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SEVEN SECRETS OF THE

REAL MESSIAH

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WORD TO THE READER

The little book you are reading could change your perspective about God, change your understanding about the Messiah, and change the course of the rest of your life.

In the chapters that follow, you will discover secrets about the identity of the Messiah, secrets that are found in the pages of the Tanakh – our Jewish Scriptures – and secrets that are also illuminated in the rabbinic writings.

You will learn:

- How the Messiah reveals the image of the invisible God

- How the sufferings of the Messiah relate to the pains and sufferings of Israel
- How the traditional Jewish teaching of the atoning power of the death of the righteous explains the Messiah's death (but the story doesn't end there!)
- How the Messiah is not only a royal figure but a priestly one as well, a priestly King
- How the Messiah is a prophet like Moses, and yet even greater
- How an important Talmudic teaching about 6,000 years of chaos, then Torah, then Mes-

siah, relate to the timing of the Messiah's coming

- How God has hidden His wisdom about the Messiah in plain sight, but in the most unlikely place

Are you ready to uncover these secrets?

Why not pray a short prayer, asking God to open your eyes so that you will discover wonders in His teaching, also asking Him to help you to follow Him and His words, wherever they will lead?

And please let us know if we can help you in your journey by contacting us at (704) 782-3760.

All the secrets here are taken from a longer book that we'll tell you about as you read the pages that follow, but for now, it's time to get started.

So, turn the page, and let the journey begin.

THE SECRET OF THE INVISIBLE GOD WHO CAN BE SEEN

Is it possible for Jews to believe that Jesus is God? It depends on what is meant by this question.

It is not possible for Jews to believe that God could cease to be God by taking a human form and for them to believe that in seeing Jesus, people literally saw God in His very essence. It is possible, however, for Jews to believe that God is capable of remaining in heaven while revealing Himself in the “tent” of a human body.

If God has actually done this, it would explain some of the mysterious passages

in the Tanakh, and it could even relate closely to some rabbinic ideas.

In a midrash to Psalm 91, when Moses realized that the tabernacle could not contain the fullness of God, the Lord proclaims, “The entire world cannot contain My glory, yet when I wish, I can concentrate My entire essence into one small spot. Indeed, I am Most High, yet I sit in a [limited] refuge” (*ArtScroll Siddur*, 380-381).

Before explaining how God can make Himself visible, let us look at what the Hebrew Scriptures have to say about the possibility of seeing God. In Exodus, God tells Moses that “no one can see Me and live” (Exod. 33:20), but it is written in Exodus 24,

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 of Israel's elders, and they saw the God of Israel. . . . God did not harm the Israelite nobles; they saw Him, and they ate and drank.
(Exod. 24:9-11, CSB)

How is this possible? Abraham Ibn Ezra thought that the elders saw God in a prophetic vision. This interpretation is problematic however, since the text would not have mentioned that God did not harm (literally, raise His hand against) them. If it was just a vision, why explain that God did not strike them for seeing a vision? It appears that they really saw the God of Israel, but how?

There are numerous appearances of

“the angel of the LORD” in the Hebrew Scriptures in which the people who see Him fear for their lives because they have “seen God” (see Exod. 3:1-6; Judg. 13:15-23). Does this imply a real divine appearance?

Even more telling is Genesis 18, which explains that the Lord (Hebrew, YHWH) appeared to Abraham and conversed with him and Sarah (Gen. 18:1-2a). There were three men – according to the Talmud, angels – who appeared to Abraham.

But the Talmud also says that Abraham “saw the Holy One, blessed be He, standing at the door of his tent” (b. Baba Mesia 86b). Abraham and Sarah dined with the LORD, who stayed with them while the two angels went to Sodom (cf.

Gen. 18:22, 18:33-19:1). According to this account, one of the three men was YHWH. This text refers to Him having dusty feet (Gen. 18:4), sitting down, eating, and talking, yet all the while He remained the Lord of heaven and earth, which means that God has the ability to appear on earth in human form while remaining enthroned above.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, which speaks of God visiting us and living among us in the person of Yeshua the Messiah, is nothing other than the most thorough explanation of the many theophanies (meaning, divine appearances) of YHWH in the Hebrew Scriptures. While Maimonides stated that God has no form (see Deut. 4:12-28), there are passages in the Tanakh which state that

God does have a form (see Num. 12:8 and Ps. 17:15).

The fact is that the ancient rabbis also dealt with the question of how the invisible God could interact with human beings, using the Aramaic term *Memra'*, which means "the word" to personify God. In other words, God's "word" is depicted as an extension of Himself, performing His divine will (see Ps. 107:20 and Isa. 55:10-12), with the most dramatic example found in the creation account, in which God created all things by speaking.

The Aramaic Targums further developed this concept of the divine *Memra'*, often speaking of "the word of the Lord" rather than "the Lord Himself." Compare the following examples in which the scrip-

tural passage comes first and the Targum (the Aramaic translation of the ancient rabbis) follows:

Gen. 1:27 God created man

The Word of the LORD
created man (Targum
Pseudo-Jonathan)

Num. 10:35 Rise up, O LORD!

Rise up, O Word of the
LORD!

Isa. 45:17 Israel will be saved by
the LORD

Israel will be saved by
the Word of the LORD

Perhaps most interesting is the Targum's rendition of Genesis 28:20-21. Whereas the Hebrew reads, "If *God* will be with me . . . then *the Lord will be my God*," the Targum reads, "If the *Word of the Lord* will be with me . . . then *the Word of the Lord will be my God*." We have to keep in mind that these words echoed in the ears of those who attended the synagogues over the centuries; they heard over and over again that Jacob's God was the Word of the Lord!

If we were to go to the beginning of the Gospel of John and substitute *Memra'* for "word," we would get the following text: "In the beginning was the *Memra'*, and the *Memra'* was with God, and the *Memra'* was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things

were made” (John 1:1-3). This is sounding quite Jewish! The main difference is that while the manifestations of God in the Hebrew Scriptures occurred episodically, being few and far between and only lasting briefly, the miracle of God’s self-disclosure in Yeshua is that this manifestation lasted for thirty-three years.

The Gospel of John goes further, saying, “The *Memra*’ became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory of the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, adapted from the CSB). The Greek phrase for “made His dwelling among us” literally means “to pitch a tent” or “to tabernacle.” Just as YHWH pitched his tent in Israel (i.e. the tent of meeting), so too has His tent been

pitched among us in the person of Yeshua. What an incredible act of divine condescension, and yet at the same time, He filled the universe with His presence. The word John uses in his Gospel for *Memra*' is *logos*, a Jewish Greek concept that was described in detail by Philo. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, p. 423, Philo used the idea of the *logos*

to bridge the gap between the transcendent God of Judaism and the divine principle experienced by human beings. This view of the Logos as a mediating principle between God and creation could link up with . . . the concept of *meimra* (Aram.; "word") in Targum literature (especially as it appears in Targum Onkelos).

One might ask, “Doesn’t this violate the *Shema*, which declares God’s unity?”

That is a terrific question, since this is a fundamental concept of Judaism. But there is absolutely no violation of our profession of faith in the *Shema*, since the word *’echad* denotes oneness, not absolute unity.

Interestingly, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), perhaps the most influential rabbi of the modern era, makes this striking point:

Echad means ‘one’ . . . But is *echad* the ideal word to express the divine unity? Like its English equivalent, the word does not preclude the existence of other objects . . . nor does it preclude its object being composed of parts.

(Cited from “The Numerology of Redemption”)

The oneness the *Shema* speaks of is like the oneness of night and day (Gen. 1:5), the oneness of man and woman who have become one flesh (Gen. 2:24), or the unity of the assortment of various pieces coming together to form the Tabernacle (Exod. 36:13). God’s oneness is similar to these types of unity. In the centuries after Yeshua manifested Himself to Israel, Christian theologians recognized this complex unity in God, calling Him a trinity, i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but this concept does not speak of three gods. Rather, it speaks of God in His complex unity.

The Shekhinah

Another rabbinic concept that helps make sense of the interval between God as He is in Himself and God as He appears to human beings is the *shekhinah*, God's earthly presence.

Professor Benjamin Sommer of Jewish Theological Seminary notes that, "God is the same as the *shekhinah*, but the *shekhinah* does not exhaust God, so one can refer easily to 'God' and subsequently to 'God and the *shekhinah*'" (*The Bodies of God*, 254, n. 21). This reminds me of a conversation I once had with a conservative rabbi who noted that, based on my explanation of the New Testament texts, Yeshua was like a "walking *shekhinah*." Exactly!

Professor Sommer, who is not a believer in Jesus as Messiah in any way, also had

this to say: “[T]he theological model Christianity employs when it avows belief in a God who has an earthly body as well as a Holy Spirit and a heavenly manifestation . . . is a perfectly Jewish one” (*The Bodies of God*, 135). In other words, the Christian view of God as triune is in harmony with Jewish thought. And I remind you that Dr. Sommer is not a Christian.

This helps us to understand texts like Isaiah 9:6, which is found in the middle of a Messianic prophecy where the promised child is called *'el gibbor*, Mighty God. The best explanation for this verse is that it refers to Yeshua, who is God incarnate, the Divine Son pitching His tent among us, while His heavenly Father remained enthroned in heaven. This is the teaching of our own Hebrew Scriptures.

An Extraordinary Divine Mystery

It is important to note that the New Testament never says that God became a human being. According to John, “No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us” (John 1:18, NLT). That’s why Jesus could say to His Jewish listeners, “Very truly I tell you . . . before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58, NIV), thereby associating Himself with YHWH. This is why Thomas, one of Yeshua’s disciples, could say to Him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Jesus Himself is the *shekhinah* of the invisible God, and whoever sees Him sees the Father.

And so, this doctrine is essentially Jewish, and contains no trace of idolatry.

What a profound mystery!

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 125-138.

THE SECRET OF THE SUFFERING MESSIAH

There is a teaching in the Talmud that there will be two Messiahs, the Messiah son of Joseph [or son of Ephraim] and the Messiah son of David. While rabbinic texts speak of the suffering of both, it is the Messiah son of Joseph who is most often seen as the suffering Messiah, being destined to die in battle before he is raised from the dead by the Messiah son of David (see b. Sukkah 52a).

Raphael Patai, an eminent Jewish anthropologist, wrote a chapter on the “Suffering Messiah” in *The Messiah Texts*. This work includes texts that can be found in

the most important genres of rabbinic literature, including the Talmud, midrash, and medieval and modern biblical commentaries. In the following passage, Patai summarizes some of the most significant rabbinic doctrines concerning the sufferings of the Messiah:

According to one of the . . . Messiah legends, God gave [the Messiah] the choice of whether or not to accept the sufferings for the sins of Israel. And the Messiah answered: "I accept it with joy, so that not a single soul of Israel should perish." . . . In the later, Zoharic [i.e., mystical] formulation of this legend, the Messiah himself summons all the diseases, pains, and sufferings of Israel to come upon him, in

order thus to ease the anguish of Israel, which otherwise would be unbearable. (*Messiah Texts*, 104)

Patai also cites a passage from the Zohar (the foundation of Jewish mysticism) that describes the Messiah's sufferings and references Isaiah 53:5:

In the hour in which they [i.e. the souls of the righteous sufferers] tell the Messiah about the sufferings of Israel in exile, and [about] the sinful among them who seek not the knowledge of their Master, the Messiah lifts up his voice and weeps over those sinful among them. This is what is written, *He was wounded because of our transgressions, he was*

crushed because of our iniquities
(Isa. 53:5). (Zohar 2:212a, in
Messiah Texts, 116)

How interesting! The text that the “missionaries” use so often is actually attributed to the Messiah by the Zohar, a work of Jewish mysticism.

In a passage from the Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi finds the Messiah sitting outside the gate of the city, unwinding and rewinding the bandages of his wounds. He asks the Messiah when he will come, and he replies that he will come that day. Later, it is explained to Rabbi Yehoshua by another rabbi that this is what Elijah meant: “Today, if you but hearken to his voice” (Ps. 95:7; b. Sanhedrin 98a).

This idea of the suffering Messiah comes from the Hebrew Bible, especially from Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Might Yeshua be the one this prophecy describes?

Consider Psalm 22, which seems to describe in remarkable detail the crucifixion and resurrection of the rabbi from Nazareth. This psalm (Ps. 22:7, 13-18, NIV) contains the following verses:

- “All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.”
- “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.”
- “Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled

me, they have pierced my hands
and my feet.”

- “I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.”
- “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”

At the end of the psalm, the psalmist sings a song of praise to God for deliverance:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD. All the families of the nations will bow down before You, for kingship belongs to the LORD; He rules over the nations. All who

prosper on earth will eat and bow down; all those who go down to the dust will kneel before Him — even the one who cannot preserve his life. Their descendants will serve Him; the next generation will be told about the Lord. They will come and tell a people yet to be born about His righteousness — what He has done.
(Ps. 22:27-31, CSB)

What a magnificent conclusion to such terrible suffering!

Not surprisingly, the writers of the New Testament saw in this psalm an extremely accurate depiction of the sufferings and triumph of Yeshua. But it is not only the New Testament authors who

attributed Psalm 22 to the Messiah. The Pesikta Rabbati, an 8th-9th century midrash, also references this psalm when speaking of the Messiah, stating in chapter 36 that when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spoke to Ephraim, the Messiah, they said that because he had suffered on behalf of their children, he was greater than they were.

It is no secret, therefore, that the Messiah is destined to suffer for the sins of His people, and this concept was not invented by Christians. Instead, its origins can be traced to the Hebrew Scriptures, with some parallels in the rabbinic writings.

But only Yeshua fulfills these prophecies, suffering willingly for the nation of

Israel and bearing our guilt on His own shoulders. He is the only one who experienced such horrors so as to atone for our sins, and He is the only one who was subsequently glorified by being raised from the dead and being seated at the right hand of God the Father, which is referred to in our Tanakh as well as in Psalm 110.

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 139-148.

THE SECRET OF THE ATONING POWER OF THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Traditional Judaism believes in the atoning power of the death of the righteous. The Orthodox Jewish historian Rabbi Berel Wein describes the attitude of the Jewish people who suffered atrocities in the seventeenth century as follows:

Jews nurtured this classic idea of death as an atonement . . . the betterment of Israel and humankind somehow was advanced by their “stretching their neck to be slaughtered” . . . This spirit of the

Jews is truly reflected in the historical chronicle of the time:

“. . . he whom God loves will be chastised. For since the day the Holy Temple was destroyed, the righteous are seized by death for the iniquities of the generation.” (*Yeven Metzulah*, end of Chapter 15, quoted in Wein, *The Triumph of Survival*, 14)

Notice how *Yeven Metzulah* connects the atoning powers of the death of the righteous to the destruction of the Temple. Now that there are no longer Temple sacrifices, the righteous die on behalf of the people.

According to the Talmud, “the death of the righteous atones” (*mitatan shel tsad-*

diqim mekapperet). Most notably, the rabbis interpret the deaths of Miriam and Aaron in this light, explaining that the death of the righteous atones (see b. Mo‘ed Qatan 28a).

The Zohar also supports this idea of the atoning power of the righteous with reference to Isaiah 53:

The children of the world are members of one another, and when the Holy One desires to give healing to the world, He smites one just man amongst them . . . Whence do we learn this? From the saying, “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities” [Isa. 53:5] . . . In general a just person is only smitten in order to

procure healing and atonement
for a whole generation. (Cited in
Driver-Neubauer, 2:15)

This message, i.e. that a godly person can suffer so as to atone for the sins of others, is central to the gospel message. Who could be holier and more righteous than the Messiah? His sacrifice has brought about freedom from transgressions. Although we deserved death, He became a source of life for all who believe. This Christian message is thoroughly biblical and thoroughly Jewish.

Consider Solomon Schechter's assessment of the Talmud's teaching on the suffering of the righteous and atonement:

The atonement of suffering and

death is not limited to the suffering person. The atoning effect extends to all the generation. This is especially the case with such sufferers as cannot either by reason of their righteous life or by their youth possibly have merited the afflictions which have come upon them. (*Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 310-311)

This teaching of the Talmud is supplemented by the following prayer in Fourth Maccabees (written somewhere between 100 BCE – 100 CE): “Cause our chastisement to be an expiation for them. Make my blood their purification and take my soul as a ransom for their souls” (4 Maccabees 6:28-29). And there are top scholars who argue that this idea

of the atoning power of righteous martyrs goes back to the Akedah, the sacrifice of Isaac; as it is written in Fourth Maccabees, “Isaac offered himself for the sake of righteousness. . . . Isaac did not shrink when he saw the knife lifted against him by his father’s hand” (4 Maccabees 13:12; 16:20).

The rabbis believed that Isaac was thirty-seven years old when Abraham was called by God to offer him up on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22), making Isaac the greater hero in the event, since he did not resist his father’s actions. In one midrashic account of creation, God describes to the angels the significance of man in the following words: “You shall see a father slay his son, and the son consenting to be slain, to sanctify my Name”

(Tanhuma, Vayyera, sec. 18). Another midrash even compares Isaac – who carried the wood for the offering on his shoulder – to “one who carries his cross on his own shoulder” (see Genesis Rabbah 56:3). Of course, Isaac was not ultimately sacrificed, but despite this, the rabbis teach that “Scripture credits Isaac with having died and his ashes having lain upon the altar” (Midrash HaGadol on Gen. 22:19), and God is seen as having accepted Isaac’s sacrifice “as though [the ashes of Isaac] were piled upon the altar” (Sifra, 102c; b. Ta’anit 16a). In keeping with the doctrine that there can be no atonement without blood having been shed, the rabbis maintain that Isaac in fact shed his blood (see Mekhilta d’Rashbi, p. 4; Tanh. Vayerra, sec. 23).

The binding of Isaac is commemorated by Jews throughout the generations, to this very day. The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, an early midrash, comments on the blood that was applied to the door frames in Exodus 12:13, blood which caused the angel of death to pass over the Hebrews and spare their firstborn sons. The midrash states: “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you’ – I see the blood of the Binding of Isaac” (I, 57), meaning that it was not the blood of the sacrificial lambs that God saw but rather the “blood” of Isaac. There is even a Jewish prayer that is still recited in an additional service for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which says: “Remember today the Binding of Isaac with mercy to his descendants.”

How powerful this is in the memory of the Jewish people, and how clearly it points to the atoning power of the death of the righteous. But whereas Isaac was not perfectly righteous and didn't actually die on Mount Moriah, Yeshua our Messiah was perfectly righteous and did die on our behalf.

There's also a fascinating insight we can glean from the book of Numbers regarding the atoning power of the death of the high priest. The Torah teaches that bloodshed pollutes the land and the only acceptable payment for this bloodshed is the blood of the one who shed it. But what if a man killed someone accidentally and unintentionally? Then he could flee from his avengers and live in a city of refuge until his death or until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:28).

What, then, would pay for the shedding of the blood? Was it his time in exile, or was it the death of the high priest? The Talmud states, “It is not the exile that expiates, but the death of the high priest” (m. Makkot 2:6; b. Makkot 11b; see also Leviticus Rabbah 10:6).

The death of the high priest, the spiritual leader of the people of Israel, atones for the accidental homicide, functioning as a substitute for the death of the one who unwittingly killed another person. The high priest, the individual called to be closest to God in the nation of Israel, intercedes on behalf of the people not only through his prayers, but also through his death! In a similar way, some of the ancient rabbis declared, “Behold, I am the atonement of Israel” (Mekhilta 2a; m. Negaim 2:1 in Schechter, 311).

If, according to rabbinic tradition, the high priests, the godly rabbis, the holy martyrs, and the righteous of Israel are able to atone for the sin of their generation, does it not make sense that the Messiah, who is our greatest leader and the only perfectly holy martyr, would make atonement for the nation?

Yeshua, the Messiah, is our great high priest! He is our atonement!

This doctrine is not something invented by Christians, but is an idea that has its basis in our ancient tradition and in the Hebrew Scriptures.

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 149-158.

THE SECRET OF THE PRIESTLY MESSIAH

The royal Messianic prophecies which speak of King Messiah ruling and reigning on the earth, destroying the wicked and establishing God's righteous kingdom, are widely accepted by Jews and Christians, but what about those prophecies which speak of a righteous servant suffering and being put to death? In what sense are those prophecies Messianic? They are Messianic because they are priestly, and the Messiah is a priestly King.

The authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls believed that there would be two Messianic figures, one royal and one priestly.

These two figures were spoken of in the Hebrew Bible, but in rabbinic Judaism, there is virtually no reference to a priestly Messiah.

Psalm 110:4 sheds light on the priestly role of the Messiah, stating, “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek’” (Ps. 110:4, NIV). And this is addressed to the Davidic king, meaning that the king is called a priest. But Davidic kings came from the tribe of Judah whereas the priests descended from Aaron and the tribe of Levi. How is this possible?

The answer is found in the life of King David, since David himself performed priestly functions (see, for example, 2

Sam. 24:25, where he offers sacrifices, or 2 Sam. 6:14, where he wears the linen ephod, which priests wore). The Tana-kh even states his sons were priests (2 Sam. 8:17; the Hebrew is *kohanim*, the standard word for priests). We see then that David, who was a prototype of the Messiah, was also a king who performed priestly functions.

We gain more insight from the book of Zechariah, where God addresses the high priest Joshua and says, “Hearken well, O High Priest Joshua, you and your fellow priests sitting before you! For those men are a sign that I am going to bring My servant the Branch” (NJV). It is well known that “the Branch” is another name for the Messiah. Keep this in mind as we look at another verse from the same book.

Zechariah 6:11-13 reads,

[M]ake a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua . . . the high priest. And say to him, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne.’” (ESV)

A crown is placed on the head of Joshua, the high priest, he is called the Branch, and it is prophesied that this man will “rule on his throne.” Joshua, therefore,

becomes a Messianic symbol. Whereas David was a prototype of the priestly king, Joshua was a prototype of the royal priest. What is more, the name of the high priest Joshua (*yehoshua* in Hebrew) is often shortened to Yeshua!

The Jewish rabbi from Nazareth, Yeshua, who was also called the son of David, made atonement for our sins and interceded for sinners, thereby doing the work of a priest. Of course, He is our royal Messiah, born King of the Jews and being crucified as King of the Jews (see Matt. 2:2; 27:37), but before establishing His kingdom, He had to atone for sin.

This is how the letter to the Hebrews describes Yeshua's priestly ministry:

[I]f sprinkling ceremonially unclean persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer restores their outward purity [according to Torah ritual]; then how much more the blood of the Messiah, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God as a sacrifice without blemish, will purify our conscience from works that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God! (Heb. 9:13-14, CJB)

What a remarkable high priest we have!

The Talmud and rabbinic writings, with all their beauty and wisdom, have missed this truth, and the Jews who wrote the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls, who were

waiting for two Messiahs, were wrong. There is only one Messiah, and He is simultaneously priest and king. The New Testament accurately conveys this truth which is supported by the Hebrew Bible. Yeshua is our priestly King!

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 159-163.

THE SECRET OF THE PROPHET GREATER THAN MOSES

Before entering the Promised Land, Israel faced a conundrum. While Moses was able to see the Promised Land, he could not go with Israel, but had to see the land from Mt. Nebo. What were the Israelites to do without their beloved leader? Moses promised them, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (Deut. 18:15; cf. Deut. 18:18). Yet, we find the following words at the end of Deuteronomy:

Since then, *no prophet has ris-*

en in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt . . . no one has ever . . . performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (Deut. 34:10-12, NIV; emphasis mine)

The rabbis teach that there will never be another prophet on the same level as Moses; instead, they believe that there will be a prophet (or a series of prophets) who will do what Moses did, i.e. serve as God's mouthpiece. This is the teaching of Maimonides, who states in the seventh of the Thirteen Principles that Moses "was on a qualitatively different level than any other." This assessment, though

traditional, is incorrect. This becomes clear when we compare the promise that God would raise up a prophet like Moses with the statement at the end of Deuteronomy that no prophet like Moses had been seen in Israel since his passing.

We already pointed out that the Jewish authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls were expecting a priestly Messiah and a royal Messiah. But these Jews, who lived immediately before and after the time of Yeshua, also expected the rise of a great prophet like Moses. We find written in the Community Rule, "They shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the Community were first instructed until *there shall*

come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (1 QS 9:11).

By the time Jesus came on the scene, there was a great expectation among the people for the Prophet to come (see John 1:21; 6:14). This was not some fabricated expectation; instead, it was a hope firmly rooted in the Hebrew Bible.

In fact, Scripture holds that the Messiah will have a greater stature than Moses, and this is reflected in a midrash on Isaiah 52:13, which states, "See, My servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." The midrash states,

"Who art thou, O great mountain?" (Zech. iv.7) This refers to the King Messiah. And why does

he call him ‘the great mountain?’ because he is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, ‘My servant shall be high, and lifted up, and lofty exceedingly’ – he will be higher than Abraham, . . . lifted up above Moses . . . loftier than the ministering angels.” (Yalqut Shim’oni, 2:571)

Indeed, Yeshua, our royal and priestly Messiah, is the Prophet like Moses but even greater, the one our forefathers waited for, who sums up in Himself all the hopes of the nation of Israel.

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 165-170.

THE SECRET OF THE 6,000 YEARS

There is a well-known passage in the Talmud which states,

The world will exist six thousand years. Two thousand years of desolation [meaning from Adam to Abraham]; two thousand years of Torah [meaning from Abraham to somewhere around the beginning of the Common Era]; and two thousand years of the Messianic era [roughly the last two thousand years!]; but because our iniquities were many, all this has been lost [i.e., the Messiah

did not come at the expected time]. (Sanhedrin 97a-b)

Remarkably, this tradition maintains that the Messiah's scheduled time of arrival was nearly 2,000 years ago.

When interpreting this text, traditional Jews follow Rashi's dating, which puts the Messiah's anticipated arrival time at approximately 250 CE; however, this dating is based on a rabbinic chronological error of more than 175 years. Recalibrating Rashi's dating by nearly 180 years yields a very surprising result: the Messiah was supposed to come in the same century as Yeshua came!

The Vilna Gaon, the most eminent rabbinic scholar of the 18th century, has a

fascinating interpretation of a story in the Talmud in which Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah was tested by the elders of Athens at the beginning of the 2nd century CE. The Greeks inquired, “Where is the midpoint of the world?”

According to the Gaon, by asking this question the elders were criticizing the Jews since their very traditions held that the Messiah would come “between . . . the eras of Torah and Mashiach,” but since, in the Greeks’ eyes, the Jews had not yet experienced redemption, the midpoint of the world had “passed [the Jews] by forever” (As rendered by Aharon Feldman, *The Juggler and the King*, 146).

Unperturbed, Rabbi Yehoshua lifted up

his finger and replied, “Here [is the midpoint of the world]”!

According to the Gaon, while the elders were aware of this Talmudic tradition, they were ignorant of another tradition, which maintains that “[the Messiah] will not come until all the government has turned to heresy” (Sanhedrin 97a), which means that before the arrival of the Messiah, there would be a universal turning away from God. The Gaon explains that when Rabbi Yehoshua lifted his finger and replied, “Here!” he was claiming that God had already set in motion the events that would lead to the Messiah’s arrival.

For the Gaon, the Messianic era was inaugurated roughly 1,800 years ago. In the Gaon’s view, however, it is only

when the human race “convert[s] back into a true human, a God-like being filled with wisdom, love, kindness, and an exalted spirit” that “Mashiach will finally come” (*The Juggler and the King*, 149-150). But our view and the view of the Gaon differ in two key ways: (1) While the Gaon interprets the present as an age of escalating apostasy, we see it as an era of enlightenment and gradually increasing awareness of the true identity of the Messiah in the midst of apostasy; (2) The Gaon believed that the Messianic era came but the Messiah did not, whereas we believe that the Messianic era came and that the coming of the Messiah was the event that inaugurated this age (cf. Silver, who has a similar view to the Gaon’s). Which of these positions do you think makes more sense?

Because of the intense Messianic expectation in the first century CE and the disappointment brought about by the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, along with the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt in 135 CE, some rabbis concluded that although the Messianic age had been inaugurated, it would be several centuries before the Messiah would actually come in person to save his people.

Could it be that the Messiah has come and inaugurated the first stage of the Messianic era, a great period of world transition, but that we have failed to recognize His coming?

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 171-177.

THE SECRET OF THE HIDDEN WISDOM

Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, is receiving a lot of attention today since so many people are searching for spiritual enlightenment. Many of these people believe that Christianity is an antiquated and spiritually impotent religion, and that on the whole, Christians and Messianic Jews are rather shallow people.

Could this be a great misconception? Could it be that the good news about the Messiah (called “the gospel”) is far deeper than we might recognize at first glance?

We know that Jesus often spoke in parables. When asked why, he explained to

His disciples, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’” (Mark 4:11-12, NIV, quoting from Isa. 6:10).

What does Yeshua mean by “the secret of the kingdom of God”? In another passage, He thanks the Father with the words, “I praise you, Father . . . because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure” (Matt. 11:25). True wisdom is revealed to the humble and the lowly, who look to God rather than to their own wisdom.

Paul also speaks about this secret wisdom, describing it as “God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began” (1 Cor. 2:7, NIV). What is this secret wisdom?

God had a wise plan from the beginning of time to gather the Jews and Gentiles together into one community through the death of the Messiah (cf. Eph. 3:8-10). But God’s wisdom is hidden in plain sight, and it is up to us to be able to discover it, as Solomon urges us in Proverbs, “if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:4-5).

And here is the great discovery, the deep secret that has been hidden from many Jewish eyes for centuries. God's ultimate wisdom is not found in Kabbalah, or in some dense philosophical texts, or in some other religion, like Hinduism and Buddhism, which attract so many secular Jews.

No. God has hidden His wisdom in plain sight, in the lowly carpenter from Nazareth, the crucified Jew, rejected by our people. He is Yeshua, our Messiah, in whom "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3, NIV).

Take another look at Yeshua, and read about what He said and did in the New Covenant Writings. What you discover there will change your life.

For the full secret, see *The Real Kosher Jesus*, pp. 179-182.

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