

righteousness and peace to the soul, but does not come into any soul that is dead in sin.¹⁰

In the Talmud, *Metatron* is identified as the Angel who went before the Israelites in the wilderness in Exodus 33:20, the Angel whose voice was to be obeyed, the Angel who had authority to pardon transgressions. Because Yahweh's name is "in him," the Talmud refers to *Metatron* as the Angel "whose name is the same as his Master's."¹¹

Because *Metatron* seems to be divine, the Talmud asks the question "Are there then *two* Powers?"¹² Some say that Christians who believe in Yeshua's deity believe in two Gods, two Yahwehs. No more so than Jews do. Consider the following, taken from the teachings of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, who was "the unchallenged leader of enlightened Orthodoxy" of the 20th century. Commenting on Exodus 34:6, Rabbi Soloveitchik taught:

"The Lord, the Lord' [why does it say 'the Lord' twice?] - I am He who is there before man sins and I am He who is there after man sins and repents... 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God' (Isaiah 59:2). The end result of sinning is the driving out, as it were, of the Holy Presence. But who, then, will take care of the sinner after the Holy One removes Himself and the sinner is left alone? Who will help him to cut himself off from his sins and escape from their contamination? Who will lead him back home to his heavenly Father? Who will extend a helping hand to rescue him from the quicksand into which he has sunk? 'Thou extendest a hand to sinners and Thy right arm stretches forth to receive the penitent.' ... Who is it that extends a hand to the sinner and stretches forth his right arm to receive penitents? ... 'The Lord, the Lord': two times the Ineffable Name is mentioned - the first removes Himself from the sinner, abandons him, but the second, the Lord who is there after man sins, remains... The second Holy Name is ready to listen even after the first has shut the gates of 'Glory' through which man passes to stand before his Maker."¹³

The above discourse from a prominent Orthodox Jewish source sounds very much like a Christian discourse on the role of Yeshua. Yeshua is the arm of Yahweh stretched forth

to receive penitents. He is "the second Holy Name" who rescues us. Those who say that this is impossible are guilty of the same error committed by the generation in the wilderness, that unbelieving generation who "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41). Let's not limit the Holy One of Israel by telling Him that He cannot appear in a human body in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth.

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HERALD

THE DEITY OF YESHUA PART TWO

BY DANIEL BOTKIN

S

ome people reject the idea of a divine Messiah, either because they do not believe in Yeshua (Jesus), or because they do not believe in the inspiration and authority of the New Testament. They say it is not enough that the New Testament declares the deity of Messiah; if the idea of a divine Messiah is to be accepted, it must also be declared, or at least hinted at, in Jewish writings.

All the books of the New Testament, with the possible exception of Luke and Acts, were written by Jewish writers. Therefore the deity of Messiah is clearly declared in Jewish writings. Nonetheless, for those who do not recognize the inspiration and authority of the New Testament Jewish Scriptures, let's look at some other Jewish writings that declare the divine nature of the Messiah.

In this Herald, MIA Shepherd Daniel Botkin again addresses a fundamental theological issue; the Deity of Yeshua. This article addresses the topic of "The Deity of Messiah in the Tenach and Other Jewish Writings."

This is the second part of the article that was featured in the May 2011 Herald.

As we continue to grow together as Israel, we must not grow apart from the true identity of Yeshua, our Savior.

Those who argue against the deity of Yeshua often quote Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man." In their minds, this five-word statement (three words in Hebrew) settles the matter once and for all. If God is not a man, then the man Yeshua could not have been God in the flesh.

That reasoning sounds simple enough. However, it's not just simple, it's simplistic and flawed. Why? First, because it ignores the context of the statement, and secondly because it is not really a statement at all. It is only part of a statement. The complete statement says, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

Balaam's statement was spoken to explain to Balak the reason he could not curse Israel. God, unlike sinful man, always keeps His word. If we wanted to paraphrase Balaam, we could say that God is not undependable, like men so often are. Balaam's statement says nothing that rules out the possibility of God taking on a body of human flesh at a later date in history.

A divine Messiah can be inferred from several Messianic prophecies in the Tenach (Old Testament). Micah 5:2 (5:1 in Jewish Bibles) speaks of Israel's Bethlehem-born ruler "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting [*mymei olam*, 'from days of eternity']". The pre-existence of Messiah is also spoken of in the Talmud,

"before the creation of the world."¹

In Isaiah 9:6 (9:5 in Jewish Bibles) the Messiah's name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." A child who is given these names is obviously not an ordinary child. No ordinary child would be called "the mighty God."

Targum Jonathan, one of the pre-Christian Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, translates Isaiah's prophecy this way:

"For unto us a son is born, unto us a son is given: and he shall receive the Law upon him to keep it; and his name is called from of old, Wonderful, Counsellor, Eloha [God], the Mighty, Abiding to Eternity, the Messiah, because peace shall be multiplied on us in his days."²

Before Yeshua, Jews had no problem believing in a future Messiah with divine attributes in this prophecy. Modern-day Jews want to avoid and evade this obvious reference to Yeshua's deity. The Jewish Publication Society's 1917 English translation leaves this compound name of Messiah untranslated, and simply transliterates it: "And his name is called *Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom*." Unless the English reader knows Hebrew, he will not see that this Child has divine attributes and is called "the mighty God."

Jeremiah 23:6 gives a shorter divine name to the Messiah: "and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS [Yahweh *tsid-*

kenu]." Curiously, the Talmud likewise assigns this divine name to the Messiah: "What is the name of the King Messiah? R. Abba, son of Kahana, said, 'Jehovah,' for it is written, This is his name whereby he shall be called, 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'"³

Divine attributes of the Messiah are also declared in the rabbis' comments on Malachi 3:1, which says, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith Yahweh of hosts." Commenting on this prophecy, Kimchi said, "'The Lord' is the King Messiah; he is also the Angel of the Covenant."⁴ Aben Ezra said, "'The Lord' is both the Divine Majesty and the Angel of the Covenant, for the sentence is doubled."⁵

The rabbis' reference to this special "Angel" brings up that which is perhaps the most compelling and convincing argument for the deity of Messiah. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures there are several passages where "the Angel of Yahweh" appears to various individuals -- to Hagar, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Gideon, to Samson's parents. The Angel of Yahweh is visible and in human form. He walks and talks. He even eats and drinks. He speaks as Yahweh, in the first person ("I"), and appears to be indistinguishable from Yahweh. Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna says, "From several texts it is clear that the demarcation between God and his angel is often blurred."⁶

In the Bible Yahweh says to Moses, "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20). The New Testament likewise affirms this: "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Yet the Bible plainly states that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel... they saw God, and did eat and drink" (Ex. 24:9-11).

How do we reconcile what appears to be a glaring contradiction? We have to understand it this way: No man can see God in His full, unveiled glory, for He is the God who

dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). Yet God *can* be seen in a veiled human form. He was seen by men when He took on a visible, tangible human form as the Angel of Yahweh in the Old Testament, and He was seen by men when He took on a visible, tangible human form as Yeshua of Nazareth in the New Testament. This is the reason that people who saw the Angel of Yahweh saw God, and it is the reason Yeshua could say, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Theologians call the Old Testament appearances of the Angel of the Lord "Theophanies" or "Christophanies" -- pre-incarnate appearances of the Messiah. Christophanies are defined by Dr. James A. Borland as "those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ,"⁷ Dr. Borland views Christophanies as "part of God's advance announcement of the coming of the Messiah."⁸

"THE REASON FOR THE RABBIS' EVASIVE TACTICS IS OBVIOUS; THESE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE PRE-INCARNATE VISITATIONS OF YESHUA."

These Christophanies not only announced the coming of the Messiah, they also announced the deity of the Messiah by identifying the Angel of Yahweh as Yahweh in a human form. If Yahweh intermittently and temporarily manifested Himself in human form in the Old Testament, why is it difficult to believe that He visibly and audibly manifested Himself as a human in the person of Yeshua in the New Testament?

If one looks at what the pre-Christian Aramaic Targums say about the *Memra* (Aramaic, the Word of the Lord), and at what the Jewish writer Philo said about the *Logos* (Greek, the Word), and at what the rabbis said about the angel they call *Metatron*, it's obvious that the idea of a supernatural Messiah with divine attributes was not foreign to Judaism before the Christian era. After the establishment of Christianity, later Jewish commentators are usually silent or evasive about those Scriptures which speak of people seeing God or the Angel of Yahweh.

The reason for the rabbis' evasive tactics is obvious; these manifestations of God look too much like pre-incarnate visitations of Yeshua. Indeed, many of the pre-Christian Jewish comments about the *Memra*, the *Logos*, and *Metatron* are remarkably similar to New Testament teachings about the role of Yeshua. Such comments are far too numerous to list them all, but here are just a few examples:

According to the Aramaic *Targums*, the *Memra* (Word of the Lord) created man; man was created in the image of the *Memra*; Jacob said, "the *Memra* of the Lord will be my God"; Abraham was justified through the *Memra* of the Lord; the *Memra* of the Lord gave Israel the Law; Moses prayed to the *Memra* of the Lord.⁹

According to the Jewish writer Philo (born c. 20 B.C.), the *Logos* (the Word) was the instrument through whom God created all things; the *Logos* is the image of God; the *Logos* announces and interprets the will and mind of God to man; the *Logos* acts as a mediator; the *Logos* is the real High Priest, Melchizedek, who by his purity takes away man's sins and who by his intercession obtains God's mercy for man; the *Logos* is the medium of divine revelation to the soul; the *Logos* is the true Manna; the *Logos* brings