

## Ask The Rabbi – December 7, 2021

### **Question:**

Within Traditional Judaism, a great deal of emphasis and authority is given to the Rabbis / Sages (philosophers). How are we, as believers in Yeshua to understand their teachings? Are we to embrace them or reject them when they talk about Yeshua?

### **Response:**

#### **Silence From The Sages**

The Sages of our people are many and with many varying views of Scripture to where a common observation has developed and goes as follows:

“Ask three Rabbis a question and you get four answers”

With that said, there is a great deal of diversity, difference and disagreement on many subjects related to Scripture. Yet when asked if Yeshua is the Messiah that Scripture speaks of, there is near unanimous agreement that He is not.

Such vast viewpoints on many topics yet near unanimity when it comes to Yeshua.

When we see the definition of Sage, we are presented with one who has or exhibits experience, calm judgment, and wisdom. Probably the most prominent Sage of the Jewish people, other than Yeshua, would be Moshe.

Yet Moshe is not a fair comparison towards other Sages (Rambam, Rashi, Hillel, Shammai, etc...) for the simple reason that Adonai spoke directly to him. No middle man, no gap in understanding and no questioning the source.

One example of such views raised by our Sages when it comes to understanding and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures can be found in relation to Isaiah 7:14:

**Isa 7:14** Therefore Adonai himself will give you people a sign: the young woman [*Or: "the virgin."*] will

become pregnant, bear a son and name him `Immanu El [*God is with us*].

Ultimately, as to whether this is an applicable Messianic Prophecy in general and is applicable to Yeshua specifically boils down to one word in English – virgin. Much debate regarding the use of the Hebrew word *almah* in relation to *betulah* tends to be foundational when one is adamant against this verse speaking of Yeshua's birth. Yet throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, *betulah* is used 50 times of which 30 are related to a maiden. If one is to make a make and argument for the use of *betulah* vs. *almah*, a case can be made for either, yet neither directly means virgin. Yet it is the adamant view of the Sages that the word used must be *betulah*, regardless that the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures predating the birth of Yeshua by at least 200+ years, used the term *parthenos*, referring to virgin, when translating *almah*. Interestingly, there was no objection to this translation until much later.

However, to focus on this one aspect of Isaiah 7:14 directs focus away from a much bigger picture in relation to Isaiah, chapters 8 – 11. This verse is only referenced once in the New Covenant writings – Matthew 1:22 - 23:

[Mat 1:22](#) All this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet,

[Mat 1:23](#) "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him `Immanu El." (The name means, "God is with us.")

There are significant things that Adonai is conveying to Isaiah in relation to this passage of the Hebrew Scriptures in proximity to Isaiah 9 and 11, ultimately conveying a number of important and significant promises:

- A message specifically to the House of David, constituting a specific sign

- Birth of a significant child who will be of royal lineage
- This message / sign will significantly impact the Davidic dynasty

I bring up these points for the simple reason because a great deal of authority is given to the Sages in relation to providing us with proper understanding. To the point that the Sages would be of similar standing to the Pharisees and the Torah teachers during the time of Yeshua. They were responsible for conveying “the proper understanding” of what the Scriptures are saying. Yet just as Yeshua addressed the many errors of the Pharisees and Torah teachers, the Sages, who have written extensively regarding the Hebrew Scriptures are not immune to errors, misunderstandings and omissions, found or in some cases not found in their work.

The Sages operate at a disadvantage in relation to Moshe, whereby they are interpreting Scripture from a 100% human position. Moshe did not rely on his own understanding, but heard directly from Adonai.

**Num 12:6** He said, "Listen to what I say: when there is a prophet among you, I, Adonai, make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream.

**Num 12:7** But it isn't that way with my servant Moshe. He is the only one who is faithful in my entire household.

**Num 12:8** With him I speak face to face and clearly, not in riddles; he sees the image of Adonai. So why weren't you afraid to criticize my servant Moshe?"

Scripture is very clear that we are not to rely on our own understanding yet to trust in Adonai...

**Pro 3:5** Trust in Adonai with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding.

**Pro 3:6** In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths.

Unlike the Sages, the writers of the New Covenant are closer to Moshe in that they are guided by the Ruach ha Kodesh when it comes to the application of the Hebrew Scriptures in relation to Yeshua. Furthermore, it was

Yeshua who conveyed the Hebrew Scriptures to His talmadim, that related to Him directly. Considering He was the one who taught them and opened their minds to what the Hebrew Scriptures said about Him, there was no middle man required to interpret what He was saying...

[Luk 24:44](#) Yeshua said to them, "This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

[Luk 24:45](#) Then he opened their minds, so that they could understand the Tanakh,

[Luk 24:46](#) telling them, "Here is what it says: the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day;

[Luk 24:47](#) and in his name repentance leading to forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to people from all nations, starting with Yerushalayim.

There are other issues pertaining to Isaiah 7:14 that go beyond the scope of this paper. Needless to say, the Sages are primarily silent about this verse being a significant sign for the House of David and its relation to Yeshua as Messiah specifically.

To expand upon the Sage's silence, in relation Anti-missionaries, they will argue that the concept of a "virgin birth" is found in other cultures, Greek, Roman, Pagan, but not in Judaism and therefore because the Sages are silent about this, it is therefore not valid in relating it to Messiah in general and Yeshua specifically. The view that is presented is:

"If the Sages are silent it is not relevant"

To further expand upon this premise of silence by the Sages, thousands of years of commentary, and not a scant

reference to support this verse. More attention is paid on diminishing the Christian position than on supporting this sign Adonai would provide to the House of David.

If the sages are silent about Isaiah 7:14 in relation Messiah and His “virgin birth”, what else could they have been silent about and ultimately miss?

What about when and how He would appear to Israel?

Remembering that prophecy, in relation to Messiah developed gradually over years, if not centuries, as a result of prophecies that remained promises unfulfilled, are there other Hebrew Scriptures conveyed to the Prophets that direct us to the coming of Messiah?

One need look no further than two Scriptures that speak of Messiah's coming:

Zechariah 9:9:

**Zec 9:9** Rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Tziyon! Shout out loud, daughter of Yerushalayim! Look!

Your king is coming to you. He is righteous, and he is victorious. Yet he is humble — he's riding on a donkey, yes, on a lowly donkey's colt.

And Daniel 7:13 – 14:

**Dan 7:13** "I kept watching the night visions, when I saw, coming with the clouds of heaven, someone like a son of man. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence.

**Dan 7:14** To him was given rulership, glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His rulership is an eternal rulership that will not pass away; and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The Zechariah verse speaks of “Your king is coming to you. He is righteous, and yet he is humble – he's riding on a donkey. While the Daniel passage speaks of one who was given rulership, glory and a kingdom, yet comes with the clouds of heaven.

The Sages later interpreted that both passages related to Messiah coming, yet according to the Talmud this is how these verses were understood:

The Talmud states, “If they [i.e., the people of Israel] are worthy [the Messiah] will come ‘with the clouds of heaven’ [Dan. 7: 13]; if they are not worthy, ‘lowly and riding upon a donkey’ [Zech. 9: 9]” (b. Sanhedrin 98a).

The question wasn't if He would ever appear, but when and under what circumstances. The Sages conveyed that if we are worthy of our King, he will appear to us in a glorious and magnificent manner, whereas in contrast, if we are not worthy, He will appear, lowly and riding on a donkey. Yet, to this day they are still waiting. Their understanding conveys that He will come, yet how He comes will be dependent upon our worthiness. Yet in stark contrast to their own viewpoints, we are still waiting. There is no third scenario. One is either worthy or unworthy.

The Sages imply that Messiah's appearance is conditional and based upon our state of relationship with Adonai, yet they contradict their own views. If that were ever truly the case, then He would never show up. What the sages have missed in understanding these two separate passages is that it was not an either or scenario but rather a yes to both. In other words the Sages missed the mark and therefore were silent about a significant aspect relating to the coming of Messiah, that being He would come not once but twice. Dr. Brown conveys the following:

*“Just days before he died, Yeshua entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, with the crowds hailing him as King Messiah. But then the people turned on him. Is it possible that he came “lowly and riding on a donkey” because we were not worthy of his coming, and in the future, when we recognize him as Messiah, he will return in the clouds of heaven?”*

The Sages further convey the aspect of Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yoseph. One is a King while the other is a suffering servant, yet both are redeemers. As a result, Jewish tradition has come to refer to two redeemers. Both are involved in delivering the Jewish people from “exile” and ushering in the long awaited Messianic age. This premise stems from an understanding by the Sages of Obadiah 1:18:

**Oba 1:18** The house of Ya`akov will be a fire and the house of Yosef a flame, setting aflame and consuming the stubble which is the house of `Esav. None of the house of `Esav will remain, for Adonai has spoken.

It is believed, according to the Talmud – Bavli Sukah 52b, Mashiach ben Yosef is of the tribe of Ephraim and will come first, before Mashiah ben David, of the tribe of Judah, to prepare the world for the coming of the Kingdom of Adonai.

It was our inequities that prevented Him from coming, this according to the Sages interpretation. However, through the New Covenant writings it is revealed to us that Yeshua, as Messiah, was not two separate people. So, we have seen Mashiach ben Yosef in Yeshua upon His entry in to Jerusalem...

**Mat 21:4** This happened in order to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet,

**Mat 21:5** "Say to the daughter of Tziyon, 'Look! Your King is coming to you, riding humbly on a donkey, and on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden!'"

We will see Him again as Mashiach ben David when He returns, as prophesied by Matthew:

[Mat 24:30](#) "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, all the tribes of the Land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with tremendous power and glory.

The Sages have not only missed that Messiah would be one person, not two, but also that the passages referencing His appearance (Zechariah 9:9 and Daniel 7:13-14) are not an either or scenario but are both related to one Messiah and two different appearances.

This brings us to another significant miss by the Sages.

The Hebrew Scriptures teach that the Messiah will be a priestly King, not just a King. We see this in David, as a royal Priest. When we understand the purpose of the Priest, to make atonement for the people's sins while offering forgiveness and reconciliation to Israel as well as the nations, this provides us with a clearer view of Messiah. Yet, the Sages are silent about this important aspect found in David, compared to Malki-Tzedek (Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7) and revealed in Yeshua. We are able to look back, with the aide of the New Covenant Scriptures that witness to Yeshua's primary purpose upon what we can now confidently say was "His First Coming".

According to b. Yoma 39b, God did not accept the sacrifices that were offered on the Yom Kippur during the last 40 years the Temple stood, prior to its destruction. This was known to the people by means of a series of special signs, all of which turned up negative for those forty years; see b. Yoma 39a).

We know, based on the New Covenant writings, they witness for us what transpired or in this case didn't transpire and was directly related to the atonement sacrifices on Yom Kippur because Yeshua had offered



himself as the perfect and final sacrifice? This was most certainly a sign for the people and was recorded by the Sages as being significant. For those that had come to accept Yeshua as Messiah, this was made clear and would further substantiate His atonement after the Temple was destroyed. To the point that you have recorded in the Talmud the concerns of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai...

*"Now I am being led before the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who lives and endures for ever and ever. If he is angry with me, he is angry for ever. If he imprisons me, he imprisons me for ever. If he puts me to death, he puts me to death for ever. I can't persuade him with words or bribe him with money. Moreover, there are two ways ahead of me: one leads to Gan-Eden [Paradise] and the other to Gey-Hinnom [Hell], and I do not know which one will take me. How can I do anything but weep?" (B'rakhot 28b)*

A lifetime spent of believing in one thing, yet as his life was approaching an end, Rabbi Zakkai is in great doubt and extreme sadness.

One cannot ignore the trait of the Priestly King when understanding the role that would involve making atonement for the people of Israel and the nations, yet the Sages are silent to this very important aspect.

Ultimately, according to the Sages there is no Jewish tradition relating to Messiah, the Anointed One, making atonement. I would consider this to be silence so enormous it is deafening.

Based on the views and understanding of the Sages:

1. We have missed the coming of Messiah because we were not worthy
2. When Messiah does come, His role will be solely as King
3. There is no longer atonement through sacrifice

One of the foundational Principles of Faith as conveyed by Rambam is that Messiah will come.

We know, He has come once and will return.

Dr. Brown equates this to a two act play. To paraphrase, you are expecting a one act play, yet it is a two act play and have missed the first act.

Silence is not golden. Silence is not bliss. If anything, silence, specifically by the Sages is dangerous. So, dangerous that their silence has influenced millions and millions of Jewish people over the centuries in relation to Messiah and that it is not Yeshua. Yet just as many of the Pharisees were blinded to the truth of Yeshua, so to many of the Sages are blinded to the truth in the very Hebrew Scriptures they study. Yeshua called the Pharisees blind guides...

**Mat 23:16** "Woe to you, you blind guides! You say, 'If someone swears by the Temple, he is not bound by his oath; but if he swears by the gold in the Temple, he is bound.'

**Mat 23:17** You blind fools! Which is more important? the gold? or the Temple which makes the gold holy?

**Mat 23:18** And you say, 'If someone swears by the altar, he is not bound by his oath; but if he swears by the offering on the altar, he is bound.'

**Mat 23:19** Blind men! Which is more important? the sacrifice? or the altar which makes the sacrifice holy?

How do we respond to the anti-missionaries, the family members who accept these positions or the people who know nothing about these very things but through cultural identity alone "I am a Jew." have ultimately closed the door to Yeshua?

First and foremost, Adonai prepares the way for us. If He has not prepared the person first, then you will likely hit a brick wall.

**Mat 16:16** Shim'on Kefa answered, "You are the Mashiach, the Son of the living God."

**Mat 16:17** "Shim'on Bar-Yochanan," Yeshua said to him, "how blessed you are! For no human being revealed this to you, no, it was my Father in heaven.

And secondly, the words conveyed by Sha'ul to Timothy...

**2Ti 2:11** Here is a statement you can trust: If we have died with him, we will also live with him.

**2Ti 2:12** If we persevere, we will also rule with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.

**2Ti 2:13** If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

**2Ti 2:14** Keep reminding people of this, and charge them solemnly before the Lord not to engage in word-battles. They accomplish nothing useful and are a catastrophe for the hearers!

**2Ti 2:15** Do all you can to present yourself to God as someone worthy of his approval, as a worker with no need to be ashamed, because he deals straightforwardly with the Word of the Truth.

We must be mindful of what the Sages convey and ultimately what they haven't conveyed in order to present the truth of Yeshua in order, according to the Hebrew Scriptures.

## Course Summary

Principles for understanding:

1. Believe in the truthfulness and authority of New Covenant scriptures what the Prophets said
2. Know the languages
3. Sensitive to Rabbinic objection

Principles in understanding prophecy:

1. Messianic prophecies are not clearly identified as such
2. Messianic hope in Israel developed gradually
3. Many biblical prophecies are fulfilled gradually
4. The Prophets saw the Messiah coming on the immediate horizon of history
5. It is important to read every prophecy in its overall context in Scripture
6. Messiah was to be both a priest and King
7. Messiah is ideal representative of His people.

Primary Messianic Prophecies Covered:

- Isaiah 7:14 – the common argument of betulah vs. almah – conveying its context in relation to Isaiah 8 – 11, in relation to Matthew's references
- Messiah as Priest and King
- Come before temple destroyed – 3 primary Scriptures supporting this position
  - Haggai 2:6 – 9 (glory of the second temple greater than the first)
  - Malachi 3:1 – 5 (divine visit)
  - Daniel 9:24 – 27 (before destruction, sin expiated)
- Isaiah 53 – The servant (plural) vs. the Servant (singular)