

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In II Samuel 16:11 David is speaking and says, "... *Here is my own son, who has **issued** from my innards.*"

Why is this so important? Because Micah 5:1 is not just revealing where Messiah is to be born, but also an important aspect of Messiah's genealogy. Looking once again to the verse,

ממך לי יצא להיות מושל בישראל ומוצאתיו מקדם מימי עולם:
...*from you (Bethlehem Ephratah) of Me (or for Me) one will go out, to be Ruler in Israel, and whose origin is...*"

It is stated "*from you (Bethlehem Ephratah)*", that is the birth place. The next word is so important in understanding the true meaning of the verse. This word can be translated either "*of Me*" or "*for Me*". If it is the latter, "*for Me*", then the verse is only saying that Messiah will do His work "for" (as in behalf of) HaShem. Although it is correct that Messiah will serve HaShem, if the context is genealogical in nature, and it is, then the former translation is more accurate, "*of Me*". The implication of this translation is that in the same way an offspring is of the same biological make up as the father, then Messiah is of the same essence, substance of HaShem, i.e. divine. This being the case, it heavily influences how one translates the end of the first verse, either as Rabbi Singer, this is only speaking that Messiah will be from the lineage of David, or as the King James Bible, Messiah being divine and eternal.

One is free to interpret these words and issues differently, but to assert as Rabbi Singer strongly does, that there is no basis for rendering Micah 5:1 as the King James Bible does; and that in doing so the translators applied translation techniques that were based solely in theological concerns and not derived from the text itself, is without justification.

The Virgin Birth

One of the most contested verses in the Bible is Isaiah 7:14. Christians see this verse speaking of a supernatural conception, which is inherently tied to Messiah's divinity; while Judaism sees this verse only speaking about a normal conception with no relationship to Messiah whatsoever. Related to this issue is another verse from Isaiah (Isa. 9:5-6) that either confirms the diety of Messiah or once again is taken out of context and misintrepreted by Christians as the Rabbis assert. Some have argued that these verses are what faith is all about, but this study will offer evidence from the Isaiah's prophecy itself, to assist one in arriving at the proper conclusions.

The first consideration in arriving at a correct interpretation of these verses is to fully understand the context in which they were written. Isaiah chapters 6-12 form a unit. Chapter 6 is Isaiah's call to be a prophet. While receiving his call, Isaiah learns that his prophecy will extend from his present day until Messiah establishes the kingdom

of G-d on Earth. Special attention should be given to the last verse of chapter 6 (Isa. 6:13). This verse speaks of Israel's judgment, "*There will be ten more (kings) in it (the land of Israel), then it shall regress and become barren- like elm and an oak which, when shedding (their leaves), still have vitality in them, so will the holy seed be the vitality of (the land).*" (Translation from **Stone Edition of the Tanach**)

What or Who is this Holy Seed? There are two primary interpretations: The first is Israel; that is, despite the difficult times that Israel will go through, the people will survive. The second interpretation is Messiah. In this interpretation, Isaiah is reminding the people that despite the difficult times that Israel will go through, G-d's glorious promises to the Jewish people will be fulfilled by means of the "Holy Seed"- Israel's Messiah.

In studying chapters 7-8 one finds children are born. A major difference between Christianity and Judaism is how these children should be viewed. Judaism says that the prophetic use of these births only spoke to the time of their births. Christianity says that there is a dual fulfillment. The basis for this view is found in Isaiah 8:18,

*"Behold, I (the prophet Isaiah) and **the children** which HaShem gave to me are for signs and miracles acts for Israel, from HaShem, L-rd of Host, the One Who dwells in Mount Zion."*

It is most interesting that the **Stone Edition of the Tanach** mistranslates two words in this verse. When the text reads "...and the children which HaShem gave to me are **for signs**.." the **Stone Edition** reads, "are signs". The Hebrew stresses that the primary reason for including these births are prophetic in nature. Secondly the Hebrew word, (and for miraculous acts) is translated by the **Stone Edition** as "symbols". In וּלְמוֹפְתֵי both cases the **Stone Edition** fails to render the word "for" emphasizing the primary purpose of the children, and chooses a much weaker word for "miraculous acts", attempting to hide the supernatural aspect to the text.

Now realizing the compound purpose for the children mentioned in this section of Isaiah's prophecy, a closer study of the context is required. King Ahaz was ruling over Judah. He was very concerned over the fact that the king of Israel and the king of Aram had entered into an alliance for the expressed purpose of attacking Judah. Despite this alliance's greater military power, Isaiah informs king Ahaz that Judah will be victorious. King Ahaz has difficulty believing Isaiah's prophecy so G-d graciously offers Ahaz a test of the validity of this prophecy. HaShem said to Ahaz, "If you do not believe this, it is because you lack faith." And "Request a sign for yourself from HaShem your G-d; request it in the depths, or high above." Even though HaShem gives this incredible opportunity to Ahaz, he refuses.

It is immediately after Ahaz's refusal that text reads, "And he said, 'Hear please, O house of David, is it too little for you only to scorn men, that you also scorn my G-d.'" (Isa. 7:13). Notice that this statement is addressed to the "House of David" and not

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King Ahaz. This term "House of David" is used to address those who have faith in the promises that G-d made to David of the restoration of David's Kingdom through Messiah. An example of this term used in such a context is found in Zechariah chapter 12 (this passage will be examined later in this study).

Because the House of David is being addressed, the reader should understand the following verse is not only applicable in Isaiah's day, but also in regard to revealing information about Messiah. The next verse (Isa. 7:14) reads in Hebrew as,

הוא לכם אות הנגה העלמה הרה וילדת בן וקראת שמו עמנואל' לכן יתן ה'
"Therefore the L-rd, He will give you (plural) a sign, behold the almah will concern
and will bear a son, and she will call His name-Immanuel (G-d with us)."

There are many critical factors involved in this verse. The first word in the text "therefore" reveals that the reason for this verse is a sign of G-d's ability to provide victory for Israel, even when reality for such a victory seems beyond all hope. The text states that HaShem will provide, a "sign". The Hebrew word for "sign" is **אוֹת**. This word is used in the Hebrew Bible to reveal something miraculous. Consider some of the places that this word appears in the Scriptures:

"G-d said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to separate between the day and the night; and they shall serve as **signs**, and for festivals, and for days and years;" Gen. 1:14

"...and HaShem placed a **mark** upon Cain, so that none that meet him might kill him." Gen 4:15

"It shall be that if they do not believe you and do not heed the voice of the first **sign**, then they will believe the voice of the latter **sign**." Ex. 4:8

"The blood shall be a **sign** for you upon the houses where you are; when I shall see the blood I shall pass over you; there shall not be a plague of destruction upon you when I strike the land of Egypt." Ex. 12:13

It is clear from these examples, that when the Hebrew word ("sign") appears, its purpose is to describe something that is not ordinary. The most common use of this word is to reveal an act that only G-d can do. This being the case, the only interpretation to this verse is that the "young woman" being spoken of in Isaiah 7:14 is a virgin. One can spend numerous hours arguing whether or not the Hebrew word, עלמה means virgin or simply a young woman, but the fact remains that in this given text, the only translation that makes sense is "virgin". If the woman conceived in the natural way, where is the "sign" the prophet spoke of? How does a natural conception fulfill the supernatural aspect of the prophecy the context demands?

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The vagueness of the word that Isaiah chose is vital for understanding the full message of this passage. The message is that G-d is going to provide victory for G-d's people over their enemies. Careful study of the text shows that Isaiah's wife conceived and bore a son called, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. As the prophecy promised, soon after

the child was born, the two nations (Israel and Aram) were attacked by Assyria and never were able to succeed in defeating Judah.

If a person carefully studies chapter 8, he will find only one child is conceived and born; the child of Isaiah and his wife, whom was called, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. If only one child is born than why does Isaiah 8:18 speak of "*the children*"? The answer is that ultimately this prophecy will have its fulfillment in the birth of Messiah.

Judaism, in an effort to explain this, says that Isa. 7:14 speaks to king Ahaz's wife; and therefore is a reference to Ahaz's son, king Hezekiah. And Isa. 8:3 speaks of the prophet's wife. Hence, two children. The problem with this interpretation is that in speaking of the child born in chapter 8 and verse 3, the phrase that is used in chapter 7 verse 14 is also used. This phrase is "*Immanuel*", this phrase is three Hebrew words placed together meaning G-d is with us. What is so very important to understand is that there is a slight difference in how the name "*Immanuel*" appears in chapter 8 (two times, verses 8 and 10) and how it appears in chapter 7 verse 14.

Isaiah 7:14 עמנו אל

Isaiah 8:8,10 עמנו אל

Why the difference? To inform the reader that there is a relationship between the birth prophesied in chapter 7 and fulfilled in chapter 8. But the space between the the word "*Immanu el*" informs the reader, that there will be a space in time from the first fulfillment (Isaiah, the prophet's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz) and the Second fulfillment (the birth of Messiah). Although, Isaiah's son will show that G-d is will the people, Messiah will literally be "*Immanuel, G-d with us*".

Why did HaShem inspire Isaiah to write in this fashion? To show in the same way G-d provided victory during Ahaz's reign, He will ultimately provide victory to His people through Messiah. This is exactly what the next chapter of Isaiah teaches.

Isaiah chapter 9 contains another highly contested passage. Once again the question is to whom does this verse speak? The rabbis once again say King Hezekiah, and Christianity says the Messiah. The verse in question reads,

משרה על שכמו ויקרא שמו פלא יועץ אל גבור אבי עד שרכי ילד לנד לנו ותהי ה
שלום:
ה:ישעיה ט

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"For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and the government has been laid upon his shoulders; and He called his name, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:5

Rabbi Singer correctly points out that the verbs found in this verse are in the past tense, while Christian translations place them in the future. He says, "*The purpose of this Bible-tampering is to create the appearance that this narrative in the Book of Isaiah is speaking of a future deified Jesus rather than events that transpired in the days of King Hezekiah.*" (Rabbi Singer's Study Guide p. 58). Although the verbs are in the past tense, the reason for a translation in the future is not "*Bible-tampering*", but the context that verse 6 of this chapter gives to this verse.

ל כסא דוד ועל ממלכתו להכין אתה וסעדה במשפטלמרבה המשרה ולשלום אין קץ ע
 צבאות תעשה זאת ' ובצדקה מעתה ועד עולם קנאת ה
 ו:ישעיה ט

"Of the greatness of government and peace, there is no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to establish it and sustain it with justice and in righteousness from now and until eternity. The zeal of the L-rd of Host will do this."

Isa. 9:6

It is clear that verse 6 has implications that extend far into the future; i.e., eternity. One then has to make a choice. Either this verse is speaking about a Divine Messiah, Yeshua, or agree with the Talmud, and say this verse is speaking about Hezekiah (see Tractate Sanhedrin 94a), then these names, "*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*" must be applied to him. Even the **Stone Edition of the Tanach** an Orthodox Jewish translation, has problems with calling king Hezekiah these names and renders the verse 5,

"...the Wondrous Adviser, Mighty G-d, Eternal Father, called his name Sar-shalom (Prince of Peace);" (p. 969).

Rabbi Singer explains the Talmudic view that calling Hezekiah with these names are most common in the Bible and gives several examples of this on page 57. The examples that Rabbi Singer provides are not congruent with what is revealed in Isa. 9:5, where the names are titles of G-d; and not names which simply honor G-d, speaking of either His attributes or His actions.

In spite of these factors, the fact remains that king Hezekiah's reign lasted only 29 years. If Judaism wishes to be consistent with their assertions, then Judaism must believe Messiah has come (Hezekiah) and he died and will rise again to fulfill all the prophecies that are left to be fulfilled. If the Rabbis hold to their statements in refuting the possibility that Jesus is Messiah, then this is the only outcome for traditional Judaism to hold in regard to Messiah. The problem is this is not the case. There are

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many views about who Messiah was, or is, or will be. All three views, that is, Messiah is from the dead, He is alive in every age, and Messiah will come in the future are in Judaism today. But for the interpretation of Rabbi Singer to be accepted, then consistency demands that all of Orthodox Judaism hold to the statement of Rabbi Hillel (this is not Hillel the Elder, but a descendant),

סנהדרין צט א) רבי הלל אומר אין להם משיח לישראל שכבר אכלוהו בימי חזקיה

"Rabbi Hillel says, 'there is no Messiah for them, for Israel; because they have already partaken of him in the days of Hezekiah.'" Sanhedrin 99a

"Rabbi Hillel maintains that King Chizkiah (Hezekiah) was the Messiah and that all the prophecies about a Messianic king were fulfilled in him. Rabbi Hillel does not dispute that the Jews will be redeemed from exile. Rather, he maintains that the redemption will be wrought not by a human messiah, but by G-d Himself." (note #13 on page Sanhedrin 99a in the Schottenstein daf yomi edition of the Talmud Bavli).

Although Rabbi Hillel's view is rejected in the Gemara, it shows the problem of holding to the view that all of Isaiah chapter 9 has to do with King Hezekiah. Rabbi Hillel saw correctly that there are Messianic implications to these verses. Rabbi Singer is inconsistent because he maintains that chapters 9 and 10 have nothing to do with Israel's Messiah,

"Isaiah's tenth chapter provides the epilogue to the events described in chapter nine...In these chapters, Isaiah recounts how the desperate Jewish nation was miraculously delivered from the Assyrian army...The story of Hezekiah's remarkable salvation from Assyria more than 2,700 years ago is related in the tenth chapter of Isaiah as well. The fact that the tenth chapter continues to speak of Hezekiah's victory and Assyria's remarkable defeat does not bode well for evangelical Christians who insist the the ninth chapter of Isaiah is speaking of a deified Jesus..." (Singer p. 59)

Once again Rabbi Singer is mistaken in Christianity's view. Chapters 9 and 10 do speak of the events that took place nearly 3,000 years ago, but it is these events, the "remarkable victory" that Rabbi Singer speaks of, that provide the backdrop for understanding what G-d is going to do through His Son, the Messiah in the future. It is most interesting that although Rabbi Singer agrees that Isaiah chapter 11 is full of Messianic prophecies, he never mentions this in discussing the context of Isaiah chapters 7-10. Most commentators (Rashi included) see a strong relationship between chapter 10 and chapter 11. Why does Rabbi Singer fail to mention this? Because linking these chapters (7-10) with chapter 11 is problematic to the contention that there is nothing futuristic or Messianic about these chapters.

Rashi says that it is the "future Messiah" Who will redeem the Ten Tribes which were exiled by Assyrians. (see **Stone Edition of the Tanach** page 972, note on Isa. 11:1). Yes Isaiah chapters 11 and 12 continue showing that it is the same faithful G-d, whose words are true, that delivered Judah in the days of Hezekiah, that will return all the exiles to the land, and set up the restored Davidic Kingdom in the future. Chapter 11

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foretells what had already been prophesied (Isa. 6:13) when we are informed that there will only be ten more kings in Judah (after Uzziah ben Amaziah unto Zedekiah ben Josiah there were exactly ten kings until the Babylonian Exile). Isaiah 6:13 tells us that after that, we are to expect the "Holy Seed"- the Messiah, Who will be the next and final (eternal) King, who will rule upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. It is for this reason that Isaiah 7:14, 9:5-6, and chapter 11 is recorded. Failure to understand the proper context, would leave chapter 11 at a most odd place to record such

information about Messiah. Rabbi Singer often accuses Christians of "*ripping verses completely out of context in order to misapply it to Jesus*" (see Singer p. 6), perhaps he fails to place verses within the proper context when they rightly do apply to Messiah?

Zechariah chapter 12 has already been mentioned in this study twice; the first time to point out the Biblical basis for the belief in the death of Messiah, and the second time in regard to a discussion of the significance of the phrase, "*The House of David*". In this section, both of these issues are related. Zechariah 12:10 is often used to prove the divinity of Jesus. Once again, this verse is highly contested.

Once again, context is the key in interpreting this verse properly. Zechariah chapter 12 speaks about the "*last days*" when Jerusalem will be attacked by all the nations of the world. Israel, a small country, would stand little chance of victory against such a confederation of nations, but with G-d's help, Israel will be triumphant. Not only will HaShem provide supernatural power for the Jewish people and miracles, but there will also be a spiritual change in the people. As G-d is destroying all the nations that come upon Jerusalem (see Zech. 12:9), He will minister to the Jewish people spiritually,

ושפכתי על בית דויד ועל יושב ירושלם רוח חן ותחנונים והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו וספדו
י:זכריה יב: עליו כמספד על היחיד והמר עליו כהמר על הבכור

"And I will pour upon the House of David and upon the dwellers of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication. They will look at Me, Whom (or the one) they have stabbed and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only Son and the bitterness for Him is as the bitterness for a firstborn Son."

Zechariah 12:10

There is no doubt that the One who is speaking is G-d, for He is the One pouring out upon the people the Spirit of grace and supplication. Therefore when the verse says, "*They will look at Me...*" there is no debate that the "*Me*" is HaShem. It is interesting that it is the next phrase that Rabbi Singer works so hard to distance from the plain interpretation of the Hebrew text. Rabbi Singer's translation is, "*They will look to Me because of the one who was thrust through,...*". There are two aspects of his translation that are noteworthy. First, his trouble with the phrase, and his desire to make the verb, "*thrust through or stabbed*" passive. In **את אשר** regard to the Hebrew particle which Rabbi Singer translates as "*because of*", he stands

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alone in such a rendering. His purpose for this clear mistranslation is to remove HaShem as the subject of "*they stabbed*". But unless there is another subject clearly stated in the phrase which follows the particle, the laws of Hebrew grammar demands the direct object be the same as the one which precedes the particle. The question now arises, why the change to the third person from the first person? The answer is simple, to show the inherent relationship between HaShem and Messiah.

In order for Rabbi Singer's translation to make any sense at all, he is forced to add the words "*because of*" not found in the text; and to take a clearly active verb "*stabbed*" or "*thrust through*" and translate it as passive verb, and to change it from the third person plural, "*they stabbed or thrust through*" to the third person singular. Otherwise his translation would be, "*They will look to Me, the one thrust through...*". And such a translation unites Messiah and G-d in a manner that Rabbi Singer cannot accept.

Rabbi Singer fails to notice that the purpose of the particle is to point out the Definite Direct Object of the verb. The order is reversed from the normal position. The reason for this is two fold; one to make the Definite Direct Object emphatic and two, to show a close relationship between the first Definite Direct Object "*They will look at Me*" and the second, "*Whom*" or "*the One*".

The last point of this section on the Son of G-d and the Hebrew Bible, will focus on a phrase "*The Arm of the L-rd*". What is the significance of this phrase? The answer to this is found in the general meaning of the word translated "*Arm*". This word is . It has many ways that it is translated, but the basic meaning is always the same. ^{אָרַם} It means a "seed" or "*offspring*". In 1 Samuel 1:11 Hannah is praying for a **son** and this word is used. The word in a slightly different form means "*arm*" because like a "son" is the extension of his father, so is the "arm" an extension of the body. It is interesting to note that the Shank bone on the Passover Seder Plate is called by this same word. The purpose of the Shank bone is to remind us of the lamb that was sacrificed for our freedom while our forefathers were slaves in Egypt. Because of the Passover Lamb our forefathers were taken out of Exile and brought to the promise land.

The New Testament calls Jesus the "Lamb of G-d" (John 1:29) and "Our Passover Lamb" (1Cor. 5:7). In the same way that by the Passover Lamb our forefathers were redeemed from slavery to Pharaoh and brought to Israel, Jesus-"Our Passover Lamb of G-d" can redeem one from slavery to sin and bring one into the Kingdom of G-d. Notice how the phrase, "*Arm of the L-rd*" sounds when instead of translating the word "arm" one translates by its basic meaning "son" in several of the "Suffering Servant" Passages in Isaiah.

*"Behold, my Master HaShem Eloqim, will come in strength, and His **Son** is ruling for Him;... Isa. 40:10*

*"...the islands will put their hope in Me (HaShem) and will trust in My **Son**." Isa. 51:5*

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*"Awake Awake, Put on strength O **Son** of HaShem! Awaken as in the days of old, as in the previous generation. Are You not the One Who decimated the haughty, Who terrified the sea creature? Are You not the One Who dried up the sea, the waters of the great depths; Who made the depths of the seas a path for the redeemed ones to cross" Isa. 51:9-10*

*"HaShem has revealed His Holy **Son** before the eyes of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will see the Salvation of our G-d." Isa. 52:10*

"...For whom has the **Son** of the L-rd been revealed..." Isa. 53:1

"But He (G-d) saw that there was no one and was astounded that there was no one to entreat, so His **Son** saved for Him..." Isa. 59:15

In conclusion of the issue *the Son of G-d and the Hebrew Bible*, it has been shown that there are clear references to the "Son of G-d" in the Old Testament as well as other indicators that speak of the Diety of Messiah. The passages that this study looked at should give all who reject Jesus as a possible candidate for the Messiah reason to pause.

The Torah and the New Testament

The third issue that this study will take up in regard to the difficulty for Jewish people to accept the claims of Christianity is the view that Christianity has for the Law of Moses (Torah). What does the New Testament say about Torah Observance?

In this section Rabbi Singer accurately states the view that Christianity has for the Torah. The question that must be asked is, "Does Christianity have it right"? In the same way that Judaism ought to be shaped by the Scriptures and not the teaching of the Rabbis, Christianity ought to base its practices on the Scriptures and not the teachings of the "church".

It has already been stated that when Rome saw the vast number of Gentiles becoming part of this Jewish sect and that persecution only fueled the spread of this religious doctrine, Rome made an historic decision, to make this Jewish sect the official religion of the Empire. The Roman leaders instructed their religious leaders (pagans) to adopt Jesus' teaching and instruct the people in it. These pagan leaders had no background in Judaism and lacked the ability to carry on the work of the Apostles. The result was a mixture of pagan traditions with a distorted view of the Apostles' doctrine. The Romans, who had already proven a deep hatred for the Jews, removed much of the Jewishness from this sect of Judaism and interpreted away much of the original character that "Christianity" had in the first century.

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In reality, one could write volumes on this issue, but in an attempt to provide a brief overview, the following question will be dealt with. **Is the Torah still valid today? If so, for whom?** In answering this question several passages from the New Testament will be studied.

The chief writer of the New Testament was the Apostle Paul. Much of Christian Theology is based on his writings. This study will assert that many of the statements Christianity interprets to lessen the significance of the Torah are taken out of context

and applied in a manner that places Christianity's view of the Torah in conflict with numerous other New Testament verses.

One of Paul's foundational teachings is that one is not saved by the performance of good works; i.e., the Torah commandments, but the redemptive work of Messiah Jesus. **Clearly this is a true statement.** The problem is that this fact has caused Christianity to conclude that if the Torah does not save, then it is of little value. Such a rationalization is not a proper conclusion. Paul writes that the Torah shows one his sinfulness, and thereby one's need for a Saviour. Christianity agrees with this point; however, the natural conclusion of this statement is rejected by the church. What is the natural conclusion of this statement? If the Torah still has the function of convicting one of sin and showing one's need for a Redeemer, **then the Torah still defines what is sin and what is not.** It must be pointed out that nowhere does the Old Testament teach that the Torah was given as a means to salvation, simply as an instrument to show man what is proper behavior and what is not. There is an additional aspect to the Torah and that is the sacrificial system that it revealed.

Today, without a Temple in Jerusalem, it is impossible for man to practice sacrifices. Judaism agrees. Without a Temple, Judaism acknowledges that much of the ceremonial aspects of the Torah are not in force today. What is left? The ethical, moral teachings of G-d to man. Where does this leave the follower of Messiah Jesus?

A primary teaching of Paul in Romans 6 is that when one accepts Jesus as Messiah, this person unites with Him in a special way. The death that Jesus died was for man, and therefore His death becomes the believer's death too.

"Now if we be dead with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him."
Rom. 6:8

Since the believer unites with Jesus in death, and the full punishment of violation of the Torah is death, the Torah no longer holds power over a follower of Messiah Jesus. Stated in another manner, one cannot be punished by the Torah. Why? Because when Jesus was crucified on the tree, He took the full punishment of the Torah for the believer. The outcome is that His followers are no longer "under the law". This phrase does not mean, as the church asserts, that the Torah is obsolete. Rather it means there is no condemnation for the one in a redemptive relationship with Messiah.

Paul provides an example of why the believer can no longer be condemned by the Torah.

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"Know you not brothers... how the Law has dominion over a man as long as he is alive" Rom. 7:1

"For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he is alive; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband"
Rom. 7:2

Although the believer in Messiah can no longer be condemned by the Torah, should this person live a life of violating the commandments? Paul strongly says no!

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue to sin, that grace may abound? G-d forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. 6:1-2

"Therefore, now! There is no condemnation to them who are in Messiah Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Torah could not do, in that it was weak because of the flesh (of man), G-d sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after flesh, but after the Spirit."

Rom. 8:1-4

These verses make it clear that although Jesus' followers cannot be punished with death (damnation) by the Torah, if the believer lives by means of the Holy Spirit, then he will live in such a manner that fulfills the righteousness of the Torah.

Let's speak in practical terms. The believer in Messiah Jesus is under no obligation to do anything in regard to maintaining his status of redeemed. However the love of G-d should constrain this individual to serve G-d. Knowing that sin grieves the heart of G-d, the believer would not want to violate the commandments of the Torah. It is not a matter that the believer has to, but rather should want to live in obedience to the word of G-d.

There is an interesting analogy from the Old Testament about redemption and the purpose of the Torah. First, Israel was redeemed by G-d, by means of the Passover lamb. It was only after being set free from serving Pharaoh, that Israel received the Torah. The Torah was not a means of Israel's redemption but the righteous instruction of how G-d's people should live.

It has already be stated that the Passover analogy lays the foundation for understanding the work of Messiah, Who died at the exact time the Passover lambs were being killed. Messiah's death is the basis of redemption; in the same way that the Torah was given to a physically redeemed Israel. The Holy Spirit was given to those who were spiritually redeemed on the same festival (Shavuot or Pentecost) in order to aid the believer in living righteously.

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What are the reasons that Torah Observance is not practiced by the church?

In addition to the Roman spiritual leaders' (pagans) lack of understanding of Judaism and the teachings of the Apostles, there are some additional reasons for the church's rejection of Torah observance. The First reason is a misunderstanding of the issue at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15).

The Apostle Paul took the message of the Gospel to people outside of Israel, both Jews and Gentiles. His ministry to the Gentiles caused a great deal of debate. The

epistle to the Galatians provides the historical background for understanding the conference that took place in Jerusalem and its rulings. Galatians 2:12 states that certain men from Jerusalem (sent by James, the leader of church) came to challenge Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. These men believed that because Paul was initially only sharing the means by which one is redeemed, that Paul's "Gospel" was insufficient. These men (Judaizers) taught that one had to be circumcised and keep the law **in order to be saved**. These men hampered Paul and eventually these men and Paul met in Jerusalem to have the elders of the Jewish sect (the Church) decide the issue.

It must be strongly stated that the primary purpose of the Jerusalem Conference was to address the issue of "**how one is justified**" and **NOT** how one should live after having been justified! Christianity's failure to recognize this has driven a great wedge between the religion that Jesus and the Patriarchs embraced and Roman Christianity and the various Christian movements that evolved from Roman Christianity. Jesus did not come to start a new and separate religion from Judaism, but to return Judaism to the teachings of Moses and to fulfill the promises that the Prophets made. The Bible always refers to the followers of Messiah Jesus as a sect within Judaism. It called it "The Way". The fact that Christianity is now a rival to Judaism, rather than a purifying factor within Judaism is extremely unfortunate.

In looking at Acts 15:1 it is clear that the issue was never whether a follower of Jesus should do the Biblical commandments, but rather whether the following statement is true or not, "*...Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.*" Once again, it must be stated that **observance of the Torah is not the basis for justification (being saved)**. However this is exactly what the Judaizers were saying and they departed out of Israel in order to challenge Paul's message and those who had embraced it.

Acts 15:5 also clarifies the debate, "*But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, 'That it was necessary to circumcise them (gentiles) and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.'*" The context is, that these two things, circumcision and Torah observance, were necessary for salvation. To these statements Peter arose to speak. In the midst of his speech, speaking in regard to the Torah, he said, "*Now therefore why tempt you G-d, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.*" (Acts 15:10). Peter is right that no man, (other than Jesus Himself) has ever kept the Torah perfectly.

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Therefore, making justification by works and not by grace renders the Gospel null and void. Peter's next statement in the debate was, "*But we believe that through the grace of the L-rd Messiah Jesus we shall be saved, even as they (Gentiles).*" Acts 15:11.

Finally James, the head of the Church in Jerusalem, rose and spoke.

"Wherefore my sentence (judgement) is this, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles who have turned to G-d: But we write unto them, they they abstain from pollution of idolatry and from sexual impurity, and from things strangled

and from blood. For Moses of old time (the Torah) has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day." Acts 15:19-21.

This statement is most informing to the issue at hand. Setting aside those things first mentioned, notice what James says, the Torah is taught in the synagogues in every city on the Sabbath day. The implication to this statement is that the First Century Church did not make circumcision or Torah observance a prerequisite for justification, but there is an expectation that Gentiles who accept Jesus and the Apostles' doctrine (New Testament) will be exposed to the Torah when they are worshipping G-d in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Hence, Torah observance is not compulsory for a salvation experience, but knowledge of the Torah and the entire Old Testament should be part of the believer's life.

All too often Christian commentators use the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15 and related passages to teach that the Torah has been done away with, when the Jerusalem Conference only says that Torah observance is not in any way related to the means of justification. Torah observance was a part of the first century believers. Consider these verses from the New Testament.

"...You see brother (Paul), how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and are all zealous of the Torah."

Acts 21:20

This verse comes within a very important context. Paul has returned to Jerusalem and he meets with James and all the elders (verse 18). Paul reveals what G-d has done through his ministry among the Gentiles. The response of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem was that they glorified the Lord and informed Paul about these numerous Jews who have believed and are zealous for the Law (verse 19-20). Then they inform Paul that there are false rumors about him. These false rumors are that he teaches Jews to forsake the Torah and not to circumcise their children, nor live according to the customs of Jewish Law (verse 21). What is surprising is that the leaders of the Church instruct Paul to prove these rumors false publicly. The leaders ask Paul to lead some of the Jewish believers to complete the vow which they were under. This required Paul to purify himself ceremonially and to make an offering which he did (see verses 22-24). It is vital that one reads what the elders said concerning Paul,

"...and all may know that those things, which they were informed of you (see verse 21), are nothing (false); but you yourself also walk properly, and keep the Law (Torah)." Acts 21:24

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When Paul is falsely accused of causing a disturbance in the Temple and gives his defense he says,

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call heresy, so worship I the G-d of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the prophets." Acts 24:14

"...Neither against the Torah of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all." Acts 25:8

Paul valued the Torah and applied the commandments to his life, but he did not see these things as the basis for his salvation; rather trusted in the grace of the L-rd Jesus, Who gave His life a ransom for many.

If this is the case, then how could Paul write, "*For Messiah is the end of the Torah for righteousness to every one that believes.*"? (Romans 10:4). The answer is because the word which translated "end" means literally "goal". What Paul is telling us is that Messiah died so we could live in obedience to the word of G-d, fulfilling the righteousness that the Law defines.

So am I obligated to Keep the Torah?

It has already been said that without the Temple, many of the Biblical commands are no longer possible to do. The Chafetz Chayim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, wrote a book about the commandments that are possible to do since the destruction of the Temple. There are 613 Biblical commandments, 248 positive commandments (thou shalls) and 365 negative commandments (thou shall nots). The Chafetz Chayim is regarded as one of the great rabbis and He said that today there are only 77 positive commandments that one can do and 194 negative ones. He does list an additional 26 commandment which are contingent on being in the land of Israel.

Hence, today there are less than half the commandments available to man to do. This raises the question is half a Torah still a Torah? Consider what the James' Epistle says,

"For whosoever shall keep the the whole Torah, and yet transgress in one point, this one is guilty of all." James 2:10.

Since there are numerous commandments that one cannot do today, no one is keeping the Torah. This is G-d's design. In this dispensation, the Torah is not a matter of keeping, but rather utilizing it for our walk with G-d. Rabbis rightly teach that the Torah reveals the character of G-d. This is why Jesus never broke any of the commandments, He revealed through His observance of the Torah, how G-d would live as a man. When the Bible says that man was created in the image of G-d (Gen. 1:26), it reveals that the primary purpose G-d made man was to be like Him. Hence the Torah becomes an aid to assist man in this pursuit. The Torah has been summarized in many ways. Jesus said,

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"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the L-rd your G-d is One L-rd: And you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like this one, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Mk. 12:29-31

The prophet Micah said,

"He(the L-rd) has told you, O man, what is good and what the L-rd seeks from you, that you do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your G-d." Micah 6:8

It all reveals to us that the call of man is pursuing holiness; that is the character of G-d. The commandments assist man in this pursuit, but only when man has been redeemed and is indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "*We know that the Torah is spiritual...*" Rom. 7:14. This reveals that other than showing man his need of redemption the Torah has no other purpose for the unregenerated man; but after redemption, the Torah commandments become the map for man's sanctification.

Paul informs the believer that things such as the Kosher Laws, Festivals, New Moons, and the Shabbat were not given so believers can judge one another. (see Col. 2:16). This all too often has caused Christianity to conclude they are no longer relevant for believers. But Paul continues in the next verse saying,

"Which are a shadow of things to come; and the body is of Messiah." Col. 2:17.

Some Christian translations add the word "*were*" and change the verse to say "*Which were a shadow of things to come...*" but the Greek is very clear, and the word "*were*" does not appear in the text. This is an example of some "bending" the text to fulfill an anti-Torah perspective that the New Testament does not contain.

These verses from Paul make it clear that although the Torah is not a basis for salvation, nor an instrument for condemning one another, it can be used to prepare people for what G-d will do in the future and, in connection with the Holy Spirit, can assist the believer in working out his sanctification.

In conclusion, the Church's nearly total rejection of the Torah, has caused the redeemed people of G-d to lose a connection with their heritage and fail in the Church's call to provoke Israel to jealousy (see Rom. 11:11). Instead of the Church being used as a bridge between the Jewish people and G-d, the Church has for the most part driven a wedge between Jewish individuals and their Messiah.

This study has shown that Christainty has a horrible record of behavior in regard to the Jewish people. The Church's silence during times of Jewish persecution or the Church's persecution of Jewish people is without excuse and does not in any way reflect the Teaching of the New Testament or the character of one indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In short, such behavior is totally inconsistent with one who truly knows the Messiah of Israel.

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This study has used both Scripture and Rabbinical writings to show that Jesus ought to be considered a candidate for Israel's Messiah. The view of the divinity of Messiah is not without foundation both in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The possibility of two comings of Messiah is sound, not only according to the Hebrew Bible, but also within the Talmud.

Finally, this study has shown that the Church's rejection of the use of Torah as a tool for assisting one in his or her relationship with G-d is in conflict with New Testament doctrine.

Appendix

In this section, this study will show some inconsistencies in the writings of Rabbi Tovia Singer's Study Guide and in Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's book. These statements should cause the reader of these works to pause in accepting the scholarship of these two men.

Rabbi Singer asks the question, "*Is the New Testament Reliable*". He cites evidence that he says proves that the New Testament should not be acceptable as Scripture. In examining Rabbi Singer's "proof" some interesting facts come to light. First of all Rabbi Singer is not telling the whole picture. The problems that he cites are nothing more than differences between the Massoretic Text (Standard Hebrew Bible) and the Septuagint (The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). When the New Testament sites a Old Testament passage it usually quotes from the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Text because the New Testament was also written in Greek. The Septuagint (only for the first five book of the Old Testament) had the approval of the Rabbis as a translation inspired by G-d. One of the values of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that it confirmed that the differences between the Septuagint and the Massoretic Text were

due to a different Hebrew Vorlage (a different Hebrew text) for the 72 Septuagint translators. The examples Rabbi Singer provides to discredit the New Testament are excellent examples of Textual Criticism. Just because one finds differences in Biblical manuscripts, does not necessarily undermine the authority of a Biblical text. Sometimes it provides additional information that is in no way conflicting with the standard interpretation.

Let's consider an example that Rabbi Singer provides. He correctly sites that there is a discrepancy between Acts 7:14 and what is recorded in Gen. 46:27. The Acts passage has the number of people listed as 75 and the Genesis passage has the number of people at 70. Rabbi Singer asks, How can $70 = 75$? (see pages 90-91 Study Guide). If the New Testament has 75 and the Hebrew Bible 70 is this not an error? Rabbi Singer uses this as a reason that one should not accept the accuracy of the New Testament. What he fails to tell you is that there is no conflict in the numbers 70 and 75. In fact in this passage 70 does equal 75. How, someone will ask. Simple: the Septuagint is including all the sons of Joseph that were born to him in Egypt, whereas the Hebrew Bible is only counting two of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. If one studies the account in Genesis chapter 46 carefully he will find the following information. Genesis 46:26 states,

"All the persons coming with Jacob to Egypt- his own descendants, aside from the wives of Jacob's sons- 66 persons in all."

This passage does not include Jacob or Joseph, who was already in Egypt, or the 9 sons of Joseph who were born in Egypt. Hence, the number 75 which is written in the Septuagint and recorded in the book of Acts only takes the number 66 from Genesis 46:26 and adds the 9 sons of Joseph to arrive at the number 75. Whereas the passage from the Hebrew Bible in Genesis 46:27 is derived by adding the 66 people

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mentioned in Gen. 46:26 with Jacob, Joseph, and only two of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ($66 + 4 = 70$). Hence, there is not an error in the New Testament, but simply a different calculation; a calculation that does not reveal an error, but different information. Only the Septuagint mentions the fact that Joseph has 7 additional sons after Jacob and his 66 descendants came to Egypt. Rabbi Singer does not explain how the number is derived and how modern scholarship does not see this as something which attacks the authenticity of the New Testament, but simply an example of the different Hebrew Vorlage. There are numerous Old Testament manuscripts which have slight differences between them; Textual Criticism's job is to determine which likely is the best choice. The issue does not attack the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible, but simply echoes the fact that the world is not in possession of the actual texts that Moses, the prophets, and other godly men wrote.

The fact that Rabbi Singer would use these issues as the basis for attacking the New Testament shows a lack of expertise in the field of Biblical scholarship.

Rabbi Singer also sites a discrepancy found in Acts 7:16.

"And were carried over into Shechem and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Shechem."

Rabbi Singer immediately attacks this passage as an error. He states that Stephen (who is speaking in Acts 7) is confusing facts on Genesis 23:7-20 and 33:18-20. Rather than assuming that Stephen made an error which would undermine that authenticity of the New Testament, one can conclude the following. Stephen is not speaking about where Jacob was buried (Hebron) which is the assumption that Rabbi Singer makes, but speaking of other descendants who were in fact buried in Shechem. Joseph being one, and perhaps his sons and other family members. If one closely examines the verse from Acts 7:16 an interesting fact is discovered.

*"And **were carried** over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Shechem."*

The verb "*were carried*" is in the plural. This means that other individuals were carried out of Egypt and were buried. Only Jacob was buried in Hebron, the rest were buried like Joseph in Shechem. Although it is not recorded in the Hebrew Bible that Abraham bought land in Shechem, the fact is that he could have; and Stephen under the influence of the Holy Spirit revealed this or this fact was known through an oral tradition. Certainly Rabbi Singer can appreciate the value of oral traditions.

Rabbi Singer also speaks to the genealogies and the events record about death, burial, and resurrection in the Gospels. **These issues will be discussed, G-d willing in the next publication.**

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Within Rabbi Kaplan's book there is a section written by Rabbi Pinchas Stolper. This section is full of misinformation that must be addressed. Rabbi Stolper's opening statement contains a serious problem that plagues Judaism.

"If Christians merely believed that Jesus was their messiah, this belief would be of little concern to us as Jews. Their claim, however, is not that he is the Christian Messiah, but our Messiah, the Messiah of the Jews, the Messiah foretold by the Jewish Prophets. Christians then attempt to prove this belief by quoting our Bible."
(Kaplan page 51)

The problem that this statement reveals is that Judaism does not seem to recognize the responsibility that G-d has entrusted to the Jewish people. This responsibility is to be a "light to the nations". G-d did not entrust His Word (the Bible) to the Jewish people to keep to ourselves, but rather to teach the world G-d's Truth. The Bible never speaks about a messiah for Gentiles and another Messiah for only the Jews. There is One Messiah and He is for all people. Judaism's failure to accept this has driven a wedge between Jews and Gentiles.

The following is but one example of several statements that Rabbi Stolper made which grossly misrepresents the New Testament.

Statement- *"If Jesus was really the Messiah, why does the New Testament admit that all the rabbis of the time, **without one exception**, rejected his claim? Why was there not one man of learning, nor one prominent leader who accepted him?"*

This statement is a classic example of how the leaders of Judaism make bold claims that are evidence that the foremost Rabbis entrusted to speak on behalf of the most important Orthodox Jewish organization- the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregation of America—are totally uneducated in the New Testament. It is shocking that a Rabbi of the stature of Pinchas Stolper is unaware of a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus, who is called a "*ruler of the Jews*" (John 3:1) and a "Rabbi" (John 3:10) . Nicodemus believed in Jesus. As did Joseph of Arimathaea, who is called an "*honourable counselor*" (Mark 15:43) and a disciple (John 19:38). There was also Jairus (Yair in Hebrew), one of the rulers of the Synagogue, who believed in Jesus (Mark 5:22-43). Acts 6:7 speaks of a great company of priests (Cohenim) who believed. Although the great Rabbi Gamaliel is never presented in the New Testament as a believer in Jesus, he did allow for the possibility that Jesus might be the Messiah. He said this after Jesus' death (see Acts 5:34-39).

Conclusion: Rabbi Stolper's statement is without foundation