

Who Is Yeshua? A Jewish Exploration of the Messiah

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities."

(Isaiah 53:3,5)

Introduction: A Gentle Invitation to Consider

To our beloved Jewish brothers and sisters: This is not an attempt to proselytize or to disrespect your sacred traditions. Rather, it is a tender, respectful, and heartfelt exploration of one of the most important questions facing all of humanity, rooted entirely in the Hebrew Scriptures and their natural extensions in the writings of the New Testament:

Who is Yeshua?

For thousands of years, the Jewish people have carried the unique calling of being the custodians of God's covenant, the guardians of His Torah, and the recipients of His promises. The question of the Messiah has always stood at the heart of Jewish expectation. What if Yeshua of Nazareth, far from being a figure of division, is the very One promised in the Tanakh?

The Messianic Hope: A Scriptural Foundation

The Tanakh provides a rich tapestry of Messianic expectation:

- **Seed of the Woman** (*Genesis 3:15*): A promised one who would crush the serpent's head.
- **Son of Abraham** (*Genesis 12:3*): Through whom all nations would be blessed.
- **Lion of Judah** (*Genesis 49:10*): To whom the scepter belongs.
- **Prophet Like Moses** (*Deuteronomy 18:15-19*): A prophet who would speak God's words directly.
- **Son of David** (*2 Samuel 7:12-16*): Whose kingdom would be everlasting.
- **Suffering Servant** (*Isaiah 53*): Who would bear our sins.
- **Righteous Branch** (*Jeremiah 23:5-6*): Who would reign in justice.
- **The One Who Comes to the Temple** (*Malachi 3:1*): Before its destruction.

These passages do not point to multiple messiahs but to a singular figure who would embody all of these roles. The hope was always for one Anointed One who would bring both redemption and rule.

The First Century: The Historical Context

In the first century, Jewish expectation was heightened. Roman oppression, a corrupt priesthood, and widespread longing for deliverance created a fertile ground for messianic hope.

Into this world entered **Yeshua of Nazareth**, a Galilean rabbi whose life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection are attested both in Jewish and Roman historical sources (Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and the Talmud). He claimed not only to teach Torah but to fulfill it (**Matthew 5:17**), embodying the very purpose of Israel's story.

The Testimony of the Gospels: A Jewish Portrait

The Gospels, particularly Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are deeply Jewish documents written within a Jewish worldview.

Matthew: Yeshua as the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Matthew presents Yeshua as the promised **Son of David**, **Son of Abraham**, and the **New Moses**:

- His genealogy connects Him to David and Abraham (*Matthew 1:1-17*).
- His virgin birth fulfills **Isaiah 7:14**: "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"
- His ministry embodies the prophetic expectation of Isaiah 9:6-7.
- His teachings (Sermon on the Mount) echo Moses at Sinai, but go deeper to address the heart (**Matthew 5-7**).
- His miracles confirm the Messianic identity prophesied in **Isaiah 35:5-6**.

Luke: The Savior for All Peoples

Luke emphasizes that Yeshua came not only for Israel but for the world, while never abandoning His unique role for the Jewish people:

- Simeon proclaims Him "*a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel*" (**Luke 2:32**).
- He heals the outcast, the leper, the tax collector, and even blesses the Roman centurion's servant (**Luke 7**).
- His parables (e.g., **The Prodigal Son, Luke 15**) display God's radical grace.
- Luke highlights Yeshua's compassion for Jerusalem and His sorrow over its coming judgment (**Luke 19:41-44**).

John: The Divine Son Who Tabernacled Among Us

John opens with a profound echo of **Genesis 1**:

- *"In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."* (**John 1:1-14**)
- He records seven "I AM" statements, reflecting the sacred name revealed to Moses in **Exodus 3:14**.
- John presents Yeshua as the **Lamb of God** who fulfills the Passover sacrifice (**John 1:29; Exodus 12**).
- His death coincides with Passover, and His resurrection on the third day echoes Jonah's sign (**Matthew 12:40**).

The Cross: Stumbling Block and Fulfillment

For many Jewish people, the cross remains the greatest obstacle. Yet Isaiah foresaw a suffering Messiah:

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities... and by His wounds we are healed." (**Isaiah 53:5**)

Psalms 22 prophetically describes crucifixion centuries before its invention by the Romans:

"They pierced my hands and my feet... they divide my garments among them." (**Psalms 22:16-18**)

Far from being a sign of defeat, the cross becomes the ultimate **Korban**, the atoning sacrifice, fulfilling the demands of the sacrificial system once for all (**Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9-10**).

The Resurrection: God's Vindication

Yeshua's resurrection is the cornerstone of the early Jewish believers' faith:

- Affirmed by over 500 witnesses (**1 Corinthians 15:3-8**).
- Demonstrates His victory over death and sin (**Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14**).
- Signals the inauguration of the **New Covenant** promised in **Jeremiah 31:31-34** and **Ezekiel 36:25-27**.

The New Covenant: A Jewish Promise Fulfilled

Jeremiah foretold a new covenant:

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Ezekiel adds:

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you... And I will put my Spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

This is not a replacement of Israel but its very renewal—a deep internal transformation that Yeshua inaugurates by sending the Holy Spirit to indwell His followers (**Acts 2**, the Jewish feast of **Shavuot**/Pentecost).

The Early Jewish Followers: Testimonies of Faith

The first followers of Yeshua were entirely Jewish:

- **Peter (Shimon Kepha), James (Yaakov), and John (Yochanan)** led the early movement from Jerusalem.
- **Paul (Shaul)**, a rabbi and Pharisee, encountered the risen Yeshua and became the apostle to the nations.

These Jewish believers did not see themselves as abandoning Judaism but as finding its fulfillment:

"We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Yeshua of Nazareth." (John 1:45)

The Invitation: Not Conversion, But Completion

To many Jews, embracing Yeshua is seen as leaving Judaism. But in truth, it is returning to the core of the covenantal promises. Yeshua did not come to start a new religion but to fulfill what the prophets spoke of:

- **He is the King of Israel** (*Zechariah 9:9*).
- **He is the Suffering Servant** (*Isaiah 53*).
- **He is the Prophet Like Moses** (*Deuteronomy 18*).
- **He is the Eternal Son of David** (*2 Samuel 7*).

As Rabbi Shaul (Paul) wrote:

"Christ (Messiah) has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs." (Romans 15:8)

A Loving Challenge

If not Yeshua, then who? Who else in all of history fits the complex mosaic of messianic prophecy? Who fulfilled the Torah perfectly? Who suffered, died, and rose again precisely according to the Scriptures?

We invite you to read the Gospels afresh—as Jewish texts deeply rooted in the Tanakh. Ask the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to open your heart to consider that **Yeshua may indeed be the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.**

Final Word: The God Who Keeps Covenant

The story of Israel is not over. The promises of God remain sure. Yeshua is the guarantee of these promises, ensuring that God's covenantal faithfulness endures forever. As Zechariah prophesied:

"They will look on Me, the One they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son." (Zechariah 12:10)

One day, all Israel will recognize Him. Until then, the invitation stands open.

Shalom.