

## Hebrews 2

### “The Humanity of Yeshua”

“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, ‘WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET’ [Psalm 8:5-7, LXX]. For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Yeshua, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE’ [Psalm 22:22]. And again, ‘I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM’ [Isaiah 8:17, LXX; cf. Samuel 22:3, LXX; Isaiah 12:2]. And again, ‘BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME’ [Isaiah 8:18]. Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

Hebrews 2:1 is the first imperative warning encountered in our author’s treatise. The author of Hebrews admonishes his audience, “we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard” (NLT).<sup>40</sup> No subject break is intended between Hebrews chs. 1 and 2, as the author builds upon his previous words about the Divine Kingship that is held by Yeshua. He urges his readers to hear what he is saying and to act upon it. His admonition of “hearing” echoes Deuteronomy 4:9, where Moses tells the Ancient Israelites, “give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life.” The concepts that the writer expounds upon are realized in the Hebrew verb *shama* (שמע), which generally means “listen to s.thg,” “heed (a request),” and “hear=understand” (CHALOT).<sup>41</sup> It is used numerous times in the Torah to refer to Israel’s need to hear *and act upon* God’s instructions to them.<sup>42</sup> The Septuagint frequently renders *shama* as *akouō* (ἀκούω), used here in Hebrews 2:1.

<sup>40</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>41</sup> CHALOT, 376.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Genesis 4:5; 24:6; Exodus 19:12; 23:21; 34:11, 12; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:12; 11:16; et. al.

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The author of Hebrews appropriates this theme and applies it to the gospel message. He adds the important phrase, “We must pay more careful attention” (Hebrews 2:1, NIV), employing the verb *prosechō* (προσέχω), frequently used in secular Greek “to bring a ship near a place, bring it to port” (LS).<sup>43</sup> The writer is concerned that his audience has lost sight of Messiah Yeshua and who He is, and that they have failed to act upon His words delivered to them in the form of the good news. As Leon Morris indicates, “The verb *prosechein* [προσέχειν] means not only to turn the mind to a thing but also to act upon what one perceives.”<sup>44</sup> Our author is concerned about both his audience’s intellectual and spiritual well being, and is urging them to not forget Yeshua.

Our writer certainly wants to prevent the Believers he is writing to from slipping away from the faith. Some have thought that he is thinking about their faith as though it were an untied boat slipping out of a harbor. Yet, the verb *pararreō* (παραρρέω) is used more frequently to refer to “imagery of flowing water” (BDAG).<sup>45</sup> The word appears only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. What might be more likely, or at least more immediately in view, is that our author employs *pararreō* the same way it is employed in the LXX in Proverbs 3:21: “My son, let them not pass [*pararreō*] from you, but keep my counsel and understanding” (Apostle’s Bible).

Here, the admonishment to observe the Instruction of God and not slip away from it is clear. The author of Hebrews treats the gospel message as the Instruction of God required to be obeyed if one is to receive salvation. David A. deSilva explains that the pairing of these important Greek verbs is used by the writer to make the point, “Failure to remain fixed in that word results in ‘drifting away,’ being borne along with the tides and waves, losing one’s way.”<sup>46</sup>

Making these statements, the author of Hebrews says that there is a severe judgment for those who fall away from the message declared about Yeshua and the salvation He provides. It is interesting that in Hebrews 2:1 he includes himself among the “we,” indicating that even if he is not careful, he too might fall from the faith as well. Of course, this begs many questions, the foremost of which is how members of his audience were in danger of falling away in the first place.

We too have to ask ourselves if there are any in the Messianic community today who are in danger of falling away. The sin that we must avoid at all costs is discounting the good news of salvation in Messiah Yeshua, and we must treat it as Divine, authoritative instruction on an equal level every bit as much as the Torah and Tanach. That is what the author of Hebrews is definitely communicating to his audience. Sadly, even in the modern Messianic movement—where the Torah can, at times, be uplifted over Yeshua—the author of Hebrews might have a bit of an offensive message.

The author of Hebrews makes an important point to his audience that is deeply rooted in Second Temple Judaism. Hebrews 2:2 makes a reference to “the message declared by angels” (RSV). This continues the motif from Hebrews ch. 1 about the superiority of Yeshua over angels, and is a reference to angels mediating the giving of the Torah to Moses. This reflects on the author’s reliance on the Septuagint as his primary Scriptures, as the reference to angels being involved in the giving of the Torah does not specifically appear in the Masoretic Text edition of Deuteronomy 33:2, but does appear in the LXX:

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<sup>43</sup> LS, 690.

<sup>44</sup> Leon Morris, “Hebrews,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:21.

<sup>45</sup> BDAG, 770.

<sup>46</sup> deSilva, 104.

DEUTERONOMY 33:2 (MT)	DEUTERONOMY 33:2 (LXX)
<p>And he said, The LORD came from Sinay, and rose up from Se'ir to them; he shone forth from mount Paran, and he came from holy multitudes: from his right hand went a fiery law for them (Jerusalem Bible-Koren).</p>	<p>And he said, The Lord is come from Sina, and has appeared from Seir to us, and has hastened out of the mount of Pharan, with the ten thousands of Cades; <b>on his right hand were his angels with him</b> (LXE).</p>
<p>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְמוֹ  מִהַר פָּאֲרָן וְאַתָּה מִרְבֵּבַת קָדֶשׁ מִיְמִינוֹ  הוֹפִיעַ  (אֲשֶׁרֶת) [אֵשׁ] [דָּת] לְמוֹ:  V'yomar ADONAI m'Sinay ba v'zarach m'Sei'ir  l'mo hophi'ya m'har Paran v'atah meiriv'vot qodesh  m'mino (eishdat) [eish] [dat] l'mo</p>	<p>καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ἐκ Σίνα ἦκει καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἐκ  Σηὶρ ἡμῖν καὶ κατέσπευσεν ἐξ ὄρους Φαράν σὺν  μυριάσιν Καδῆς ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ'  αὐτοῦ  kai eipen Kurios ek Sina ekei kai epephanen ek Seir  hēmin kai katespeusen ex orous Pharan sun  muriasin Kadēs ek dexiōn autou angeloι met'  autou</p>

The view that *autou angeloι met autou* (αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ), "his angels were with him" (LXE), is a concept we see reflected in Psalm 68:17: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them *as at Sinai*, in holiness." The LXX translators from the Third-Second Centuries B.C.E. are obviously reflecting on a standing Jewish opinion that the Torah was delivered by God to Ancient Israel via angels. We see this view also reflected in the extra-Biblical Book of Jubilees, composed during the Maccabean era:

"And he said to the angel of the presence, Write for Moses *the account* from the beginning of creation...And the angel of the presence spoke to Moses in accordance with the Lord's command" (*Jubilees* 1:27; 2:1).<sup>47</sup>

We likewise see this same view adhered to by the First Century historian Josephus:

"And for ourselves, we have learned from God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our law, by angels or ambassadors..." (*Antiquities of the Jews* 15.136).<sup>48</sup>

The view that angels were used by God to deliver the Torah to Moses is one seen in the statements of the Apostles. The martyr Stephen attests in Acts 7:38, 53, "This is the one [Moses] who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you...you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it." The Apostle Paul likewise writes in Galatians 3:19 that the Torah was "ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator."

The understanding being emphasized by Hebrews' author is that the Torah was not given by human beings to other human beings; the Torah was delivered through angels. The penalty for disobeying the high crimes of the Torah was frequently death, as exemplified in Numbers 15:30: "But the person who does *anything* defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people." If the principal

<sup>47</sup> R.H. Charles, rev. C. Rabin, "Jubilees," in H.F.D. Sparks, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp 13, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 406.

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penalty for violating such high crimes in the Torah is death, **how much more is the penalty for those who disregard the gospel message of Yeshua?**

The term that our author employs for “disobedience” is *parakoē* (παρακοή), either meaning “to hear incorrectly” or “to disregard” (TDNT).<sup>49</sup> In writing about the importance of obeying the gospel, he wants to make it perfectly clear to his audience not to mishear him. While in English his words appear as “every violation and disobedience received its just punishment” (Hebrews 2:2, NIV), the Greek uses three words that begin with the letter *pi* (π). Lane comments, “Alliteration, a standard device in oratory, particular with the letter π, occurs in v 2, where the phrase παράβασις καὶ παρακοή [*pasa parabasis kai parakoē*], ‘every infringement and disobedience,’ provides a sonorous formulation.”<sup>50</sup> The author of Hebrews with masterful speech has clearly thought through what he wants his readers to understand.

While the author of Hebrews considers disobedience to the gospel to be more severe than disobedience to the Torah, he nevertheless has a very high regard for the Torah. He describes the Torah with the word *bebaios* (βέβαιος), “**pert. to being high on a scale of reliability, certainly, truly, reliably**” (BDAG).<sup>51</sup> This is invariably translated in Hebrews 2:2 as “unalterable,” “binding” (NIV), “valid” (RSV), “reliable” (ESV), and even “force” (REB). F.F. Bruce makes the important statement, “In this epistle...the law is not a principle set in opposition to grace manifested in Christ’s saving work, but rather an anticipatory sketch of that saving work.”<sup>52</sup> By no means is the Torah viewed by the author of Hebrews as being antithetical or in opposition to the salvation of Yeshua.

In Hebrews 2:3 we see a definitive appeal to a *qal v’chomer* argument, which was frequently employed by the Rabbis: “how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.” This is a “‘how much more’ argument: if the lesser point applies, then how much more does the greater point apply” (IVPBBC).<sup>53</sup> **The author of Hebrews in no uncertain terms states that disobeying the gospel message brings a penalty worse than disobeying the Torah.** Tim Hegg makes the ever-important observation, “if the Law, which was administered by angels...is seen to be unalterable in the way it deals with sin, *how much more* would this be the case with the revelation of the truth by Yeshua!”<sup>54</sup> Bruce offers a good paraphrase of this in his commentary:

“It was through angels that Moses’ law was communicated, and its sanctions were severe enough; how much more perilous must it be to ignore the saving message brought by no angel, but by Jesus, the Son of God!”<sup>55</sup>

The author of Hebrews is concerned that his audience has strayed from or was neglecting the gospel message of Yeshua, and he is making important appeals to their understanding of Ancient Israel. He writes about the awesome scene of angels delivering the Torah to Moses, but also writes that the coming of Yeshua and His salvation is more awesome. Lane comments, “The experience of Israel demonstrated that a reckless disregard for the tradition and the commitment to which it summoned the community of faith could only expose the people of God to divine judgment. It is this peril that the writer seeks to address.”<sup>56</sup> By extension, could

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<sup>49</sup> G. Kittel, “to hear, listen,” in TDNT, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:34-35.

<sup>51</sup> BDAG, 173.

<sup>52</sup> F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 67.

<sup>53</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 653.

<sup>54</sup> Tim Hegg, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Author, n.d.), 22.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce, *Hebrews*, xix.

<sup>56</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:40-41.

he also be communicating to a few in the Messianic community today? Are there not Messianic people today who ignore or neglect the gospel message of salvation and place more importance on the Torah? The author of Hebrews demonstrates a high regard for both, but recognizes that in the end, the gospel message of salvation in Yeshua is more important.

Hebrews 2:3 ends with an important factual note about the authorship of the text. The author writes, "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him" (NIV). We see parallels with these comments in Luke's Gospel, which opens with, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:1-2). It is clear from these testimonies that neither Luke nor the author of Hebrews were eyewitnesses of Yeshua. However, they did know and encounter eyewitnesses who had firsthand testimony of seeing the Messiah in person. This discounts one of the original Disciples, who knew Yeshua first hand, and the Apostle Paul, whom Yeshua revealed Himself to on the road to Damascus, as being the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But our writer considers the Apostles' testimony to be a sure and trustworthy word. Ellingworth indicates that at this time in the mid-First Century the gospel message primarily existed in "a chain of oral tradition stretching from Jesus to the author and his readers; yet it would be quite anachronistic to set this in opposition to any written record."<sup>57</sup> With the possible exception of the Gospel of Mark, Hebrews was most likely written before the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John.

Our author states that he can believe in the message of the gospel because he has seen God bear witness to it "by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 2:4). We see a slight parallel to this from the teachings of Paul, who writes, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). This is another indication that the author of Hebrews is well-acquainted with Paul. The accompanying of signs or miracles with the proclamation of the gospel was very important to the First Century *ekklēsia*, and is a precedent that comes directly from the teachings of Yeshua:

"And He answered and said to them, 'Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT* [Isaiah 35:5], *the lame walk*, *the lepers are cleansed*, and *the deaf hear*, *the dead are raised up*, *the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM* [Isaiah 61:1]" (Luke 7:22; cf. Matthew 11:4-5).

The author of Hebrews uses a very specific term in 2:4, *sunepimarturoontos* (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος), a present active participle. For our writer, it means that God is presently and actively bearing witness or testifying of the gospel. NEB tries to capture all of these concepts by rendering it as, "God added his testimony by signs, by miracles, by manifold works of power, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

At this point, the author of Hebrews hits modern readers with some stark realities. Rejecting the Torah that angels delivered to Moses comes with a severe consequence: capital punishment. Rejecting the gospel message of salvation in Yeshua must then bring with it an even worse consequence: eternal punishment. He asks his First Century audience how one can reject the Messiah, when God is presently testifying that Yeshua is the Savior by sending great miracles and works to them. Do we ever run the risk of falling into similar traps as the Messianic community today? Let us hope not, and heed the good words here.

After emphasizing the Divine Kingship of Yeshua in Hebrews ch. 1, and the severity of rejecting the gospel message in Hebrews 2:1-4, the author describes the mystery of Yeshua's

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<sup>57</sup> Ellingworth, 134.

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humanity. It might be difficult for our mortal brains to entirely comprehend it, but the Apostles did affirm Yeshua the Messiah to be both God and man—and all at the same time. They did not always try to sort out all the details, but recognized that because only God can redeem people from sin, Yeshua must be Divine, and likewise Yeshua having come as a man can redeem sinful humankind. As Hagner adequately explains, “Jesus’ humanity, which would seem to make him inferior to the angels, is indispensable to God’s purpose of redemption. The Son had to become human in order to die, but following death came his exaltation.”<sup>58</sup> It is notable, however, that even though we need to understand the humanity of Yeshua, as emphasized in the following verses, our author places His Deity over His humanity by mentioning it first (Hebrews ch. 1).

The writer of Hebrews wanted his readers to see the human elements of the Messiah’s ministry, and how they could identify with Him and what He has accomplished. By coming as a man, Yeshua is able to redeem people and restore them to the position that God originally intended for humanity. Our author states quite poignantly, “the future world we are talking about will not be controlled by angels” (Hebrews 2:5, NLT), and then goes into explaining how redeemed humanity will rule over the Earth second only to God Himself. We might need to remember Paul’s word of 1 Corinthians 6:3 here: “Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

By employing the phrase, “But there is a place where someone has testified” (Hebrews 2:6, NIV), our author was “expressing confidence that the important issue was that God had inspired the words” (IVPBBC).<sup>59</sup> The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8:4-7 and uses a Jewish hermeneutic referred to as *gezerah shavah*, linking key words and phrases to make an important theological case. In this instance, the key terms are “man” and “Son of Man.” It is also important that we note some obvious differences from the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Septuagint text from which the author is working:

PSALM 8:4-7 (MT)	PSALM 8:4-7 (LXX)
<p>what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet (RSV).</p>	<p>What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little less than angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour; and thou hast set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: (LXE).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ׃ וְתַחֲסֶרְהוּ מִעֵט מַיְאֵלָהִים וְכַבֹּד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲמָרְהוּ׃ תִּמְשִׁלְהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כֹּל שָׂתָה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו׃ צִנְהוּ וְאַלְפִים כֻּלָּם וְגַם בַּהֲמֹת שָׂרֵי׃</p> <p><i>ma-enosh ki-tizkerenu u'ben-adam ki tifqedenu. v'techas'reihu m'mat m'Elohim v'kavod v'hadar te'at'reihu. tam'shi'leihu b'ma'asei yade'kha kol sha'tah tachat-rag'layo. tzoneh v'alafin kulam v'gam bahamot sadaï</i></p>	<p>τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μὴ μνησθήσῃ αὐτοῦ ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπτη αὐτὸν ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους δόξης καὶ τιμῆς ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτὸν καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ</p> <p><i>ti estin anthrōpos hoti mimnēskē autou ē huios anthrōpou hoti episkeptē auton. elattōsas auton brachu ti par' angelous doxē kai timē estephanōsas auton. kai katestēsas auton epi ta erga tōn cheirōn sou panta hupetaxas hupokatō tōn podōn autou</i></p>

<sup>58</sup> Hagner, in *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 2155.

<sup>59</sup> Keener, 653.

When the Psalmist proclaims these words, he is in awe and wonder at why God would make man lower than Himself, yet still give him dominion over His Creation. He uses the terminology *ma-enosh* (מַה־אִנוּשׁ), “what is man,” and *ben-adam* (בֶּן־אָדָם) or “son of man.” In the LXX this is streamlined to *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος), “man,” and *huios anthrōpou* (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου), “son of man.” The author of Hebrews appropriates this imagery and associates it with Yeshua (Hebrews 2:9) using a unique way of connecting the term *anthrōpos*, likely using First Century Jewish hermeneutics via a Greek text.

Of course, one of the major terms that Yeshua uses in the Gospels to refer to Himself as is “Son of Man” (most probably with Danielic influence, i.e., “and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming” in Daniel 7:13). Our author wants to surely convey that Yeshua is the “Ultimate Man,” by whom emulating all of humankind can fulfill the destiny that God originally intended for it. As Ellingworth explains, “the ‘world to come,’” which redeemed humanity will have dominion over, “is something which it is already possible for believers, not only to ‘speak’ about, but to some extent to experience.”<sup>60</sup> This experience comes only through obedience to the gospel and in knowing Yeshua.

The author of Hebrews opens up his quotation by asking his readers, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?” (Hebrews 2:6, ESV). There is considerable debate over the “Son of Man” terminology employed in the Bible. Numbers 23:9, for example, is a verse that can be confusing for some:

“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

Jewish anti-missionaries who deny the Messiahship of Yeshua often use this text by selectively quoting from it by saying, “God is not a man...nor a son of man,” and then say that Yeshua cannot be God. However, the context of the verse in the Torah is clear as it is talking about the characteristics of God, which are perfect and Divine, and not worldly and fallen. The Messiah, as God, does not possess the fallen traits of mortals. The inclusive language of the NRSV offers a much clearer understanding of Numbers 23:9, rendering the verse with “God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind.”

Much discussion still remains as to how humankind is being talked about in Hebrews 2:5-8, and how Yeshua as the Son of Man is perhaps being echoed in some way, from Psalm 8. Lane offers a good explanation of these concepts and what the author of Hebrews is trying to convey to his audience:

“He cites Ps 8:5 because he wishes to emphasize that Jesus in a representative sense fulfilled the vocation intended for humankind...He understood that the parallel expressions ἄνθρωπος [*anthrōpos*], ‘man,’ ‘humankind,’ and υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου [*huios anthrōpou*], ‘son of man,’ ‘mortal,’ were perfectly synonymous and were to be interpreted in terms of that fact...The quotation of Ps 8 may readily be applied to Jesus without finding in the vocabulary an implied reference to the Son of Man christology of the Gospels.”<sup>61</sup>

Here, we see an excellent application of *gezerah shavah*, as our author is making word and concept plays on “man” on “mankind/humanity,” comparing them to Yeshua, the “Ultimate Man.” There might be some echoes of “Son of Man” teaching from Yeshua in the Gospels, but it should not be pushed too far in one’s reading of Hebrews 2:6-8. The most anyone can say is that Yeshua in His humanity—His supreme love, obedience, and ethics—represents that high standard to which His followers are to all strive to demonstrate, the very standard of conduct that human beings were originally created for.

<sup>60</sup> Ellingworth, 146.

<sup>61</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 45a:47.

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Continuing, the author says, concerning humankind, “YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS” (Hebrews 2:7). His quotation of Psalm 8:5 differs from the Hebrew, which reads with *elohim* or “God” (NASU, RSV, NRSV), which in the LXX was rendered as *angelous* or “angels.” (We have already discussed how *elohim* is frequently translated as *angelos* in the LXX.) Many, with “son of man” terminology appearing immediately prior in Hebrews 2:6, can automatically conclude that this quotation is a direct reference to Yeshua, but it is not. In actuality, what is being spoken about is the human race. Yet, whether human beings are attested to be made a little lower than God or the angels, the assertion issued is that the lot of humanity is cast with the Heavenly host. The verb used to communicate this in Hebrews 2:7 (used later in Hebrews 2:9), is *elattoō* (ἐλάττω), “**to cause to be lower in status**” (BDAG).<sup>62</sup> The Scriptures do not teach, for example, that human beings were made “just a little higher than the animals.”

The main issue here, regarding the future of humanity, is that people have been appointed lower than the angels for just a limited time, as angels will be subjected to redeemed humanity in the eschaton. Finishing his quotation with Psalm 8:6, he reflects on the state of humankind that the redeemed who receive Yeshua into their lives will experience: “You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.” While the understanding of having all things in subjection is likewise a characteristic of Yeshua, the author of Hebrews makes a point of referencing redeemed humanity’s rule from Psalm 8. Yeshua as King over Creation is always emphasized from Psalm 110:1, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

The author of Hebrews remains optimistic via his comments in Hebrews 2:8 that all things will be subjected to humankind in the redeemed state. He writes, “For in subjecting everything to him, He left nothing not subject to him. As it is, we do not yet see everything subjected to him” (HCSB). The author of Hebrews is clear that his readers must know Yeshua and obey the gospel message. One of the definite rewards of receiving Yeshua is not only eternal salvation, but also rule alongside of the Creator God over the redeemed Creation. He is very keen to note, however, “But in fact we do not yet see all things in subjection to man” (NEB). The curse upon Creation (Genesis 3:18) has yet to be lifted.

When we contemplate who Yeshua is and our salvation experience, do we ever consider what God originally intended for each and every one of us? Do we forget that by being restored to the Father that His intention is for us to rule second only to Him in eternity? The author of Hebrews considers this a very important part of his argument against people downplaying or neglecting the Messiah. In writing about redeemed humankind—and the necessity of knowing Yeshua to experience Creation’s full redemption—our writer is almost asking his audience, “Do you really want to give this all up?” Likewise, if you know anyone in the Messianic community who is wavering in his or her faith in Yeshua, or downplays who He is, ask the person if he or she wants to really give up ruling over the redeemed Creation. As our author states in his opening remarks in Hebrews ch. 2: **to give up the Torah is really bad, and brings severe consequences; to give up the Messiah brings even worse consequences.**

After commenting about what the state of redeemed humankind will be, ruling with God, the author of Hebrews makes a comparison to the Incarnation of Messiah Yeshua and His humanity. Yeshua, as the “Ultimate Man,” was “made lower than the angels for a short time” (Hebrews 2:9, HCSB). It should be noted how “made lower” does not at all mean “created lower,” given the presence of the previously noted verb *elattoō*. Legitimate alternative

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<sup>62</sup> BDAG, 313.

renderings for Hebrews 2:9a include, “what we do see is Jesus who was put lower than the angels for a little while” (Moffat New Testament), and “But we see Him who has been set for a little while lower than the angels” (PME).

The Apostle Paul attests in Philippians 2:7 that Yeshua the Messiah “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (NIV). Yeshua, as the Son of God, willfully left His exalted state, emptying Himself of His glory, and entered into the world as a man and thus in that sense was “for a short while was made lower than the angels” (NEB). But it is notable that this state was never to be permanent. It was only temporary during Yeshua’s Earthly ministry. Ellingworth makes the critical observation,

“There is no reference, in this passage or elsewhere, to the incarnate Son being ‘only a little’ lower than angels, and it is therefore difficult to see why the author should repeat the expression in a spatial sense. If it is understood temporally, it has the function of distinguishing the short period of humiliation from the uncompleted period of Christ’s exaltation to his final triumph.”<sup>63</sup>

Because of Yeshua’s humbling Himself to the state of a lowly human man for a season, Hebrews 2:9 asserts that “because of the suffering of the death” (YLT), He is “now crowned with glory and honor” (NIV, NRSV). Yeshua, by suffering death on the tree for human sins, took away the death penalty for every human being—past, present, and future. Because Yeshua has experienced the death penalty that each one of us should suffer for our sins, we can now have complete access to the Father—assuming that we receive the redemption that He offers!

The author of Hebrews has just emphasized how Yeshua temporarily accepted mortality, in order to be exalted by the Father. He explains that Yeshua had to come to die in order to bring “many sons to glory,” meaning to provide them with eternal redemption: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

We see some similarities between Hebrews 2:10 and the Apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 8:6, “yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6 has been notably viewed as a sort of Messianic *Shema*, as the Father is identified as God and the Son is identified as Lord, both being a part of the Divine Identity. It is very possible that the writer to the Hebrews, having been in the inner circle of Paul, is expanding a bit, upon the themes explained in 1 Corinthians 8:6. Lane observes that “2:10-18 assumes the form of homiletical midrash. The exposition turns on the citation and development of three biblical quotations”<sup>64</sup> that are used to support the premise that his audience can identify with Yeshua as a man sent by the Father, every bit as much as recognizing Him as the Divine King.

Bruce makes the important connection that the one “for whom and by whom all things exist” (Hebrews 2:10, RSV) “must here be God the Father, of whose perfecting work the Son is object,”<sup>65</sup> even though the Son has been previously attested to have this same status (Hebrews 1:2). The Son is the *archēgos* (ἀρχηγός), rendered in a variety of different ways, including: “author,” “pioneer” (RSV), “leader” (NEB), “founder” (ESV), “source” (HCSB), and “champion” (WBC).<sup>66</sup> *Archēgos* was often used to refer to “The ‘hero’ of a city, its founder or

<sup>63</sup> Ellingworth, 154.

<sup>64</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:53.

<sup>65</sup> Bruce, *Hebrews*, 79.

<sup>66</sup> Lane, 47a:51.

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guardian" (*TDNT*).<sup>67</sup> It is used in Acts 5:31 to refer to Yeshua: "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince [*archēgos*] and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." As *TDNT* indicates, Yeshua is "the *archēgós* of our faith both as its founder and as the first example when in his death he practiced his faith in God's love and its overcoming of the barrier of human sin."<sup>68</sup>

When the author writes that the Father had "to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10), he is speaking in terms of the salvation-historical goals that had to be fulfilled by the entry of His Son into the world. He employs the verb *teleioō* (τελειόω), meaning, "to make perfect, complete" (*LS*),<sup>69</sup> meaning bring to total completion the work that He was intended to do, and make its significance be truly realized. Our author will later state, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). Yeshua suffered on Earth so that an entire host of people may now come to the Father for reconciliation via Him. Paul elaborates on this concept, writing, "God was in Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

It is also important to note that Yeshua, being the Author and Originator of our salvation—and thus our example to emulate—suffered and died for us. Suffering for the faith is a constant theme of Apostolic teaching:

"Now if we have died with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:8).

"It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

Emphasizing the humanity of Yeshua, and the close relationship that His followers are to have to Him, the author of Hebrews remarks, "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin" (Hebrews 2:11, RSV). This is a reflection on the fact that the Son originates from the Father, and human beings originate from the Father as God's image bearers (Genesis 1:26; James 3:9). The Son, sent by the Father, is of the job of making others holy. The verb *hagiazō* (ἁγιάζω) is often used to "set someth. or make it suitable for ritual purposes, consecrate, dedicate" (*BDAG*).<sup>70</sup> Lane comments, "The vocabulary appears to be used in its OT significance, in which the people of Israel were sanctified or consecrated to God and his service in order to be admitted into his precedence."<sup>71</sup> We should consider how the Messiah is King over Israel, and the redeemed in Him are His subjects, who in turn are to rule over Creation.

The Messiah gives saved human beings full access to the Father via His sacrifice—and our author emphasizes these things as present realities. Ellingworth indicates, "Ἁγιάζων [*hagiazōn*] and ἁγιάζομενοι [*hagiazomenoi*]...are timeless present participles used as nouns."<sup>72</sup> It is with this idea in mind that the writer quotes some critical Tanach Scriptures, applying them to Yeshua as proclaiming these statements before the Father in Heaven. In this regard, Yeshua is portrayed as the proper mediator for humankind, having taken part in the human experience and now exalted. Messianic Jewish theologian David H. Stern sums it well, "As man, Yeshua had to suffer like us in order to fully identify with us. This is what uniquely qualifies him to be our

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<sup>67</sup> G. Delling, "archēgós," in *TDNT*, 83.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *LS*, 797.

<sup>70</sup> *BDAG*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:58.

<sup>72</sup> Ellingworth, 163.

mediator. By being identified fully with God and with us he bridges the gap (Isaiah 59:1-2) and creates for us the unity with God that he himself has.”<sup>73</sup>

The first Tanach passage the author of Hebrews portrays the Messiah speaking out is Psalm 22:22: “I will tell of Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You” (cf. Hebrews 2:12). This, of course, is applied to the Son speaking of the Father’s greatness to the people. It is important to note that in the Hebrew source text, the word *qahal* (קהל) is used for “assembly” (NASU) or “congregation” (RSV, NIV, NJPS, et. al.). The LXX renders this as *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία). Hebrews 2:12 in the KJV is actually translated as “in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Morris is keen to note that “it is...used of the congregation of ancient Israel.”<sup>74</sup> Here, the author of Hebrews identifies Yeshua speaking on behalf of not only His people—but the community of Israel. The author of Hebrews does not portray Yeshua as speaking on behalf of “the Church,” some entity of elect separate from Israel, but he is firmly upholding the understanding that Believers are all a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), in a text clearly involving Israel from Psalms.

The second part of our author’s portrayal of Yeshua comes by Him proclaiming Isaiah 8:17-18, which was actually an original word issued by the Prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz. Take important note of the fact that his quotation is directly from the Greek Septuagint, which slightly deviates from the Hebrew:

ISAIAH 8:17-18 (MT)	ISAIAH 8:17-18 (LXX)
<p>And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion (NASU).</p>	<p>And <i>one</i> shall say, I will wait for God, who has turned away his face from the house of Jacob, <b>and I will trust in him</b>. Behold I and the children which God has given me: and they shall be <i>for</i> signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in mount Sion. (LXE).</p>
<p>וְחִכִּיתִי לַיהוָה הַמִּסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִבֵּית יַעֲקֹב          וְקִנִּיתִי-לוֹ: הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי וְהַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר          נָתַן-לִי יְהוָה לְאִתּוֹת וּלְמוֹפְתִים          מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַשֹּׁכֵן בְּהַר צִיּוֹן:          בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל</p> <p><i>v'chikiti l'ADONAI ha'mastir panav m'beit Ya'akov v'qiv'voti-lo. hinnei anokhi v'ha'yeladim asher natan-li ADONAI l'otot u'l'mofetim b'Yisrael m'im ADONAI Tzavot ha'sheiken b'har Tzion</i></p>	<p>καὶ ἐρεῖ μενῶ τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἀποστρέψαντα τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου Ἰακώβ καὶ πεποιθῶς ἔσομαι ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παῖδιά ἃ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός καὶ ἔσται εἰς σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ παρὰ κυρίου σαβαωθ ὃς κατοικεῖ ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σιών</p> <p><i>kai erei menō ton Theon ton apostrepsanta to prosōpon autou apo tou oikou Iakōb kai pepoithōs esomai ep' autō idou egō kai ta paidia ha moi edōken ho Theos kai estai eis sēmeia kai terata en tō oikō Israēl para Kuriou sabaōth hos katoikei en tō orei Sion</i></p>

The major difference in the quotation is that the Hebrew of Isaiah says “I will even look eagerly for Him” (NASU) or “I will hope in him” (RSV), as the verb *qavah* (קָוָה), appearing in the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice) means “wait, or look eagerly, for” (BDB).<sup>75</sup> The LXX

<sup>73</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 669.

<sup>74</sup> Morris, in *EXP*, 12:28.

<sup>75</sup> BDB, 875.

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obviously reflects an interpretation of “waiting for” God to be “put[ting] My trust in Him” (Apostle’s Bible). *Qavah* was rendered as the verb *peithō* (πείθω), actually defined as “to prevail upon, win over, persuade” (LS).<sup>76</sup> This could be rendered as “I will prevail through Him,” but “trust” has been the term that many English translators have chosen to use. This is all an example of some slight variances in the text of Isaiah 8:17-18 that are a result of interpretations, but nothing so significant so as to at all alter the overall meaning. Just as the children of the Prophet Isaiah were to serve as signs to King Ahaz and confirmation of God’s activity (Isaiah 7:15-16; 8:17-18), so are Yeshua’s followers to be regarded as His fellow brothers and sisters who bear witness to the Father’s redemptive work.

There might also be a secondary reference to 2 Samuel 22:3 detectable in vs. 12-13. Again, there are some slight differences between the MT and LXX:

2 SAMUEL 22:3 (MT)	2 SAMUEL 22:3 (LXX)
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence (NASU).	my God; he shall be to me my guard, <b>I will trust in him:</b> <i>he is</i> my protector, and the horn of my salvation, my helper, and my sure refuge; thou shalt save me from the unjust man (LXE).
<p>אֱלֹהֵי צוּרִי אֶחְסֶה-בּוֹ מִגְּדִי וְקִרְן יְשׁוּעִי מִשְׁגָּבִי וּמִנוֹסִי מִזְּשׁוּעֵי מַחֲמָס תְּשַׁעֲנֵנִי:</p> <p><i>Elohei tzuri echeseh-bo magini v'qeren yis'i misgabi u'menusi moshi'i m'chamas toshi'eini</i></p>	<p>θεός μου φύλαξ ἔσται μου πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ' αὐτῷ ὑπερασπιστής μου καὶ κέρας σωτηρίας μου ἀντιλήπτωρ μου καὶ καταφυγή μου σωτηρίας μου ἐξ ἀδίκου σώσεις με</p> <p><i>Theos mou phulax estai mou pepoithōs esomai ep' autō hyperaspistēs mou kai keras sōtērias mou antilēptōr mou kai kataphugē mou sōtērias mou ex adikou sōseis me</i></p>

Obviously, the only major difference between these versions of 2 Samuel 22:3 is that the LXX adds the phrase “I will trust in Him” (Apostle’s Bible). This does not alter the basic meaning of the text, delivered in David’s song of deliverance, where he appeals to God for His support.

The humanity of Yeshua is necessary if He is the rightful Savior and Redeemer of men and women. The author reflects upon the reality that He “became flesh and blood by being born in human form” (Hebrews 2:14, NLT). Just as the bronze serpent was to be lifted up in the wilderness, and was a likeness of what was killing the Ancient Israelites (Numbers 21), so Yeshua not only had to be lifted up (John 3:14), but He had to be lifted up in human form. The Apostle Paul reflects on this more fully in Philippians 2:5-8:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who, existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a wooden scaffold” (PME).

Here, Paul speaks about how Yeshua—who notably had legitimate equality with the Father—emptied Himself of His exalted state to be sacrificed as a human being for the sins of

<sup>76</sup> LS, 615.

others. The author of Hebrews may be regarded as reflecting much of this same motif, but he uses some specific terminology that often goes unobserved in our English translations. While most versions read “flesh and blood,” the Greek order is *haimatos kai sarkos* (αἵματος καὶ σαρκός), literally “blood and flesh.” Ellingworth indicates that “The expression αἷμα καὶ σὰρξ [*haima kai sarx*] is rabbinic...but not found in the OT. The order is usually σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα [*sarx kai haima*].”<sup>77</sup> This indicates that our author is well-acquainted with First Century Jewish terminology. Guthrie observes, “It has been suggested that ‘blood’ alludes to Christ’s shedding of blood, which is then given as the reason for his becoming flesh, *i.e.* the atonement required the incarnation.”<sup>78</sup>

The important issue to note throughout Hebrews chs. 1 and 2 is that Yeshua is superior to angels, He is surely to be worshipped, He also shared in human nature via the Incarnation—meaning that He is not totally out of reach for people to relate to, in what He endured to accomplish redemption. **However, our author considers the Divine Sonship of Yeshua to be primary to His identification with humanity.** Guthrie continues, remarking, “There can never be a wholly satisfactory explanation of these two facets of his nature, because man has no suitable frame of reference in which to consider it.”<sup>79</sup>

Yeshua has come into the world “so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (NIV). While most versions render this passage with “destroy,” the NASU has the best translation with “render powerless.” The Greek verb *katargeō* (καταργέω) means “to make of none effect” (LS)<sup>80</sup> or “to cause someth. to lose its power or effectiveness, invalidate, make powerless” (BDAG).<sup>81</sup> The author of Hebrews does not say that Satan will cease to exist, but rather his power and hold over the world will be eliminated. The power that Satan wields is the power of death because he entices people to sin. 1 John 3:8 further elaborates, “the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” Those who practice the works of Satan and do not repent are subject to eternal punishment.

Yeshua the Messiah has come to “free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:15). It can be suggested that the author of Hebrews develops upon the theme that is seen in Luke 11:21-22, where Yeshua teaches, “When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.” Lane supports this premise, remarking, “The writer to the Hebrews develops this strand of the gospel tradition into a significant pastoral response to the crisis facing his hearers. Although God intended that his people should participate in his glory, they experienced bondage through the fear of death...The writer to the Hebrews affirms that the Son of God assumed humanity in order to become their champion and to secure their release.”<sup>82</sup> This should indicate that the “death” in view is not solely intended to be physical, but that it also involves spiritual dynamics resultant from human sin. People on Earth who live lives where their transgressions and offenses against the Creator go unresolved, live in a condition of death long before their physical life processes expire.

The death that the Lord redeems people from is widely a result of their own doing—as they have fallen for the temptations of Satan—and the author of Hebrews is likely reflecting

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<sup>77</sup> Ellingworth, 171.

<sup>78</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, pp 91-92.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>80</sup> LS, 413.

<sup>81</sup> BDAG, 525.

<sup>82</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:62-63.

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upon this reality. Wisdom 1:13 says that “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living,” and Wisdom 2:23 further says, “God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity.” These concepts are present in Hebrews 2, because God sent humanity His Son to die for men and women so that they would not have to be separated from Him, and that in Yeshua they could testify to His glory, and ultimately in the world to come be ruling second only to Him. While Yeshua’s resurrection from the dead has decisively rendered the force of physical death as a defeated foe, and assures us of a future resurrection to come, Believers in Him can experience a deliverance from the conditions of death—by having new life in Him—long before the general resurrection. The slavery that all men and women are subject to, which if not rectified will ultimately result in death and subsequent eternal separation from God, is **sin**. Yeshua came to free people from the dastardly influence and consequences of sin, and offer people full reconciliation with the Father.

In his closing remarks about the superiority of Yeshua over angels, the author of Hebrews is candid by saying, “For it is clear that he did not come to help angels” (Hebrews 2:16, NRSV), or “it is clear that He does not reach out to help angels” (HCSB). If Yeshua came to redeem angels, then surely He would have been incarnated as an angel. But Yeshua was incarnated as a man to redeem humanity. The verb *epilambanomai* (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι) means “**to make the motion of grasping or taking hold of someth., take hold of, grasp, catch**” (BDAG),<sup>83</sup> which most Bibles render as “give help to” or some close equivalent. LITV renders this as “For indeed He does not take hold of angels.” deSilva remarks, “‘Laying hold’ here speaks of Jesus’ role as rescuer, deliverer, and protector of his clients in the new exodus from the shakable realm and entrance into the ‘rest’ of God.”<sup>84</sup> We see this elaborated further throughout the writer’s treatise. Some may make comparisons between personified Wisdom in the Apocryphal literature to Yeshua, because this is a characteristic of Wisdom: “Wisdom exalts her sons and gives help [*epilambanomai*] to those who seek her” (Sirach 4:11). The author of Hebrews may be appropriating similar terms from his Hellenistic Jewish background. Yet, the figure Wisdom granting help is more in the sense of offering moral or ethical direction; what Yeshua offers is eternal salvation.

What Yeshua came to lay hold of or redeem is listed here as being the *spermatos Abraam* (σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ), or “the offspring of Abraham” (ESV). Yeshua came to redeem Abraham’s descendants—meaning those who have the faith of Abraham and believe in God the same way that Abraham believed in Him—all of the recipients of the Abrahamic promise. This is fully realized when one examines the basic passages on God’s blessing upon Abraham’s seed and how Believers are of that “seed”:

“And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3).

“[A]nd he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them...For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all...That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants” (Romans 4:11, 16; 9:8).

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<sup>83</sup> BDAG, 374.

<sup>84</sup> deSilva, 120.

“And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:29).

There are actually many ways that one can be of the “seed of Abraham,” beyond that of being physically born from his lineage. While Abraham was promised by God that His seed would spread abroad, one is by no means required to be of that physical ancestry to be redeemed. Yeshua Himself said, “If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham” (John 8:39), meaning that Abraham's true “seed” lives as he did. The Messiah's death was for all people, who in some way can claim to be “of Abraham.” Ellingworth notes, “The author's choice of words is influenced by the historical fact that Jesus was of Israelite, and therefore of Abrahamite, descent.”<sup>85</sup> In fact, the Rabbis of the Talmud say, “Abram the same is Abraham. At first he became a father to Aram [Ab-Aram] only, but in the end he became a father to the whole world” (b.*Berachot* 13a).<sup>86</sup>

In his comparison of Yeshua with the rest of humanity, the author of Hebrews says that in order “to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17, NRSV), He had “to be in every respect like us” (NLT). In order for Yeshua to deliver an acceptable sacrifice to God, He had to come to Earth in human form. In particular, our author says that Yeshua had to be “a merciful and faithful *cohen gadol* in the service of God” (CJB/CJSB), or a high priest.

To a certain degree, we see parallels between our writer's words here, and some of the Messianic expectations of the Qumran community. deSilva indicates, “The inhabitants of the settlement at Qumran...looked forward to a priestly leader whose offerings would be acceptable to God and whose teachings would be in line with God's Law.”<sup>87</sup> Aramaic fragments from the Pseudepigraphal work *Testament of Levi* were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which attest, “He will atone for all the sons of his generation and will be sent to all the sons of his [peo]ple. His word is like a word of heaven, and his teaching is according to the will of God” (4Q541).<sup>88</sup>

There is, however, a critical difference between the Earthly high priest and the role of high priest as portrayed by Yeshua. Yeshua is “merciful and faithful” and is able to sympathize for the people He serves. The Earthly high priest is described by the Jewish philosopher Philo as being required to be stern and sullen and sacrosanct for his priestly duties:

“God commands the high priest neither to rend his clothes over his very nearest relations when they die, nor to take from his head the ensign of the priesthood, nor in short to depart from the holy place on any plea of mourning, that, showing proper respect to the place, and to the sacred ornaments with which he himself is crowned, he may show himself superior to pity, and pass the whole of his life exempt from all sorrow” (*The Special Laws* 1.115).<sup>89</sup>

Whether God commands this behavior of the high priest or not can be debated, but it is certainly a reflection on how the high priest would have been characterized by many in Second Temple Judaism, either living in the Land of Israel or in the Diaspora. The beforementioned *Testament of Levi*, appearing in the larger Pseudepigraphal work *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, was believed to record some oral traditions from the final words of Jacob's twelve sons prior to their deaths. In its entirety, the work only survives in Greek and dates from the

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<sup>85</sup> Ellingworth, 178.

<sup>86</sup> *The Soncino Talmud. Judaic Classics Library II*. MS Windows 3.1. Brooklyn: Institute for Computers in Jewish Life, 1996. CD-ROM.

<sup>87</sup> deSilva, 123.

<sup>88</sup> Vermes, 527.

<sup>89</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, pp 544-545.

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

mid-Second Century B.C.E. It speaks of a priest who will come and remove the curse from humanity:

“In his priesthood sin shall cease and lawless men shall rest from their evil deeds, and righteous men shall find rest in him. And he shall open the gates of paradise; he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life. The spirit of holiness shall be upon them. And Beliar shall be bound by him. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits” (*Testament of Levi* 18:9-12).<sup>90</sup>

Lane remarks that “This text, like others that represent God as the champion of Israel, preserves an apocalyptic point of view. It offers a hellenistic-Jewish paradigm for the christological perspectives developed in Heb 2:10-18.”<sup>91</sup> Being a major work surviving among a collection of Hellenistic Jewish texts, the reflection on Yeshua being the high priest is obviously appropriated from the author’s background of being a Diaspora Jew. In addition to being the “Ultimate Man” of Hebrews 2, Yeshua is also portrayed as fully fulfilling the role of high priest in a way the Earthly high priest could not. While like the Earthly high priest, Yeshua can enter into the Holy of Holies, unlike the Earthly high priest, Yeshua is the only One for whom “there shall be no successor for him from generation to generation forever. And in his priesthood the nations shall be multiplied in knowledge on the earth” (*Testament of Levi* 18:9).<sup>92</sup> However, the Qumran references regarding the *Testament of Levi* indicate that the Messiah being a “priest” was not only a Hellenistic Jewish expectation. At least two Jewish communities of the First Century expected the Messiah to function as a priest, and the author of Hebrews further expounds upon this.

The reference to “the people” in Hebrews 2:17 has an undeniable connection to Israel. Lane indicates, “‘the people’ (τοῦ λαοῦ [*tou laou*] has its background in the Greek Bible, where ὁ λαός [τοῦ θεοῦ] [*ho laos {tou Theou}*] is a technical term for Israel in its character as the nation chosen by God and separated from the other nations by covenant relationship.”<sup>93</sup> Yeshua is not only portrayed as the high priest able to sympathize with the sins of fallen humanity, but specifically intercedes for the sins of Israel to the Father. This intercession is necessarily something that must include people from the nations, and not only physical descendants of the Patriarchs. This may be regarded a further development of concept that all Believers are a part of the “commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:11-12; cf. Acts 15:14).

Yeshua is able to intercede for and helps men and women in a unique way, because He experienced the same things on Earth that they all experience. Unlike the Earthly high priest who would often try to detach himself from the people he served, Yeshua endured through life like any human being. Our author indicates, “Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18, NLT).<sup>94</sup> Ellingworth is keen to note that “it is perhaps best to take the primary meaning of *πειράζω* [*peirazō*] here to be ‘test.’”<sup>95</sup> Yeshua can identify with us “Because he himself was tested by what he suffered” (NRSV). WBC offers an expanded rendering of Hebrews 2:18: “Because he himself

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<sup>90</sup> H.C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” trans., in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 795.

<sup>91</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:65.

<sup>92</sup> Kee, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, 795.

<sup>93</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:66.

<sup>94</sup> It is very true that according to James, “God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone” (1:13). Some may use Hebrews 1:18, and likewise James 1:13, to discount the Divinity of Yeshua. However, it must be noted that God Himself was tempted in the Tanach by the Ancient Israelites (Exodus 17:7; Deuteronomy 6:16), and that certainly does not make Him something less than the Supreme Creator. The difference between fallen human beings and Yeshua, is that Yeshua—as God—has the Divine nature to truly not succumb to temptation.

<sup>95</sup> Ellingworth, 191.

suffered death, having been put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tested.”<sup>96</sup> Yeshua is able to be our able mediator as high priest before the Father, because He partook of the human experience as we all do. The difference between Yeshua and us, is that Yeshua was able to overcome all of the worldly temptations that we fall prey to because of our fallen nature (Hebrews 4:15). After emphasizing Yeshua’s Divine Kingship, the author of Hebrews concludes the opening of his treatise by emphasizing Him as the “Ultimate Man,” most present in the role of high priest.

## Hebrews 3:1-6

### “Yeshua Has More Honor Than Moses”

*“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Yeshua, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Messiah was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.”*

Hebrews ch. 3 continues the montage of Yeshua being superior over all things, with the author now describing Yeshua’s superiority to Moses in Hebrews 3:1-6.<sup>97</sup> Too frequently among Christian examiners, these verses are usually construed to mean that our author is arguing the so-called superiority of “Christianity to Judaism.” Hagner summarizes this position well, remarking, “The superiority of Jesus to Moses, [is] obviously important for those tempted to abandon the Christian faith and return to Judaism.”<sup>98</sup> To an extent, this comment is accurate in that the author of Hebrews is urgently dissuading anyone considering an abandonment of faith in Yeshua. However, many have taken these verses to mean that our writer is disparaging Moses, when this is not the case at all. On the contrary, while holding Yeshua to be superior over all, our writer has a very high regard for the Teacher of Israel and the Torah. In his eloquent communication style, he is able to maintain the high regard that First Century Judaism had for Moses, while preserving the focus of Messiah Yeshua for an individual’s salvation. By comparing Moses to Yeshua, we see that the author of Hebrews holds Moses with the utmost respect—**by comparing a mere human to God in the flesh.**

The author begins his comments by reminding his audience that they are holy because of their faith in Yeshua: “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Yeshua, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1). This is the only place in the Apostolic Scriptures where the term *adelphoi hagioi* (ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι) or “holy brothers” (NIV) is used, even though the concept of sanctification or holiness is affluent all throughout the Bible. We see a parallel to Hebrews 3:1 in 1 Corinthians 1:2, where the Apostle Paul writes, “To the [assembly] of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Messiah Yeshua, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, their *Lord* and ours.” The author of Hebrews, perhaps having been in the inner circle of Paul, adapts this terminology for his own unique purpose. “Holy brethren,” used only here in this form, speaks to the need for Believers to be holy to God and members of a true community of faith in union with Messiah Yeshua, “brothers in the family of God” (NEB).

<sup>96</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:51.

<sup>97</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>98</sup> Hagner, in *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, 2156.