

HEBREWS 1

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU’ [Psalm 2:7]? And again, ‘I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME’ [2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 7:14]? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM’ [Deuteronomy 32:43, LXX; Psalm 97:7]. And of the angels He says, ‘WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE’ [Psalm 104:4]. But of the Son He says, ‘YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS’ [Psalm 45:6-7]. And, ‘YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END’ [Psalm 102:25-27]. But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’ [Psalm 110:1]? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”

The opening lines of the Epistle to the Hebrews are very interesting, and present some important concepts that the author is trying to convey to his audience.¹ He opens his message with the words, “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1, RSV). The author writes about the revelation of God to humanity and how He has done this in various stages in time, through the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through the Prophets of Israel. David A. deSilva indicates that “The purpose of an exordium was to gain the attention and goodwill of the hearers, to establish oneself as an expert and honorable speaker (i.e., make initial appeals to ethos), and to introduce the leading ideas that will be developed in the speech itself.”² Consequently, appeals made to the Patriarchs and Prophets of Ancient Israel are exactly what we see throughout the entire text of Hebrews. Our author will appeal to his audience’s knowledge of their sayings, writings, and extant traditions to convey important points about Yeshua the Messiah.

We are told that God has revealed Himself in *polumerōs kai polutropōs* (Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως), which is invariably rendered as “in many portions and in many ways” (Hebrews 1:1, NASU), “at many times and in various ways” (NIV), or “in fragmentary and varied fashion” (NEB). These are admittedly some difficult concepts that examiners have debated over many centuries. The author of Hebrews suggests that God did not reveal Himself to humankind all at once, but gradually over time has given people the information that they need to know concerning His existence, His plans and intentions, and consequently also their redemption. Donald Guthrie remarks, “Anyone acquainted with the Old Testament would at once be able to fill in the details—the different modes (visions, angelic revelations, prophetic words and events) and the different occasions (stretching across the whole vista of Old

¹ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*.

² David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)pp 84-86.

Testament history).³ Both the author and his audience understand that God has always been in the process of revealing more of Himself to men and women since the Creation, and has done so especially through the history of Israel. In Hebrews ch. 1, the author makes many quotations and allusions to the Tanach that he expects his hearers to be intimately familiar with.

The author of Hebrews does not consider God's revelation to be really complete until Yeshua the Messiah entered the scene of world history. He says that God has now "spoken to us in His Son" (Hebrews 1:2). The Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel are part of a succession of godly persons whom the Lord used to reveal His will to humanity, which is consummated in the coming of the Messiah Himself. **The theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is overwhelmingly Yeshua.** Yeshua, in the author's mind, is the overwhelming climax and fulfillment of everything which preceded His arrival, in the Father's previous revelation through the Patriarchs and Prophets.

In opening his treatise, we also see that the author of Hebrews has a highly developed sense of the nature of Yeshua. Donald Hagner says that "The high Christology of these verses is determinative for the whole book."⁴ Yeshua the Messiah is the One who has been "appointed Heir and lawful Owner of all things" (Hebrews 1:2, Amplified Bible). However, while Yeshua is indeed superior to all previous mediators, the author does not by any means demean previous mediators such as Abraham, Moses, or David. On the contrary to what some might think, the author demonstrates a strong continuity between the Tanach or the Scriptures of Israel, and the Messiah. The fact that these mediators could even be compared to Yeshua—which a high Christology holds to be God in the flesh—shows how highly the author of Hebrews regards them. And, we do have to consider the fact that Yeshua would fulfill in person what the Prophets only prophesied.

The author of Hebrews writes that this has all come *en huiō* (ἐν υἱῷ), "in Son." Yeshua, in relationship to the Father as His Son, is the only One who can fully and truly convey the Father's will to mortals—whereas anyone who preceded Yeshua in human history was definitely limited because of his or her humanity. Furthermore, when our author says that the Father has "appointed" Yeshua, he uses the verb form *ethēken* (ἐθηκεν), appearing in the aorist active indicative tense, implying some sense of timelessness. Paul used similar terminology to describe his appointment as an apostle by God, indicating that it carried major authority (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11).

Hebrews 1:2 ends with the important statement that through Yeshua, God "made the universe" (NIV). There are certainly parallels between this statement and what we see elsewhere in the Apostolic Scriptures:

"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3).

"[Y]et 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).

³ Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Letter to the Hebrews*, Vol 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 62.

⁴ Donald Hagner, "Hebrews," in Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al. *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 2154.

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“For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).

The Greek of Hebrews 1:1 ends with something extremely important that cannot be overlooked. The author says that Yeshua created *tous aiōnas* (τοὺς αἰῶνας), employing the word *aiōn* (αἰών) for “world,” rather than the more common *kosmos* (κόσμος). *TDNT* explains, “the word is used for the duration of the world...[and] the same term can signify both God’s eternity and the world’s duration.”⁵ Both *aiōn* and *kosmos* are used in the LXX to communicate the Hebraic concept of *olam* (עולם), which *TWOT* notes has a wide variety of possible meanings: “*forever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world, etc.*”⁶ A notable usage of where the author of Hebrews may be appropriating this idea appears in the Mishnah. While the Mishnah was compiled after Hebrews, the traditions that it represents were present in the Jewish community of the First Century:

“Precious are Israelites, to whom was given the precious thing. It was an act of still greater love that it was made known to them that to them was given that precious thing with which the world [*olam*] was made” (m.*Avot* 3:14).⁷

In Hebrews 1:2, *aiōnas* is probably best translated as “ages” (YLT/LITV), rather than “world” (cf. Hebrews 11:3). Guthrie observes, “The reason is that the word ‘ages’ is more comprehensive, including within it the periods of time through which the created order exists.”⁸ In other words, not only is Yeshua responsible for just creating the universe, but He is responsible for creating every single second of every person’s life that exists in that universe. Everything that makes the universe operate properly, Yeshua is personally responsible for. While Yeshua as the Son is the mediator between humankind and the Father, Yeshua is also credited with being the Creator.

Some have also speculated as whether or not our author is appropriating themes consistent with the description of the figure Wisdom in ancient Jewish literature. Consider the parallels between Proverbs 8:27-31 and Wisdom 9:1-2:

PROVERBS 8:27-31	WISDOM 9:1-2
<p>When He established the heavens, I was there, when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, when He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; then I was beside Him, <i>as</i> a master workman; and I was daily <i>His</i> delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the world, His earth, and <i>having</i> my delight in the sons of men.</p>	<p>O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom hast formed man, to have dominion over the creatures thou hast made.</p>

⁵ H. Sasse, “*aiōn*,” in *TDNT*, 1164.

⁶ Allan A. MacRae, “עולם,” in *TWOT*, 2:672.

⁷ Neusner, *Mishnah*, 680.

⁸ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 65.

Second Temple Judaism often identified God's Word with His Wisdom, and Yeshua is often considered to be the Word of God by the Apostles, notably seen in John ch. 1. The themes of God's Word and Wisdom were particularly important in Hellenistic Judaism. Lane comments that the statements in Hebrews 1:2, and what "immediately follow belong to a class of statements descriptive of divine Wisdom in the theology of Alexandrian Judaism...Reflection on the Wisdom of God in Alexandrian theology provided [our author] with categories and vocabulary with which to interpret the person and work of Christ."⁹

However, in spite of possible parallels that exist between Yeshua, the Word of God, and Wisdom, Paul Ellingworth must state, "Despite allusions to Wis. 7, Hebrews does not identify Christ with wisdom...and indeed avoids the term σοφία [*sophia*]."¹⁰ It is however, interesting, that while Wisdom was considered to be a companion with the Almighty, Yeshua is likewise portrayed as being a companion with the Father in Scripture. Revelation 3:14 describes Him as "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God." As Hebrews begins, our author may not totally see Yeshua as God's "Wisdom," but there are likely parallels that suggest theological motifs appropriated from Diaspora Jewry. These themes are all used to uplift Yeshua as Lord, Redeemer, and Creator. Notably, though, it is not in the areas where Yeshua is similar to the figure of Wisdom that are important for readers to consider—**but where Yeshua is decisively different** (cf. Colossians 1:15-20). The figure of Wisdom is a virtue often used to describe God's power and immanence; Yeshua the Messiah is an actual person, to whom all of Creation must give an account and bow down before in worship (cf. Philippians 2:10-11).

Hebrews 1:3-4 summarize who the author of Hebrews considers Yeshua the Son to be, in relation to His Father, before he substantiates his thoughts with some sizeable quotations from the Tanach. He describes Yeshua first as the "radiance" or "brightness" (Hebrews 1:3, KJV) of God. Used in the context of God's glory, *BDAG* defines *apaugasma* (ἀπαύγασμα) as "**radiance, effulgence**, in the sense of brightness from a source."¹¹ Yeshua the Messiah obviously originates from the Eternal Father.

The author further says that the Messiah is "the exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:3, NRSV). He employs the word *charaktēr* (χαρακτήρ), meaning "**characteristic trait or manner, distinctive mark**" and "**an impression that is made, outward aspect, outward appearance, form**" (*BDAG*).¹² Yeshua, as the Son of God, bears everything that His Father is. This is a much clearer term to use than the more common *eikōn* (εἰκών), which *LS* simply defines as "*a likeness, image, portrait*."¹³ The closest Hebrew equivalent for *charaktēr* is probably *temunah* (תְּמוּנָה), "*likeness, representation*" (*BDB*).¹⁴ Moses was able to see the *temunah* of the Lord, and was able to speak with Him in close proximity:

"With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form [*temunah*] of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?" (Numbers 12:8).

The Septuagint translators may have been at a loss with how to translate *temunah*, and instead simply rendered it as *doxa* (δόξα), or "the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 12:8, LXE). "In the LXX *charaktēr* denotes a 'scar' in Lev 13:28." However, in later texts it indicates "the 'likeness'

⁹ Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:12.

¹⁰ Paul Ellingworth, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 99.

¹¹ *BDAG*, 99.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1078.

¹³ *LS*, 228.

¹⁴ *BDB*, 568.

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impressed by parents on children in 4 Macc. 15:4" (TDNT).¹⁵ 4 Maccabees 15:4 states, "In what manner might I express the emotions of parents who love their children? We impress upon the character [*character*] of a small child a wondrous likeness both of mind and of form. Especially is this true of mothers, who because of their birthpangs have a deeper sympathy toward their offspring than do the fathers."

Yeshua's personal attributes, ethics, morality, and grand compassion, may be regarded as being the exact same as His Father. This will surely be manifested in Yeshua's obedience to His Father to die for sinful humanity, and the service He offers people in providing them with eternal redemption.

The stamp of the Father's complete nature upon the Son is a strong indication of Yeshua's Divinity. The author testifies to the fact that Yeshua is "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). He employs the participle *pherōn* (φέρων), best translated as "bearing up" (YLT). It appears in the present tense indicating that Yeshua is presently the One who is "upholding" (RSV) the Creation—meaning that He is presently running the universe. It is notable that while many may conclude that the "word" referred to is Yeshua, the term *logos* (λόγος), which John uses in his Gospel to refer to Yeshua, is not employed here. The author of Hebrews uses *rhēma* (ῥῆμα), meaning "that which is said or spoken, a word, saying" (LS).¹⁶ The idea that appears to be communicated is not only how Yeshua is the Creator, and that the ages are being presently upheld by His spoken word—but that all He had to do was proclaim, "Let there be light"; and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

Lane indicates that "The writer may have become familiar with the terms like ἀπαύγασμα [*apaugasma*] and χαρακτήρ [*character*] from an Alexandrian education, but he has brought this distinctive vocabulary into the service of Christian confession."¹⁷ Apparently, these were terms commonly used in the Jewry of Alexandria, and our author appropriates and reapplies them to the Messianic faith, amplifying them from their original meaning.

Hebrews 1:3 also tells us something very important about what Yeshua has done in the world, which sets the tone for the remainder of the epistle. The author writes, "After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (ESV). Describing the act of redemption, he uses the term *katharismos* (καθαρισμός), a later form of *katharos* (καθαρός), meaning "clear of dirt, clean, spotless, unsoiled" (LS).¹⁸ This latter term is used in the LXX to describe the defilements of sin in association with the altar and the purification that is provided for the people (Exodus 29:37; 30:19; Leviticus 16:19). Its verb form, *katharizō* (καθαρίζω), is used to translate the Hebrew verb *taher* (טהַר), defined as "make or declare ceremonially clean" (BDB).¹⁹ One notable example appears in Leviticus 16:30, in reference to *Yom Kippur*:

"[F]or it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse [MT: *taher*; LXX: *katharizō*] you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD."

Consequently, a major theme of Hebrews is how Yeshua has fulfilled the requirements of the Tabernacle service as delivered to Ancient Israel by Moses. The author says that Yeshua—as the perfect sacrifice for sins—has provided the atonement and purification that the Torah requires. With this in mind he can confidently say that "he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). Using terms such as the "Majesty on high" or "HaG'dulah BaM'romim" (CJB/CJSB) is a very Jewish way of referring to God. But even more

¹⁵ G. Kelber, "character," in TDNT, 1308.

¹⁶ LS, 717.

¹⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:13.

¹⁸ LS, 388.

¹⁹ BDB, 372.

important is the fact that the author of Hebrews is making an indirect reference to Psalm 110:1, one of the most frequently quoted Tanach texts in the Apostolic Scriptures:

“A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”

This verse is important, of course, because it is used by the Apostles to affirm that Yeshua is not only seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, but also to affirm His Divinity (discussed previously in **Volume I**). The Hebrew text has *ne’um YHWH l’Adonai* (יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי יְהוִה), which some Jewish examiners have said only speaks of God speaking to a human master. But the Greek LXX text, quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures, says *eipen ho Kurios tō Kuriō* (εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ): “The Lord said to my Lord” (LXE)—indeed indicating that God is having a conversation with Himself. Of the eleven quotes or direct references to Psalm 110:1 in the Apostolic Scriptures, four of them are in Hebrews (1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).²⁰ Even though this is not the only theme of Hebrews, Ellingworth is keen to note, “The importance of Ps. 110 for Hebrews cannot be questioned.”²¹

The author’s opening thoughts end with a statement that is somewhat perplexing, as Yeshua is “much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4). Why does the author of Hebrews even make a reference to angels, and Yeshua’s exaltedness over them? Speculation abounds as to what this may have been referring to. The mainstream Pharisaical Judaism of the period did not have a strongly developed angelology, when compared to that of the Qumran sect. In the Torah and Tanach, we certainly see angels, and the Apostolic testimony was that they were present at Mount Sinai (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19). We also know that angels are created beings, who are simply called out to perform God’s tasks. The most neutral meaning for the Hebrew *malak* (מַלְאָךְ) and the Greek *angelos* (ἄγγελος), is probably “messenger,” and the terms are used in the Bible to refer to human messengers every bit as much as spiritual or supernatural messengers. So why does our author make the point of saying that Yeshua has been given a far better position than the angels? *EJ* summarizes some of the Jewish angelology of the First Century:

“The doctrine of angels was not evenly spread among the various parts of the Jewish people. The apocalyptic wisdom teachers imparted the knowledge that they had secretly acquired through their contact with angels, only to a narrow circle of the specially initiated. Consequently, the doctrine of angels found its widest distribution among the secret societies of the Essenes. The latter (Jos., Wars, 2:142) carefully guarded the secret list of angels’ names. The Qumran scrolls testify to an organized system of angelology, in which the ‘Prince of Light’ and other heavenly princes were expected to fight alongside the Sons of Light on the ‘last day,’ and they thought them present at meetings of the Qumran sect. A certain dualism is seen in the struggle for power between the forces of evil (Belial) and those of goodness over the sons of man (IQM 13:11). The Pharisees, on the other hand, showed little interest in these problems. The Sadducees, who were opposed to any kind of mysticism, are described by the Acts of the Apostles (23:8) as denying the very existence of angels; this however, was undoubtedly a false assumption, derived from the Sadducees’ rejection of apocalyptic teachings. Among Jewish magicians and sorcerers, the concept of angels was particularly confused, influenced as they were by the pagan literature on the subject, where the angels usually appear in the company of pagan gods, to combat disease.”²²

²⁰ The other references are: Matthew 26:64; Acts 2:23; 5:34; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 3:22.

²¹ Ellingworth, 90.

²² Alexander Altmann, “Angels and Angelology,” in *EJ*.

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This entry offers some of the possible reasons why someone, like the author of Hebrews, might make a point that Yeshua is superior to the angels. Ellingworth indicates, "There was intense speculation about angels in the intertestamental period...at Qumran, and in later Jewish and gnostic circles...Other strands of NT tradition...suggest that a cultus involving angels competed seriously with faith in Christ."²³ Is it possible that some in the Jewish audience receiving this message were falling prey to angel worship? We do know that angel worship was a problem for some at Colossae, which the Apostle Paul rebukes them about:

"Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and **the worship of the angels**, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18).

In spite of the possibility that some in Hebrews' audience were worshipping angels, Ellingworth concludes, "There is no evidence of this danger in Hebrews, which is generally nonpolemical in tone."²⁴ It is absolutely true that angel worship is not called out by name in the Epistle to the Hebrews. However, this does not rule out the possibility that many Jewish Believers were entertaining the idea that Yeshua was just an angel or a messenger sent from God, or some kind of highly exalted supernatural being—rather than God Himself. Lane notes the distinct possibility, "It has been argued that the writer found it necessary to combat a heretical form of christology that confused Christ with the highest angel in Judaism."²⁵ When we see the author's remarks about Yeshua the Messiah's superiority over the angels, it should be with this in mind. **The author of Hebrews does not consider Yeshua to be an "angel," and goes to great lengths in Hebrews ch. 1 to describe why this is not the case.**

Hebrews ch. 1, detailing some of the major themes that our author will be focusing on, provide some of the main support for the Divinity of Yeshua witnessed in the Apostolic Scriptures, along with: John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; and Colossians 1:15-20. The concepts of God's complete revelation in Messiah Yeshua, Yeshua's Kingship over the universe and complete superiority, His eternity and humanity, and also His redemption of sinners, are the concepts that are explained throughout the entire treatise. Lane summarizes it all quite well when he states, "The writer's perspective is distinctly theocentric; he confronts his readers immediately with the God who intervened in human history with his sovereign word addressed to humankind. His ultimate word, however, was spoken through one who is distinguished from others by reason of the unique relationship he sustains to God."²⁶

The remainder of Hebrews ch. 1 includes strong reasoning for why Yeshua the Messiah is superior to the angels. The exact situation that required the author to write about this, has sometimes been thought to be angel worship among his audience. More likely is the fact that some believed that Yeshua was nothing more than some kind of high supernatural agent of God, though ultimately a created being. The author of Hebrews proves that this is not the case, relying on his audience's knowledge of both the Tanach and the actions of Yeshua. He proceeds to define who Yeshua is, arguing that He is a Son to God, and God is a Father to Him, a relationship that God does not have with any of the angels. This makes Yeshua's purpose for coming to Earth and intervening in the lives of mortals on behalf of their salvation, one that is superior to the angels.

²³ Ellingworth, 103.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:8.

²⁶ Ibid., 47a:9.

He opens up his argument, stating, “For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus” (Hebrews 1:5a, NLT). He then quotes from Psalm 2, a text rife with Messianic references. This psalm opens up with rhetorical questions:

“Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’” (Psalm 2:1-3).

The Psalmist asks how the nations of the Earth can even dream of setting themselves against the Almighty God of the Universe and against His *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) or Messiah. The author of Hebrews sees this clearly as a reference to Yeshua, who the Psalmist indicates is to come into the world, receive the world as a Divine inheritance, and break all the enemies of His Father. The elongated text, that our author makes only a short reference to, reads as follows:

“But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘**You are My Son, today I have begotten You** [Hebrews 1:5]. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware” (Psalm 2:6-9).

This same text is quoted by the Apostle Paul when preaching the good news to a synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, and Paul makes the important point that this psalm speaks of Yeshua—and not King David:

“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Yeshua, **as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU’** [Psalm 2:7]. *As for the fact* that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY *and* SURE *blessings* OF DAVID’ [Isaiah 55:3]. Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, ‘YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY’ [Psalm 16:10]. For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay” (Acts 13:32-37).

Yeshua is a decisively different Son to the Father, than the relationship that King David had to Him. The fact that Yeshua is this Son is readily attested to us in the Gospels, by the voice of the Father Himself:

“Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!’” (Mark 9:7).

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:32).

Upon establishing that Yeshua is the Son prophesied about in Psalm 2, our author makes a unique quotation from 2 Samuel 7, in Nathan’s prophecy to King David about One coming after him who would have a throne established forever. As Warren A. Quanbeck explains it, “Here David is treated as a prophetic figure who finds his true place as a preparation for the great King, ‘great David’s greater Son.’”²⁷ While it was initially spoken concerning Solomon, it was considered to have major Messianic significance. The elongated prophecy specifically says,

²⁷ Warren A. Quanbeck, “Hebrews,” in Charles M. Laymon, ed., *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 900.

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“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-16).²⁸

The expectation that the Messiah was going to be a son of David, is, of course, realized in other prophecies in the Tanach (Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 9:9). Some have tried to claim that Psalm 2 was not a prophecy about Yeshua, but only about David and his son Solomon, and that the emerging Christian Church of the late First Century only “invented it” to apply to Jesus Christ. But, this prophecy was considered to be messianic in nature by some Jews of the First Century. The most notable extra-Biblical application of 2 Samuel 7 in a Messianic context appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Qumran community’s text *Midrash on the Last Days*:

“The Lord declares to you that He will build you a House (2 Sam. vii, 11c) I will raise up your seed after you (2 Sam. vii, 12). I will establish the throne of his kingdom [for ever] (2 Sam. vii, 13). [I will be] his father and he shall be my son (2 Sam. vii, 14). He is the Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time. As it is written, I will raise up the tent of David that is fallen (Amos ix, 11). That is to say, the fallen tent of David is he who shall arise to save Israel” (4Q174 10:10-11).²⁹

This should confirm for us that the author of Hebrews is not necessarily “inventing” a new interpretation of Nathan’s prophecy, but that it did exist in the milieu of some in the First Century Jewish community, and was likely more widespread than just the Essenes. We might not totally agree with the Essenes’ ultimate conclusions regarding these prophecies, but they are interpreted as being references to the Messiah to come, and the author of Hebrews has not fidgeted with the Tanach Scriptures.

It is also important to note that the Hebrew phrase *v’haqimoti et’-zaraka* (וְהִקְיִמֹתִי אֶת־זַרְכָּא) in 2 Samuel 7:12, was rendered as *kai anastēsō to sperma sou meta* (καὶ ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου μετὰ) in the Greek Septuagint: “I will raise up thy seed after thee” (LXE). This is a theme appropriated by John in his Gospel, when people are asking, “Has not the Scripture said that the Messiah comes from the descendants [*spermatos, σπέρματος*] of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” (John 7:42).

The author of Hebrews begins to make some major arguments describing the superiority of Yeshua over the angels. He argues that Yeshua is the Son of God, and justifies this claim with some major Messianic words from the Tanach. Following this, our author then discusses how this Son of God is to be worshipped, a definite sign that he considered Yeshua Divine, although as One to be distinguished from the Father.

Yeshua is described in Hebrews 1:6 as being the “firstborn.” While some might choose to view “firstborn” as a reference to the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, being “firstborn” is a designation of the **first status or first rank** as seen in the Tanach Scriptures (Exodus 4:22; Psalm 89:27; Jeremiah 31:9). With Yeshua coming into the world, the angels are commanded by the Father to worship Him. The author writes, “And all God’s angels must worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6, HCSB). Why does he do this? Again, it is to emphasize the superiority of Yeshua over

²⁸ This same basic admonition is repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:13: “I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you.”

²⁹ Geza Vermes, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 494.

angels—and angels are beings which are *decisively not* to be worshipped. And, the Messiah being superior to angels was a very strong First Century Jewish concept. Louis H. Evans is keen to note, “That angels should worship the messianic Son is a rabbinic concept with which the Jews were quite familiar. When the messianic Son comes He shall be above Abraham, above Moses, and greater than the ministering angels.”³⁰ This “firstborn” Yeshua was brought into the world at Bethlehem. Some may need to remember, though, how Yeshua possessed glory and was worshipped in Heaven (cf. John 17:5)—but that the Incarnation of the Son of God, did not all of a sudden mean that such worship was to be abandoned by the Heavenly host subsequent to His entry into the world. For, even in His lowest estate, incarnated as a mortal, He still deserved worship by the Heavenly host.

What is important for us to determine is exactly *what Tanach text* our author quotes from in Hebrews 1:6 to support the premise that Yeshua is to be worshipped. One text that is thought to be alluded to is Psalm 97:7, which says “Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, who boast themselves of idols; worship Him, all you gods.” The appeal that is made by the Psalmist is that any false gods or idols are to bow down and worship the Lord, the One True God. **This is a reverent action that is to be directed toward Yeshua the Messiah**, and would be regarded as idolatrous if Yeshua Himself were not God.

The MT of Psalm 97:7 says *hishtachavu-lo kol-elohim* (הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֹו כָּל־אֱלֹהִים), “worship Him, all you gods,” rendered in the LXX as *proskunēsate autō pantes hoi angeloi* (προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι), “worship him, all ye his angels” (LXE). Here, *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), the Hebrew word typically meaning “God,” is understood to be “divine beings” or “powers,” which the Septuagint translators understood to mean “angels” (Grk. sing. *angelos*, ἄγγελος). While the theme of Psalm 97:7 is being appropriated by the author of Hebrews, Hebrews 1:6 probably includes more.

Another possible text being referenced by our author is Deuteronomy 32:43, in its Septuagint version. While most differences between the Hebrew MT and Greek LXX are nominal at best, this verse is an exception. When applied to Messiah Yeshua, the admonition is clearly presented that the angels—and consequently human beings as well—are to worship Him. This is especially because of the great power of God demonstrated in acts of vengeance against the enemies of His people. Note the major differences between the MT and LXX versions of this verse:

³⁰ Louis H. Evans, Jr., *The Preacher’s Commentary: Hebrews*, Vol 33 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 55.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:43 (MT)	DEUTERONOMY 32:43 (LXX)
<p>Rejoice, O nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries and will forgive his land, and his people (Jerusalem Bible-Koren).</p>	<p>Rejoice, you heavens, with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him; rejoice you Gentiles, with His people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in Him; for He shall avenge the blood of His sons, and He shall render vengeance, and recompense justice to His enemies, and will reward them that hate Him; and the Lord shall purge the land of His people (Apostle’s Bible).</p>
<p>הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ כִּי דָם־עַבְדָּיו יִקָּח וְנַקָּם יִשְׁיב לְצָרָיו וְכִפֵּר אֲדָמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ: <i>har'ninu goyim amo ki dam-avdayv yiqqom v'naqam yashiv l'tzarayv v'kipper admato amo</i></p>	<p>εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ ἅμα αὐτῷ καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ ὅτι τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικᾶται καὶ ἐκδικήσει καὶ ἀνταποδώσει δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν ἀνταποδώσει καὶ ἐκαθαριεῖ κύριος τὴν γῆν τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ <i>euphranthēte ouranoi hama autō kai proskunēsātōsan autō pantes huoi Theou euphranthēte ethnē meta tou laou autou kai enischusatōsan autō pantes angeloi Theou hoti to haima tōn huiōn autou ekdikatai kai ekdikēsei kai antapodōsei dikēn tois echthrois kai tois misousin antapodōsei kai ekkathariei Kurios tēn gēn tou laou autou</i></p>

The key phrase that is obviously missing from Deuteronomy 32:43 in the MT is “you heavens, with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him” (Apostle’s Bible), as the principal actors in the Heavens are God’s angels. The Greek phrase that appears in LXX(a), is *kai proskunēsātōsan autō pantes huoi Theou* (καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ), literally meaning “and worship Him all sons of God.” In Jewish theology, “the sons of God” are often viewed as being His angels. LXX(b), which may be a source the author of Hebrews is working from, reads with *angeloi Theou* (ἄγγελοι θεοῦ).³¹ The Greek of Hebrews 1:6 uses this second reading.

This phrase appears in a song that lauds the Lord’s ultimate victory over His enemies, and may be what is alluded to in the Book of Revelation as being sung by those who overcome the antimessiah (Revelation 15:3). Why does this phrase not appear in the Masoretic Text? The argument could be made that since the Septuagint is not a literal word-for-word translation, this is an extrapolation of what Deuteronomy 32:43 means, and thus merely an expansion upon it. However, this same phrase appears among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which specifically included thirty-three copies of Deuteronomy, with thirty of them at Qumran.³² As Deuteronomy 32:43

³¹ Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 350.

³² Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 145.

reads from *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, “Rejoice, O heavens, together with him; and bow down to him all you gods.”³³ The Hebrew behind this reads with *elohim*, which here can be interpreted as a reference to angels.

The statement of Hebrews 1:6, “Let all God's angels worship him” (CJB/CJSB)—especially given the Tanach intertextuality where worship of the LORD God of Israel is now ascribed to Yeshua the Messiah—does serve as sure evidence of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity. Hebrews 1:6 includes a definite employment of the verb *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω) or “worship.” However, various versions which are employed in either Messianic Judaism and/or the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, indicate that their translators or publishers, are unsure about the kind of veneration issued by the Disciples to Yeshua:

- “And all the angels of God must now kneel before Him” (Power New Testament).
- “Let all the messengers of Elohim do reverence to Him” (ISR Scriptures-2009).
- “Let all the angels of God bow down to him” (The Messianic Writings).

While it is lexically acceptable to render *proskuneō* in Hebrews 1:6 as “bow down,” it is hardly something which is theologically acceptable. Given the intertextuality from Psalm 97:7 in view, for sure, with worship to be issued from the angels of God to God Himself—there is no legitimate reason for *proskuneō* to be rendered any other way in English translations of Hebrews 1:6.

After stating that the angels were to worship Yeshua, the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 104:4 in Hebrews 1:7, describing one of the functions that God has for His angels. Psalm 104:4 says, “He makes the winds His messengers [Heb. *malachav*, מַלְאָכָיו], flaming fire His ministers.” He specifically quotes from the LXX, which reads, “Who makes his angels spirits [Grk. *pneumata*, πνεύματα], and his ministers a flaming fire.” This includes some subtle, but non-substantial differences. This may reflect on the developing angelology of Second Temple Judaism, as some may have believed that God’s angels were composed of fire and wind. Alas, though, this would mean that the angels were regarded as being composed of temporal elements—or at least elements not directly emanating from God Himself.

Hebrews 1:8-9 have the Father addressing His Son, as our author quotes from Psalm 45:6-7, which say in their entirety,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows” (Psalm 45:6-7).

What is imperative to understand about these verses is that Yeshua is directly addressed with the title of “God.” The Psalmist first says, “Your throne, God, will last forever and ever; you rule your kingdom with a scepter of equity” (Psalm 45:6, CJB/CJSB). But then comes the ever-important Hebrew phrase, *al-ken meshachakha Elohim Elohekha* (עַל-כֵּן מָשַׁחְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךָ), “Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You” (Psalm 45:7). In this text that the author of Hebrews applies to Yeshua, the Psalmist identifies the recipient of these praises as “God” (Psalm 45:6). Speaking about God, the Psalmist says that “God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy” (Hebrews 1:8, NIV). This means that God has done something to God, or Himself. God has set Himself on the Eternal Throne over all His Creation.

Understood in a Messianic context, which would affirm a plural Godhead, it means that the Father has set the Son on His Throne. This is plainly understood by the Hebrew verb *mashach* (מָשַׁח), appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice) meaning to “anoint a

³³ Ibid., 193.

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person” (CHALOT).³⁴ It is not any coincidence that the Hebrew *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) or “Messiah” is derived from this verb. The author of Hebrews is reflecting on the great mystery of the Godhead, and the relationship that the Father and Son have as co-members. Yeshua the Son is the One who has been anointed by His Father to rule from His Throne. Yeshua is directly identified as God by the author of Hebrews.

Additional amplification of Yeshua’s Divinity is realized in Hebrews 1:10-12, as actions that the Lord God performs, actually involve the Son as the One who performs them. The author of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 102:25-27, which attest to God’s eternality as the Creator of the universe. God is portrayed by the Psalmist as having Divinely fashioned the Heavens and the Earth, and is one who will remain, even when the Creation becomes old and worn out like clothing:

“Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end” (Psalm 102:25-27).

God is portrayed as being the One who has the power to “change” the Creation—an action that involves Yeshua the Messiah accomplishing it—similar to how Believers will be changed at the Messiah’s Second Coming. The verb *allassō* (ἀλλάσσω) is used in both Hebrews 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52:

“[L]ike a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed [*allassō*]. But you are the same, and your years will have no end” (Hebrews 1:12, ESV).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed [*allassō*], in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

The quotation ends by emphasizing the fact that God’s reign—Yeshua’s reign—will not end in the linear time of this universe, but will continue beyond the end of time. This is in distinct contrast to the views of the world that were adhered to in Greco-Roman philosophy. Guthrie remarks, “There was a widespread belief in the Graeco-Roman world that the world, and indeed the universe, was indestructible. The...view expressed here would be in stark contrast.”³⁵ This may be a reflection on the author’s additional statement, “Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, CJB/CJSB).

While we see that the characteristics of God the Creator are applied to Yeshua—indeed indicating that Yeshua is God and is the Creator, with the Son integrated into the Divine Identity—there is a notable difference between the Hebrew text of Psalm 102 and the Greek Septuagint version that our author is working from. The LXX says, “In the beginning thou, O Lord, didst lay the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands” (Psalm 102:25, LXE). The Greek adds the title *Kurios* (κύριος) or “Lord,” where the Hebrew text only implies that this is speaking about the Lord.

The author of Hebrews concludes the beginning of his treatise by asking his audience some very important rhetorical questions. He is trying to emphasize, more than anything else, that Yeshua the Messiah is superior to angels because He is Divine (Hebrews 1:13), seen in the references to Him as both “God” (Hebrews 1:8) and “Lord” (Hebrews 1:10). He asks his audience a critical question by quoting Psalm 110:1, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right

³⁴ CHALOT, 218.

³⁵ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 78.

hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” The Apostle Peter quotes this exact same text speaking of Yeshua in his sermon at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit is poured out:

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”’ (Acts 2:34-35).

The importance of understanding what is communicated by Psalm 110:1 is most critical. Yeshua’s reign over His enemies is total and complete. The Apostle Paul appropriates these same things, indicating that Yeshua not only has complete authority over the world, but over life and death themselves:

“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

Yeshua the Messiah ruling and reigning from the right hand of the Father is not a position that has ever been given to any of God’s angels. Instead, the author of Hebrews validly asks his audience, “Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14, NRSV).

The angels are defined as being *leitourgika pneumata* (λειτουργικά πνεύματα), “spirits of service” (YLT). They are designated for *diakonia* (διακονία), or “attendance on a duty, ministrations” (LS).³⁶ Guthrie validly states how “The writer is certainly not wishing to belittle the function of angels,”³⁷ but he almost likens their job to being field medics in military service. And, Yeshua the Messiah is certainly more than a medic. Yeshua reigns over the angels who are sent to serve God’s people, and be about God’s Divine tasks. Ellingworth offers a valid paraphrase of Hebrews 1:14, with added thoughts to consider:

“All these angels, as we have been showing from scripture, are subordinate to God and therefore to Christ as Son. They live to worship God in heaven, and serve him by being sent...on earthly missions for the benefit of those to whom God is to give salvation.”³⁸

Hebrews ch. 1 lays forth a very important message that we all need to understand. The author of Hebrews, in no uncertain terms, believes that Yeshua the Messiah is God Himself made manifest in human form. The Son has been sacrificed for us, providing the atonement and purification that all human beings need to be forgiven of their sins. The Son has been exalted on high, and presently sustains the universe in all its intricacies. The Son is to be glorified, magnified, and worshipped by all, being superior to the angels. As Evans concludes, “Nowhere else in the New Testament is there such an array of Messianic literature brought to bear as argument for the glorification of Christ.”³⁹ The author of Hebrews issues forth great Spirit-inspired words that bring tears to one’s eyes and warm a person’s heart, but also engage the spirit and the mind in a masterfully crafted defense uplifting the Messiah.

HEBREWS 2

“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

³⁶ LS, 189.

³⁷ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 79.

³⁸ Ellingworth, 133.

³⁹ Evans, 62.