

## Approaching the Nature of Yeshua from the Tanach

There are theologians, weighing the options from Micah 5:2 as to whether *mimei olam* is (2) indicative of a pre-existent, Divine Messiah, or (1) whether the ancient Davidic Kingdom promises are in view—who recognize the merits of both—but who demonstrate a preference for the Davidic Kingdom promises, while not ruling out the possibility of a pre-existent, Divine Messiah being spoken of.<sup>176</sup>

Textually from Micah 5:2, it does have to be recognized how there could be an intended association between *mimei olam*, and Davidic Kingdom prophecies such as Amos 9:11 employing *kimei olam*, with terrestrial-bound time in view. Yet textually from Micah 5:2 readers have to weigh the fuller intention of *m'qedem mimei olam* (מִקְדָּם מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם), the term *qedem* (קֶדֶם) often involving “temporal: **before, earlier, ancient times**” or “**antiquity, primeval times**” (*CHALOT*).<sup>177</sup> When *qedem* appears alongside of *olam* (עוֹלָם), “long duration, antiquity, futurity” (*BDB*),<sup>178</sup> important questions about the nature of the Ruler of Israel are raised, which go beyond His prophetic fulfillment of Davidic Kingdom promises. Michael Rydelnik astutely concludes in his book *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Messianic?*,

“...Micah predicted that this king’s origins would be from eternity past. The two Hebrew temporal nouns used can speak of eternity when they stand alone, although this is not always the case. Used chronologically, *qedem*, ‘antiquity,’ can refer to ancient times as in ‘long ago,’ to the earliest imaginable times as when the mountains first came to be (Deut 33:15), or to the ‘eternal’ God and His eternal dwelling place (Deut 33:27; Hab 1:12; Pss 55:19; 68:33). The second term ‘*olam*, ‘eternity,’ usually refers to the distant or unending future (although sometimes within the context of one’s lifetime). But it is also used of ancient times in the past (Ps 24:7) or of the beginning of creation (Ps 25:6; Joel 2:2) or before. According to Ps 93:2, God’s ‘throne has been established from the beginning [lit. ‘from then’]; / You are from eternity.’ And Ps 90:2 declares, ‘Before the mountains were born, / before You gave birth to the earth and the world, / from eternity to eternity, You are God.’ When *qedem* and ‘*olam* are used together, however, as in Prov 8:22-23, they always denote eternity past (cf. Deut 33:27). In Mic 5:2, these words are placed together to emphasize the ruler’s true origin, being far earlier than his arrival in Bethlehem or even antiquity. Rather, he comes from eternity past.”<sup>179</sup>

There are good reasons for Micah 5:2 to not just be translated with, “One whose goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity” (TLV), but to also recognize *m'qedem mimei olam* as representing the pre-existent, Divine origins of the Messiah who would be born as a baby in Bethlehem.

## Psalm 2

### “Messiah as the Lord’s Anointed King”

“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!’ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘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. 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

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<sup>176</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “The Deity of Christ and the Old Testament,” in Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *The Deity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), pp 57-58.

<sup>177</sup> *CHALOT*, 313.

<sup>178</sup> *BDB*, 761.

<sup>179</sup> Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Messianic?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 98.

shatter them like earthenware.' Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"

When reviewing the contents of Psalm 2, readers encounter what is officially an anonymous Psalm, but is likely Davidic, and a passage which certainly relates to the Lord's anointed king. Because of quotations of Psalm 2:7 appearing in the Apostolic Writings, being applied to Yeshua of Nazareth (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5), Psalm 2 is to be taken as speaking to His ultimate reign over all the nations and kingdoms of Planet Earth. A. Cohen, in his Psalms volume appearing in the *Soncino Books of the Bible* series, does indicate how "Commentators, both ancient and modern, differ as to whether the subject of the Psalm is the Messianic or a historical king."<sup>180</sup> Those who hold to either a high Christology of Yeshua being the eternal, uncreated Son of God, or a low Christology of Yeshua being a created supernatural agent of God, both read Psalm 2 in some way speaking of Yeshua the Messiah.

Even if there are some components of Psalm 2, which might be seen to apply to King David (Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14), there is undeniable association with Yeshua of Nazareth witnessed.<sup>181</sup> But while Psalm 2 might be said to communicate something about the Kingship of Yeshua the Messiah, does it communicate anything about the nature of the Messiah? This is where examiners who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, may hold to a variance of opinion.

The Psalmist declares that there is a worldwide conspiracy, not just involving the peoples of Planet Earth, but their leaders (Psalm 2:1-2a), 'al-YHWH v'al-Meshicho (עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ), "against the LORD and against His Anointed."<sup>182</sup> Applying this word to the ministry of Yeshua of Nazareth, the statements of Acts 4:27-28 are often invoked: "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Yeshua, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." Any human conspiracy to oppose the Lord, His Anointed or Messiah, and His purposes, is something that He is seen to just dismiss (Psalm 2:3-5).

The Lord, in contrast to the mortal conspirators opposing Him, declares how "I myself have installed my king on Tziyon, my holy mountain" (Psalm 2:6, CJB/CJSB). A key statement made regarding this figure to be installed on Zion is *beni attah, ani ha'yom yelid'tikha* (בְּנֵי אֲתָהָ אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדֶּיִךָ), "You are My son, I have begotten you this day" (Psalm 2:7, ATS), a statement specifically related to Yeshua of Nazareth by both the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:33) and the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). In the estimation of Rolf A. Jacobson, "The language emphasizes the special relationship that the king has with God. Because the relationship he has with God is now that of a 'father-son' relationship, the king is in a position to ask what he will with God."<sup>183</sup> And, the Lord further states, "Ask it of Me, and I will make the nations your domain; your estate, the limits of the earth" (Psalm 2:8, NJPS), something to be surely indicative of the global reign of the Messiah, which will be fully realized in the future Millennial Kingdom (Psalm 2:9; cf. Revelation 12:5; 19:15).

<sup>180</sup> A. Cohen, *Soncino Books of the Bible: The Psalms* (London: Soncino Press, 1968), 3.

<sup>181</sup> For a useful summary, consult Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp 96-99.

<sup>182</sup> "Against Jehovah, and against His Messiah" (YLT)

<sup>183</sup> Nancy deClaisé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, Beth LaNeel Tanner, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 69.

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There is a warning issued by the Lord: “Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth” (Psalm 2:10, NIV). There are actions of veneration to be directed to both the LORD or YHWH (Psalm 2:11), and to the Messiah King established on Zion (Psalm 2:12).

It is first asserted, *’ivdu et-YHWH b’yir’ah* (עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בַּיִרְאָה), which more English Bibles than not, render with “Serve the LORD with fear” (Psalm 2:11a, RSV/NRSV/ESV), given how the verb *avad* (עָבַד), appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), basically means “labour, work, do work” (BDB).<sup>184</sup> Yet, recognizing how *avad* can also be defined along the lines of, “**serve, worship** (a god, God)” (CHALOT),<sup>185</sup> it is seen that Psalm 2:11a can be translated with, “Worship the LORD in fear” (Alter). It is witnessed that the second admonition, *nash’qu-bar* (נִשְׁקֶוּ־בָר) is often translated as either “Do homage to the Son” (Psalm 2:12a, NASB/NASU)<sup>186</sup> or “Kiss the Son” (NIV). Appearing in the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), the verb *nashaq* (נָשַׁק) is noted by HALOT to mean, “to **kiss**,” with Psalm 2:11ff noted to involve, “to kiss a representation of a god.”<sup>187</sup> Psalm 2:12a is more literally rendered as “kiss! son” (Kohlenberger).<sup>188</sup>

For sure, the conspirators of the world recognizing the LORD God of Israel, and His Messiah, as those to whom they must submit—is something rooted within the language of Tanach in the Ancient Near East, and symbolizes how both Israel’s God and Israel’s Kingdom will be supreme. As Peter C. Craigie properly summarizes,

“They are advised to ‘serve’ the Lord; the word ‘serve’ (עָבַד) has political overtones and implies that foreign nations should submit as vassals to Israel’s God. In order to submit to God, they would have to submit to his son, the king; thus they are called upon to ‘kiss the son,’ for kissing was a sign of homage and submission (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kgs 19:18). Failure to submit to God through his king would result in disaster, for God’s hasty wrath would culminate in their destruction (v 12). But submission, though not easy for the arrogant, would lead not only to a vassal relationship, but also would bring with it the happiness of ‘all who seek refuge in him’ (v 12).”<sup>189</sup>

Psalm 2 certainly depicts a regal aura to Yeshua as King Messiah, with the rebellious rulers of the Earth admonished by the LORD or YHWH to recognize the King He has installed, right after they recognize Him: “Serve ADONAI with fear...Kiss the Son” (Psalm 2:11a, 12a, TLV). Is there anything here to be communicated about the nature of the Messiah, and whether He is uncreated as God, or a supernatural created agent of God proper? Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., writing on “The Deity of Christ and the Old Testament,” and a proponent of a high Christology, thinks that “Psalm 2 says much about the Christ—his unique role in God’s plan for history, his inevitable judgment of the nations, all fulfilled in Jesus as the final Son of David. But Psalm 2 does not reveal his deity.”<sup>190</sup> Kingly or regal veneration to be issued toward the Father and the Son are seen in Psalm 2. Psalm 2:7, applied to Yeshua the Messiah, to introduce the King to be installed upon Zion, was employed by the author of Hebrews—among *additional quotations* from the Book of Psalms—to establish the fact that He was no mere mortal, or even a messenger/angel as a supernatural agent sent from God:

“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

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<sup>184</sup> BDB, 712.

<sup>185</sup> CHALOT, 261.

<sup>186</sup> “Pay homage to the Son” (HCSB).

<sup>187</sup> HALOT, 1:731.

<sup>188</sup> Kohlenberger, 3:349.

<sup>189</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50*, Vol 19 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 68.

<sup>190</sup> Ortlund, “The Deity of Christ and the Old Testament,” in *The Deity of Christ*, 42.

7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13]? 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]" (Hebrews 1:5-12).

Consideration of the additional Psalms applied to the Messiah (esp. Psalm 45:6-7; 102:25-27), where it is seen that Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity, is more what is necessary.

## **Psalm 23:1-4**

### **"The Lord as Shepherd"**

**"A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."**

Psalm 23 is one of the most significant chapters of Holy Scripture, often because of the great comfort and solace which it has been responsible for providing many people. It is easy to recognize how Bible readers often take for granted the word, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1a), *YHWH ro'i lo ech'sar* (יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר).<sup>191</sup> In the Tanach or Old Testament, the LORD or YHWH is often referred to as the shepherd of His people. Might this communicate anything later in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, regarding Yeshua the Messiah as shepherd?

As far as it concerns God proper as shepherd, in the Tanach, Tremper Longman III astutely summarizes,

"The metaphor of God as shepherd is by no means unique to this psalm (e.g. Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Pss 28:9; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:15; Mic. 7:14). God as shepherd is primarily a pastoral metaphor, but it should be borne in mind that, throughout the Ancient Near East, kings and other leaders were styled as shepherds of their people. In the Old Testament as well, the king was the shepherd of his people. Most often, this metaphor was used in a negative sense of Israel's leaders. They were shepherds who led their sheep astray (e.g. Ezek. 34), but David responded well, though not perfectly, to God's command that he shepherd God's people (2 Sam. 5:2). The extensive use of the shepherd metaphor for leaders reveals that Psalm 23 is a royal psalm. The psalmist expresses confidence in the Lord (Yahweh) as the shepherd-king."<sup>192</sup>

How might the LORD or YHWH being shepherd, carry over into how Yeshua the Messiah both functions as shepherd, and what could be deduced regarding His nature? In a general resource like *The Apologetics Study Bible*, more Messianic significance is stressed from Yeshua being the Good Shepherd or Great Shepherd, as a leader of His people and Kingdom:

<sup>191</sup> "Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (New Jerusalem Bible).

<sup>192</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), pp 134-135.