

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

signaled the beginning of His fulfillment of all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and with it the accomplishment of some significant Messianic prophecies. Yeshua being proclaimed as “My beloved Son” is primarily a declaration of His Messianic Kingship and association with the hopes and aspirations of Israel in the Tanach. And, it may be that “My beloved Son” has additional components to it, when the Sonship of the Messiah is described in other passages, more directly speaking of His Divine origins.

### Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13

#### “Yeshua is Tempted in the Wilderness by Satan”

“Immediately the Spirit impelled Him *to go* out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him” (Mark 1:12-13).

“Then Yeshua was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD” [Deuteronomy 8:3].’ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU”; and “ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE” [Psalm 91:11-12].’ Yeshua said to him, ‘On the other hand, it is written, “YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST” [Deuteronomy 6:16].’ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.’ Then Yeshua said to him, ‘Go, Satan! For it is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY” [Deuteronomy 6:13].’ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him” (Matthew 4:1-11).

“Yeshua, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ And Yeshua answered him, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE” [Deuteronomy 8:3].’ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’ Yeshua answered him, ‘It is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY” [Deuteronomy 6:13].’ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU” [Psalm 91:11], and, “ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE” [Psalm 91:12].’ And Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘It is said, “YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST” [Deuteronomy 6:16].’ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:1-13).

The Synoptic Gospels all depict Yeshua being taken out into the wilderness, to encounter Satan or the Adversary, subsequent to His water immersion or baptism. Many have interjected how within the ministry record of the Messiah, that various experiences of Ancient Israel in the Torah are repeated to some degree—in particular those events where the Israelites quantitatively failed, and Yeshua will succeed. Wellum states, “Jesus is presented as the true Israel who, like the Israel of old, was called out of Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15; Hosea 1:11), was tested

in the wilderness but did not fail, and triumphed over the Evil One through obedience to God and his Word (Matt. 4:1-11)."<sup>37</sup>

Matthew and Luke obviously record more about what transpired during the temptation of Yeshua by Satan, especially given various quotations made from Tanach Scripture. That Yeshua is faithfully obedient to Moses' Teaching—but most especially His Messianic mission—is something to be properly recognized by all. In being tempted by the Devil to transform stones into bread (Matthew 4:3-4; Luke 3:3-4), the sufficiency of God's Word serving as nourishment, is acknowledged (Deuteronomy 8:3). In being tempted by the Devil to worship him and be given all the kingdoms of Planet Earth (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8), Yeshua responded with the emphasis that only the Lord God of Israel was a legitimate entity to worship (Deuteronomy 6:13), meaning the Devil was illegitimate. It has to be conceded that these are responses which could all be issued to Satan, from an entity that could be supernaturally empowered by God and be God's agent, but not necessarily be God in human form.

The second temptation of Matthew 4:5-7, or third temptation of Luke 4:9-12, does present some interesting questions about the nature of Yeshua as "the Son of God." Both record how Satan challenged Yeshua over His identity as "the Son of God":

"Then the Adversary took him to the holy city and set him on the highest point of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'jump! For the *Tanakh* says, "He will order his angels to be responsible for you....They will support you with their hands, so that you will not hurt your feet on the stones'" (Matthew 4:5-6, CJB/CJSB).

"Then he took him to Yerushalayim, set him on the highest point of the Temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, jump from here! For the *Tanakh* says, "He will order his angels to be responsible for you and to protect you. They will support you with their hands, so that you will not hurt your feet on the stones"'" (Luke 4:9-11, CJB/CJSB).

It is to be properly recognized that both Matthew 4:5-6 and Luke 4:9-11 include a quotation from Psalm 91:11-12, which is delivered in the wider context of deliverance being available for God's own:

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!' For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, *but* it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made the LORD, my refuge, *even* the Most High, your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent. **For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone.** You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down. Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him And let him see My salvation" (Psalm 91).

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 70.

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In being challenged by Satan as to His identity of being “the Son of God,” and being tempted to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple to have angels catch Him from falling—supported with a direct quotation from Psalm 91:11-12—what would have been a logical response for the Messiah to issue? There is certainly material present in the wider context of Psalm 91 which could have been employed as a rebuke of the Adversary. Just consider how the contents of Psalm 91:13-15 could have been adapted as a response to Satan:

**“You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down. Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him”** (Psalm 91:13-15).

“Satan! MY FATHER WILL TREAD UPON THE LION AND COBRA, BECAUSE I HAVE LOVED HIM, HE WILL DELIVER ME AND SET ME *securely* ON HIGH, BECAUSE I HAVE KNOWN HIS NAME. I WILL CALL UPON HIM, AND HE WILL ANSWER ME; HE WILL BE WITH ME IN TROUBLE; HE WILL RESCUE ME AND HONOR ME because I have loved Him and kept His word” (Psalm 91:13-15, adapted).

The major difference here is that various pronouns appearing in Psalm 91:13-15 have been inverted from God speaking to the one trusting in Him, to Yeshua speaking of the Father who will deliver Him from the Devil. This is not an irregular usage of the Tanach, and would not have been surprising given Yeshua the Son’s unique status before God the Father.

Of course, this is not the only possible response that Yeshua could have issued to Satan from the Book of Psalms. That the Satan, or the Adversary, has manipulated the intention of Tanach Scripture is agreed upon by all readers, whether they hold to either a high or a low Christology. One can definitely envision, after being quoted Psalm 91:11-12 as a reason for Yeshua throwing Himself off of the pinnacle of the Temple, only to be rescued by angels, for the manipulative and lying intentions of Satan to be told,

“Let the lying lips be mute, which speak arrogantly against the righteous with pride and contempt. How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men!” (Psalm 31:18-19).

Surely, there are other statements appearing in the Book of Psalms, which the Messiah could have spoken to the Devil, in order for the temptation to end. Instead, how does Yeshua respond to the Devil’s statement, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down/from here” (Matthew 4:6/Luke 4:9)? In spite of the many other responses which could have been legitimately issued from the Psalms, Deuteronomy 6:16 is quoted:

**“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah”** (Deuteronomy 6:16).

The verb *nasah* (נָסָה), appearing in the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), according to HALOT, often means “to **put someone to the test**,” and noting Deuteronomy 6:16 involves how “men **tempt** God.”<sup>38</sup> In the case of the Ancient Israelites, the incident of Massah and Meribah and how the population demanded water (Exodus 17:7), is in view. While God is able to resist temptations demanded of Him by mortals, because He is a Perfect Being, God is continually tempted by mortals situationally nonetheless. Both Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:9 are drawing on the vocabulary of the Greek Septuagint, which renders the verb *nasah* with *ekpeirazō* (ἐκπειράζω),

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<sup>38</sup> HALOT, 1:702.

“to tempt” (LS),<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 6:16 appearing in the NETS with, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God, as you tempted in the Temptation.”

The Messiah, challenged by Satan as to His identity being “the Son of God,” responded in Matthew 4:7 and Luke 4:12 with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16. Here, human people—and by extension the Adversary—are prohibited from tempting God. Both Matthew 4:7 and Luke 4:12 include an essentially verbatim quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16 from the LXX, an indication that Satan’s tempting of Yeshua, “the Son of God,” is an act of temptation against the LORD (YHWH). No one reading the Gospels would have thought it inappropriate if Yeshua’s quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16 were adapted to read something like, “On the other hand, *as I shall obey*, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST,’” given the thought that if Yeshua had thrown Himself off of the pinnacle of the Temple, He would be tempting His Father to act in rescuing Him. Instead, recognizing how the temptation is being issued directly to Yeshua, Yeshua responds as though the subject of Deuteronomy 6:16 is Himself. The only way this is possible is if Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity as God. None of us, as human beings, would just quote Deuteronomy 6:16 during an incident of being tempted, without some kind of significant preface beyond “it is written.”

## **Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37**

### **“Demons Confess Yeshua as the Holy One of God”**

“They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Yeshua of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ And Yeshua rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee” (Mark 1:21-28).

“And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Yeshua of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Yeshua rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of *the people*, he came out of him without doing him any harm. And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, ‘What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.’ And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district” (Luke 4:31-37).

Any reader of the Synoptic Gospels can easily recognize how Yeshua the Messiah has distinct supernatural powers. This is especially true when He encounters human beings who were demon possessed. At a particular Sabbath, while teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, a person who was demon possessed identified something unique about this Yeshua who had been speaking (Mark 1:23; Luke 4:33), which went beyond His teaching abilities. Speaking in the plural, the demonic entities possessing the man ask the Messiah,

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<sup>39</sup> LS, 242.