

"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Romans 11:5)

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The Questions that Some People Do Not Want Answered

by Galen Peterson

It is not uncommon for religious authorities to establish decrees and restrictions that make it easy for people to avoid having to do their own critical thinking. This is true in Judaism where the rabbis have added more stringent restrictions than what the Torah directly states. A restriction of this kind is called a *chumra*. The concept is based on a single commandment:

"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it" (Deut 22:8).

A parapet is a low wall that was built on the perimeter of flat roofs that would make it safer for people walking up there. The rabbis reinterpreted this practical instruction and said that a fence or a wall should be built around the Torah that would protect people from falling in a religious sense. They have been effective in making sure that those under their authority know what is expected in terms of behavior.

Behaving well is important.

And leaders should be watching over their flocks, providing guidance for everyone. But our greatest concern should be about people *thinking* well, so that by knowing the purity of God's message we can apply it in a responsible manner. It is the difference between legislating morality and being transformed inwardly, resulting in an outward result that is honoring to God.

The wall around the identity of the Messiah

Who is the Messiah?

Orthodox Jews tend to answer that question by saying "The Messiah hasn't come yet." But people in the Reform branch of Judaism often say: "It's not a *who*, it's a *what*." Instead of the Messiah being a person, it has been redefined as a metaphor for a coming age of peace and harmony."

The problem with that way of thinking is that it was never the intent of the biblical authors. And it was never interpreted by the people of biblical times in that

manner. There is no doubt that the Jewish people who lived back then understood the Messiah as being a very special person who would accomplish God's purposes. So what we are witnessing is a projection of a modern way of thinking back upon the time when the message was given.

If the Messiah is in fact a person, then what is his identity? That raises the second way that rabbinical authorities impact the thinking of their people. They know full well the implications. They know that there is only one legitimate candidate. That means the only two realistic answers are Yeshua (Jesus) or he hasn't come yet.

The problem is that Judaism never gives you the chance to evaluate the options objectively. The rabbis have built a fence around the Messiah that makes it difficult to reach the truth about Him. For example, there is a rabbinic curse on the study of the book of the prophet Daniel:

Blasted are the bones of those who calculate the End, for they used to

say, "Since the [time of the] End has arrived, but has not come, he will never come" (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97b).

The rationale behind the curse is that if you focus on the timing of events, and then end up waiting for them to occur, you will likely just give up and may even lose faith. But as we will see shortly, it is in the book of Daniel that we also find the timing of the Messiah's coming, and that points to Yeshua. The point is that Daniel is never read in the synagogue or taught anywhere by the rabbis, and in reality, it is never read by Jewish people in general.

Another act of rabbinic censorship has to do with the book of Isaiah. The *Haftarah* is the weekly reading from the prophets and historical books of the Old Testament that are read in addition to the *Torah* passages (the books of Moses). Over the course of the reading cycle for the year, the *Haftarah* portions cover Isaiah chapter . . . 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55. . .

Do you notice something missing? It's Isaiah 53. It is simply not read in the synagogue, which again generally means it is not read at all by most Jewish people. And that means that an incredible prophetic passage is completely cut out of their awareness and their thinking.

The rabbis have decided that it is in the best interests of the people not to have to consider certain portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. But, in reality, it is all about preventing people from finding answers to questions that they do not want to be asked. Does it not seem better for each of us to do critical thinking and decide for ourselves how these questions should be answered?

How are you with riddles?

Who has ascended into heaven

and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!

This is a quotation from Proverbs 30:4. The answer to each of the first four rhetorical questions is clearly God. He alone has sovereignty over the entire universe as described here. The answers to both parts of the last question are not given in this passage. But the proverb taunts the reader by saying "surely you know!" Isaiah 45:18 is one of many passages that answers the question, "What is His name?" by identifying Him as *YHWH* (the LORD).

Who is the Son of God?

What about His son's name? For many people, this is a question that they may know the expected answer, but are afraid to admit it. And so they ignore the question altogether. But if we want to know the truth for ourselves, we have to rely upon a trustworthy source, and that is the written Word of God, not the expanded and often burdensome opinions of religious authorities. One important passage in Scripture that answers this question is found in Isaiah 9:6. The prophet reveals:

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

When you read this verse plainly, a future son, a human being, would be born who has the attributes of God and is identified

directly as God Himself. And that understanding points directly to Yeshua, for He alone has that divine connection.

But because the rabbis do not want this verse to point to Yeshua, they have manipulated the text. The most popular English translation used by Jews is published by the Jewish Publication Society. For this verse, the original 1917 version simply transliterated the last part. So it reads:

"his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom."

Like most names, we really do not think about the underlying meaning. So for Jewish readers, this verse easily slips into the realm of having no idea what is being said. When the time came for a revision, the JPS opted for another tactic. The only revision (1985) translated all of the Hebrew terms into English. But then they went one step further. They added more words that are not actually in the original text:

For a child has been born to us, a son has been given us. And authority has settled on his shoulders. He has been named, "The Mighty God is planning grace; The Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler."

Here, they added the words "is planning grace" right after "The Mighty God." That turns the phrase into a descriptive name like Daniel—"God is my Judge" or Ezekiel—"God will strengthen. While that might appease most people who accept what they are reading as being accurate, it is simply a manipulation intended to prevent readers from considering the Messianic implications that point to Yeshua. But consider for yourself what the original text actually says.

שָׂר-שָׁלוֹם

Sar Shalom.

“Prince of

אֲבִיעֶד

Avi-ad,

“Everlasting

אֵל גִּבּוֹר

El Gibbor,

“Mighty

פֶּלֵא יוֹעֵץ

Pele Yoetz,

“Wonderful

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ

Va-yikra shmo

“And he shall

← read R to L

“is planning grace” is not in the original Hebrew as the JPS translation claims

That’s everything the verse says. The phrase “is planning grace” is not in the original Hebrew. So the translation by the most widely-used Jewish publisher is without merit.

In Biblical days, Jewish scholars understood this verse differently than their modern counterparts. We know this because of the writings called the Targums that were recorded during the second century B.C. These scholars had the responsibility of translating the Scriptures from Hebrew into Aramaic, which enabled the Jews who remained in Babylon/Persia to read biblical books. The Targum for Isaiah 9:6 clearly identified this passage as being Messianic by stating that the son was both the Messiah and God.

That is how this verse was interpreted over 100 years before the birth of Yeshua. It seems that the rabbis have changed their mind today and they disagree with their own people long ago, because their belief could only be fulfilled by Yeshua. But that is pure gamesmanship. The original Hebrew text is undeniably clear in declaring that the Son of God is the Messiah and the Mighty God at the same time.

Where would He come from?

The prophet Micah foretold where the Messiah would be born:

But as for you, Bethlehem

Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity (Mic 5:2).

Once again, the ancient scholars (*Targum Jonathan Micah 5:2*) confirmed the Messianic interpretation of this verse long before Yeshua was born.

Not only do we see that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, but He would be eternal in nature, which is an attribute of God alone and is consistent with Isaiah 9:6. Also, based on the current political situation, the prospect of a Jewish Messiah being born in Bethlehem is no longer a likely occurrence. One can readily conclude that the Messiah must have already been born in Bethlehem. And that can only be Yeshua.

When would He come?

Genesis 49:10 indicates that the tribe and kingdom of Judah would have a ruler continually until the one comes whom the rule ultimately belongs. Another way of saying that is when Judah finally loses its ruler, God’s true king will have arrived. The ancient Targums confirm this about the Messiah:

The transmission of dominion shall not cease from the house of

Judah, nor the scribe from his children’s children, forever, until the Messiah comes, to whom the Kingdom belongs, and whom nations will obey” (Targum Onkelos Genesis 49:10).

Historians like Josephus have shown in great detail that Judah had rulers for 1700 years, until Rome took that power away permanently in the year 6 A.D. Yeshua, who was most likely born between 6 and 4 B.C., would have been between nine and eleven years old at the time when Judah lost its power. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled exactly as it was stated—the Son of God was in fact born before 6 A.D.

The prophet Daniel revealed another aspect of the Messiah’s arrival. He records a message from the angel Gabriel, who declared:

“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” (Dan 9:25).

The context shows that these weeks are periods of seven years. The full time-period was divided into two phases:

- Seven weeks (49 years) representing the rebuilding phase of Jerusalem.
- Followed by 62 weeks of years for ordinary life in Israel.

The passage goes on to reveal:

Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off
(Dan 9:26).

The term “cut off” is a consistent Hebraic way of saying “killed.” In the great majority of passages in which the term is used, it refers to capital punishment. So that gives us a very precise indicator of the timing and nature of Messiah’s death. The following equation becomes apparent:

$62+7 = 69$ weeks of years

$69 \times 7 = 483$ years until the appearance and death of Messiah.

Since prophetic years were reckoned at 360 days each, 483 years totals 173,880 days altogether. The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued by the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus I in the month of Nisan in 445 B.C (Neh. 2:1-5). That date, then, is the starting point for the countdown until Messiah’s arrival and death. And if you move forward in time 173,880 days from the decree of Artaxerxes in the spring of 445 B.C., you come to a day that we now know as Palm Sunday in 33 A.D.

On that day, Yeshua arrived in Jerusalem. Five days later, He was

crucified at the exact same moment when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered. Thus this remarkable prophecy establishes with great accuracy the timing of the death of the Son of God—the Messiah.

Naturally, if there is a rabbinic curse on reading Daniel, most Jewish people will never have an opportunity to know about this very passage. So perhaps you can see the real purpose behind the curse. Moreover, the window of opportunity has passed. Both the time and the place of the Messiah’s arrival have come and gone. And they will never come again. But the good news is that these things and many more happened exactly as foretold.

What would He do?

The rabbinically censored 53rd chapter of Isaiah describes the ministry of the Messiah 700 years before it occurred. Consider this one verse out of many in the chapter:

He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isa 53:5).

This prophecy was given long

before the Romans created death by piercing called crucifixion. But the key here is to recognize that the Messiah would be pierced for the sins of *other* people, not for His own. That describes Yeshua perfectly. Can you think of that description fitting anyone else?

If you take the time to read the rest of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, you will see that it refers to the Messiah living again, even after death, and is now interceding for transgressors. That alone can only refer to Yeshua who rose from the grave and now intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father—right back at His place in eternal glory like Micah had shown (Rom 8:34; Heb 8:1). Altogether, we can see that the Son of God—the Messiah—would bring us salvation from our sins.

What does this mean for you?

There is much more that can be said, but the above questions are the most important ones that we all need to have answered. Become a dedicated reader of God’s Word so that you will know for yourself what is written for your benefit. Each and every one of us should be responsible for what we believe instead of taking for granted what others tell us or do not tell us. Your eternal future depends upon it.

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