

WINNING JEWS TO CHRIST

A Handbook to Aid Christians in their Approach to the Jews

by

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHRISTIANITY IS COMPLETED JUDAISM

We have seen that the two main objections of the Jews * against Christianity have been:

- (1) That Jesus was not the Messiah of whom the Torah (Old Testament) spoke and whom the Jews expected to fulfill the ancient prophecies
- (2) That the dogmas of Christianity are contrary to those of Judaism.

*** We mean those Jews who speak as Jews. The contentions and objections of liberal Jews and the like are not Jewish (from a Jewish standpoint) but are common to liberal Gentiles and should be dealt with as with Gentiles.**

They maintain that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of the Messiah are pure idolatry, and in contradiction to the Jewish belief in One God. To these objections, as well as to others, such as the “Virgin Birth,” “Original Sin,” “Vicarious Atonement,” there is but one answer: Christianity not only does not oppose basic Judaism but it is Judaism itself fulfilled.

We can show the Jew that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah because in Him all prophecies regarding the Messiah were fulfilled, although some individuals or groups of Jews may have expected something else. We can show him that those doctrines which are now known as “Christian Doctrines” are typically Jewish. Like Philip (John 1:45) we can tell the Jew: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” *Jesus, the Messiah (Jeshuah Hamashiach) in the Old Testament.*

The portrait of Jesus as the promised Saviour is clearly outlined in the Torah from its first book to its last. Already in Eden after the fall of Adam God promised that the seed of the woman would ultimately crush the head of the Serpent, Satan (Genesis 3:15), and thus bring about the redemption of fallen humanity. Till that time Satan had many a chance to “bruise mankind.”

Thus already during the time of Noah the human race had become so degraded and corrupt that God had to destroy it by the flood. He saved only God-fearing Noah and his family. Humanity fell more and more away from its creator, yet He would no longer destroy His handiwork so He called Abraham out of his corrupt surroundings to train him and his descendants to be a people who would be a blessing to all mankind (Genesis 12:1-3).

This was the birth of the “Covenant” between God and the Jewish people, the covenant which the Jews, as frail human beings, have often violated but which God the Almighty, all merciful, unchangeable has repeatedly ratified. This seed of Abraham that was to become a blessing and salvation to the world, was begun in Isaac; as Jesus later, he, too, had a miraculous birth, since Sarah could not naturally bear a child (Genesis 17:15-19; and Genesis 21:12).

Isaac so loved God that he was ready to be sacrificed to Him. The Covenant was later confirmed with Jacob and his seed — not with Esau (Genesis 28:13, 14). Of Jacob’s descendants, the twelve tribes, the tribe of Judah was distinguished as the kingly line through whom the Messiah would come (Genesis 49:8, 10). Of this royal family came David and later, at the appointed time, Jesus, the “**Son of David.**” In the previous chapter we have given a list of prophecies which tell the life story of Jesus in the Old Testament.

Many of the rabbis, in their antagonism to Christianity or in their zeal to preserve their particular kind of Judaism, have applied these passages to others rather than to the Messiah. But it is easy to show how wrong they were. Indeed, many Jewish authorities of highest standing clearly and boldly taught that they refer to the Messiah, and these have been generally recognized by the Jews.

Jewish Exegetes Conform with Christian Interpretation:

Let us cite here a few of these controversial passages: The “Seed of the Woman” that shall bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) is, according to Christian belief, the Messiah who would destroy the power of Satan. Many Rabbis deny that, but the ancient, most authoritative Jewish exegetes and expositors of the Bible such as the Targums, the Midrashim and others, plainly taught that this “seed” is the Messiah.

“And I will put enmity between thee and the *woman*, and between the seed of thy sons, and between the seed of her sons: and it shall be when the sons of the *woman* keep the commandments of the *law*, they will be prepared to smite thee on thy head; but if they forsake the commandments of the *law*, thou wilt be prepared to wound them in the heel. Nevertheless for them there shall be a *medicine*: and they shall make a *remedy* for the heel in the days of the *King Messiah*” (Targum Jerusalem).

“As thou wentest forth for the salvation of the people by the hands of the Mashiach, the Son of David, who shall wound Satan who is the head, the King and Prince of the house of the wicked, and shall raze up (overturn) all his strength, power, policy and dominion” (R. David Kimchi).

“As the incarnation of evil Satan is the archenemy of the Messiah: he is antichrist. The light which was created before the world, was hidden by God beneath his throne; and to the question of Satan in regard to it God answered: ‘This light is kept for Him who shall bring thee to shame.’ At his request God showed Satan the Messiah; and when he saw Him, he trembled, fell upon his face, and cried: ‘Verily this is the Messiah, who shall hurl (bruise) me, and all the princes of the angels of the peoples down even into hell’ (Pesikta Rab. 3:6, ed. Friedmann, p. 161, b).

“This is that seed that is coming from another place, And who is this? This is the *King Messiah*” (Ber. Rabbah, 51, ed. Wars, p. 95, a, on Genesis 19:23).

When Eve bore her first son she called him Cain and said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord” (that is what the name means). This verse may be translated variously: “I have obtained a man-God.” According to the ancient Rabbis (in Midrash) Eve thought this son was the “seed,” the Messiah who would defeat Satan.

The “seed” of Abraham (Genesis 22:18) is also applied to the Messiah by the ancient Rabbis. This was also their interpretation of the “seed” of Jacob in Genesis 28:14 (John 8:56-58; and Hebrews 2:16).

Of the “**star out of Jacob**” (Numbers 24:17) the Jerusalem Targum says: “When the mighty King of Jacob’s house shall reign and the Messiah the Power-Sceptre of Israel be anointed He shall slay the Princes of Moab. From them their King shall arise and their Redeemer be of them.”

The Princes of Moab here are symbols of the power of Satan. Remember what havoc they have wrought in Israel (see Numbers 25:1-19). Other books which are most sacred to the Jewish people also declare that this “*Star of Jacob*” refers to the Messiah. So Targum, Onkelos, Pesikta, the Sohar, Debarim, Rabbah and others, The Pesikta, for instance, says: “Our Rabbis have a tradition that in the week in which the Messiah will be born there will be a bright Star in the east, which is the ‘Star of the Messiah.’” *

*** In this connection you may quote Matthew 2:2, 9 and Revelation 22:18.**

Shiloh:

A very important passage is Genesis 49:10: “**The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a Law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come.**”

Christians understand that Shiloh here refers to Messiah, and they justly argue, if Jesus was not the Messiah, who was? He must have come before the Sceptre departed from Judah. To refute this argument some modern Rabbis assert that Shiloh does not refer to Messiah but to a certain place called Shiloh.

However, the ancient Jewish expositors and commentaries understand it as referring to Messiah. For instance, Jerusalem Targum, says: “**Kings shall not cease from the house of Judah . . . until the time that the King Messiah shall come . . .**”

Divinity of Messiah:

Some Rabbis say that the idea of the Messiah as a divine being is foreign to Judaism. The Rambam taught that there is nothing supernatural in the person of the Messiah or in his deeds. They find it difficult to explain Jeremiah 23:5, 6:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness,” where the Bible says that He the Branch of David shall be called Jehovah — Our Righteousness.

Here again the ancient Jewish sages taught that it refers to Messiah.

In the Midrash on Lamentations 1:16 we read: “What is the name of the King Messiah? Rabbi Abba, son of Kahana said, ‘Jehovah’ for it is written: This is His name, whereby He shall be called, ‘Jehovah our Righteousness.’”

The Messiah’s divine attributes are also portrayed in Micah 5:2 — **“whose origin is of old from eternity.”**

The Jerusalem Targum explains: “Out of thee Bethlehem shall Messiah go forth before me to exercise dominion over Israel; whose name has been spoken from of old from the day of eternity.”

So also Malachi 3:1 refers to Messiah. Eben Ezra explains here: “The Lord is both the Divine Majesty and the Angel of the Covenant.” Kimchi says: “The Lord is the King Messiah; He is also the Angel of the Covenant.”

Isaiah 9:6 plainly foretells the coming of the Redeemer the **“Mighty God”** — etc. Yet the later controversial rabbis insist that a Messiah-God (divine) is not in conformity with the Jewish Torah. But the Jerusalem Targum and the Midrash (on Deuteronomy 2:4) refer this verse to Messiah. Son of God — **“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”** (Psalm 2:7).

When John the Baptist spoke to the Jewish crowds around saying, **“and I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God”** (John 1:34): Or when Paul preached Christ in the synagogues, declaring that **“He is the Son of God”** (Acts 9:10; 13:33; Hebrews 5:5), the Jews did not find anything foreign in the term **“son of God.”**

Only later to counteract Christian influence did some Rabbis say that Psalm 2 does not apply to Messiah and that the Hebrew words “nashku bar” do not mean “kiss the son” but something else. But the ancient Jewish exegetes (the Targums, the Talmud, etc.) understood that this chapter refers to Messiah. The “Holy Zohar” says: “This is the faithful shepherd; of thee it is said, ‘Kiss the Son’; thou art the Prince of the Israelites, the Lord of the earth . . . the Son of the Most High, the Son of the Holy God . . . and gracious Shekinah.”

Another stumbling-block which the later rabbis placed in the way of evangelization of the Jews is the Virgin Birth.

The Virgin Birth:

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

This passage proves that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin. The later rabbis say that the word *almah* of that verse does not mean virgin but young woman and that the whole passage does not refer to the Messiah but to some contemporary event.

That the Hebrew word *almah* means virgin has always been understood until the controversial rabbis tried to change its meaning, and so also was it understood by the ancient authorities that this verse refers to Messiah.

Messiah a King:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9).

Midrash Koheleth (63:2) says: “As it is of the former Redeemer— And Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on an ass (Exodus 4:20) so it is said of the latter Redeemer (Messiah), ‘Poor and riding on an ass.’”

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (on Daniel) says, “But is it not written of the Messiah, ‘Lowly and riding upon an ass’? Yes, but this shows that He will come in humility and not in pride upon horses.”

A Prophet Like Moses:

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Commenting on this verse, Rabbi Levi Ben Gershon says: “In fact the Messiah is such a Prophet as it is stated in the Midrash on the verse, ‘Behold my servant shall prosper’ — Moses by the miracles which he wrought drew but a single nation to the worship of God, but the Messiah will draw all nations to the worship of God.”

Melchizedek (a Priest):

“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4).

The whole chapter is applied to Messiah by the Targums and Midrash and later commentators.

Despised and Rejected:

Isaiah 53.

One of the objections the rabbis have against Jesus is that the expected Messiah was to be a mighty king who would overthrow the Gentile rule, and instead would let Israel rule over all nations. Jesus, they say, did not satisfy those longings and expectations. On the contrary He was despised and rejected and executed like a mean criminal.

When the Evangelists, Matthew (21:42), Mark (8:31) and Luke (17:24, 25) reminded the Jewish people that He was destined to be rejected, to suffer and to be killed, it was not strange to Jewish ears. They knew what Isaiah in chapter 53 meant; they knew that it applies to Messiah. So did also the later commentators as the Jerusalem Targum and the "Holy Zohar."

Rabbi Saadiah Ibn Danan comments: "There is a secret one (interpretation) sealed up in its midst, which sees throughout allusions to the King Messiah . . . and in the same verse it is expounded by our Rabbis."

Rabbi Moshen Alsheck says: "Our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is here speaking of the Messiah." Today the rabbis speak differently.

In view of the "Suffering Messiah" as portrayed in Isaiah 53, etc., some rabbis propounded the theory that there were to be two Messiahs: one Messiah being Ben Joseph of the Joseph dynasty. He is to suffer and die; the other Messiah Ben David, of the Davidic dynasty. He is to come as mighty King and ruler of the whole world. Thus R. Kimchi quotes R. Abraham Eben Ezra who writes that this prophecy "applies to the great wars which shall be in all the world in the days of the Messiah the Son of Joseph."

The Messiah therefore is the person to be smitten "before the scattering of the sheep." On verse 53:12 the Jerusalem Targum says: "He, Messiah, shall intercede for man's sins, and the rebellions for His sake shall be forgiven."

So also the Midrash B'reshith Rabbah: "And when Israel is sinful, the Messiah seeks for mercy upon them, as it is written, 'By His stripes' we were healed, and He carried the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Those rabbis who do not like the traditional interpretation of Isaiah 53 which affirms that it applies to Messiah, say that it may apply to someone else (contemporary) or to Israel as the suffering servant of God. Of course, any Jew who knows Hebrew (or in translation) will on reading this chapter at once see that it cannot apply to the Jewish people, nor to any individual before Jesus.

1. The Jews were not punished for the sins of others. The Jews in their prescribed prayers confess their sins and those of their fathers, for which they have been punished.
2. No Jew would say that his people is without sin, while the person in Isaiah 53 is sinless.
3. This person submits to His suffering and death without protest or resistance. This cannot be said of the Jews.
4. He was killed and buried. This cannot be said of the Jewish people as a whole.

That Isaiah did not think that the Jews were a sinless people one may see in his first chapter — **”Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, etc.”**

Pierced:

John (the evangelist, in 19:34-37) when relating how Jesus was pierced quotes Zechariah 12:10, **“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn,”** as a prophecy which was then fulfilled. While modern rabbis do not admit that this passage applies to Messiah, the old commentators said that it does apply to Messiah. So, for example, R. Kimchi, Abarbanel, and Yarchi. Rabbi Alshech says: “They shall lift up their eyes to me in perfect repentance, when they see Him whom they have pierced, that is Messiah, son of Joseph.”

By “they” the rabbis mean the Gentile nations who would kill this Messiah Ben Joseph in the war of Gog and Magog, but they agree that it refers to a Messiah who would be killed. (**“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool”** — Psalm 110:1). This verse is cited by Jesus as referring to Him (Matthew 22: 41-45).

Modern rabbis would not admit that it refers to the Messiah. The ancients did so, however. Thus Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 2 says, “The affairs of the Messiah are told in the Torah (Pentateuch) — Exodus 4:22, in the Prophets — Isaiah 53:13, and in the Hagiographa — Psalm 110:1. So also Midrash on Psalm 18:35, **“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.”**

Rabbi Yoden in the name of Rabbi Kama said that in the future to come in the days of the Messiah, the Holy One blessed be He, will make the Messiah to sit at His right hand as it is said, **“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand.”** And so also Rabbi Saadia Gaon (on Daniel 7:13): “And this is the Messiah our Righteousness, as it is said, **“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”**”

Coming Again:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14). Jesus, and later the apostles, cited this passage as applying to Him (Matthew 26: 64; Mark 13:36; Revelation 1:7; 14:14).

This passage, too, contrary to objecting rabbis, the ancient commentators applied to the Messiah. The Talmud, Sanhedrin 98:1 says, “R. Alexander said R. Joshua Ben Levi objects to what is written. **‘And behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven’**; and it is written, ‘Poor and riding on an ass’; if they (Israel) are worthy He (messiah) comes with the clouds of Heaven; but if they are not worthy, He comes poor and riding on an ass.”

Abarbanel: The expositor explains these words “**Like the Son of Man**” as referring to King Messiah.

Rabbi Shimeon bar Yochai: “When the King Messiah shall be revealed all the nations of the world shall be gathered to Him.”

I have thus cited but a few of the many comments of the most authoritative rabbis who have interpreted the Scriptures in the same manner as have the Christians, and not as do the modern rabbis.

The few examples I cited here are enough to convince the skeptical Jew that true Christianity is not foreign to true Judaism, but they are one and the same religion based on the “Old Testament” Scriptures.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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