

## THE NATURE OF YESHUA IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES AND HEBREWS

Even though we see some noticeable variance among the traditions concerning Abel, they do provide a large census of Jewish opinion indicating that the death of Abel led to a downward spiral, not only inflicting considerable curses upon Cain (Genesis 4:11-12), but a considerable problem with fallen humanity. The consequences of Fall, typified by the blood of Abel crying out for justice, is only resolvable via the blood of Yeshua. Our author's placement of Abel's blood, and comparing it to "the sprinkled blood" of the Messiah, is by no coincidence. Interestingly enough, the *Targum Jonathan* on Genesis 4:3 lists Abel's death as having occurred "on the fourteenth of Nisan,"<sup>272</sup> and there are commentators who have suggested that Yeshua the Messiah sacrificed on 14 Nisan is in view here.<sup>273</sup> Even though there are debates over the crucifixion chronology of Yeshua, the typology is certainly there.

The key in properly understanding Hebrews 12:24 is that although the blood of Abel is very important to consider, as it speaks of the first human slaughtered and the general fall of humankind—crying out for justice—it is only the blood of the Messiah Himself that can redeem mortals and bring them into the Father's presence. Lane validly writes, "The presence in the heavenly city of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant whose blood speaks more effectively than the blood of Abel, provides assurance that those who pursue peace and holiness...will be welcomed. Entrance into the city, however...calls for allegiance and obedience as the response of gratitude to the objective blessings secured by Jesus."<sup>274</sup>

The author of Hebrews also puts an interesting timestamp in his epistle when describing Yeshua as "the mediator of a new covenant," surely a reference to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 33:31-34 (cf. 8:8-12; 10:15-17). But he employs a different Greek word for "new" in Hebrews 12:24, *neos* (νέος). Whereas *kainos* (καινός) generally describes something that is new in character, *neos* "pert. to being in existence but a relatively short time, new, fresh" (BDAG).<sup>275</sup> In the chronology of our writer, the New Covenant had only been inaugurated for Believers a very short time. This is why Stibbs refers it to "Jesus the Mediator of this recently established...covenant."<sup>276</sup> Those of Hebrews' audience may be a part of the "first wave" of the New Covenant's inauguration. While this makes them extremely special in the eyes of our author, it also places an extreme responsibility on them. That is why he has just detailed all of the wonderful parts of Heavenly Jerusalem and what one gets to experience as part of God's Kingdom. Who in their right heart or mind would want to give these things up?

### HEBREWS 13:8

"Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever."

After stating the need for his audience to emulate their previous leaders (Hebrews 13:7), the author of Hebrews makes an interesting remark.<sup>277</sup> He says, "Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8, CJB/CJSB). Obviously, this is a reference to Yeshua's changelessness, as he has previously stated "your years will have no end" (Hebrews 1:12, ESV). There are several important parallels to be drawn between Hebrews 13:8 and several passages in the Tanach:

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<sup>272</sup> J.W. Etheridge (1862), trans. *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel On the Pentateuch With The Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum From the Chaldee*. Accessible online at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~ntcs/pj/psjon.htm>>.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp 360-361, fn 177.

<sup>274</sup> Lane, *Hebrews*, 47b:474.

<sup>275</sup> BDAG, 669.

<sup>276</sup> Stibbs, in *NBCR*, 1215.

<sup>277</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.

“But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end” (Psalm 102:27).

“For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

“Even to *your* old age I will be the same, and even to *your* graying years I will bear *you!* I have done *it*, and I will carry *you*; and I will bear *you* and I will deliver *you*” (Isaiah 46:4).

Each of these verses, in some way or another, speak of the timelessness of God. The writer of Hebrews is witnessed taking a concept associated with the nature of the LORD God (YHWH) and is clearly applying it to Yeshua—thus considering Him timeless and indeed with His nature on the definitive, Divine side of things. But he is also probably applying Yeshua’s not changing to His continuing priesthood in Heaven, which never changes as He is always interceding. As the audience should follow their leaders’ manner of faith, they can have confidence that the work of Yeshua for them is unchanging and constant.