

# **Messiah ben Joseph or Messiah ben David? or both?**

Examining Messianic expectation in  
the Scriptures & Rabbinical Writings

-  
by Mottel Baleston [www.MessiahNJ.org](http://www.MessiahNJ.org)

# ISSUES THAT SEPERATE RABBINICAL JUDAISM & CHRISTIANITY:

**Old Testament only**  
**Atonement by Deeds**  
**Absolute singular God**  
**One Messiah establishes peace**

**Old and New Testament**  
**Atonement by faith in Messiah**  
**One God existing as three Persons**  
**One Messiah who comes twice**

# Modern Rabbinical critics say:

“The real Messiah will get it right the first time, he won't need to return“

“If Jesus was the Messiah, no one would need to be convinced, it would be evident by world peace“

**Rabbinical Judaism avoids the question of  
the disparity between the varied  
descriptions of Messiah and His work in the  
Hebrew Scriptures.**

Messiah as conquering hero bringing peace?  
Messiah as sacrificial lamb for sinners?

# **Traditional Judaism cites these passages as the expectation for Messiah:**

**And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isaiah 2:4**

**The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the Lord. Isaiah 65:25**

# Even the Apostles had a 'Kingdom Now' expectation for Messiah:

Peter: *"Are you now going to restore the kingdom?"*  
(Acts 1:6)

When you are under the heavy thumb of Rome,  
you long for the promised Messianic Kingdom  
and Theocratic Rule

**Traditional Judaism avoids these passages as the  
expectation for Messiah:**

**Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is  
coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble  
and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

**Zech. 9:9**

**~ ~ ~**

**I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those  
who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and  
spitting. Isaiah 50:6**

**and, traditional Judaism also avoids these passages  
as the expectation for Messiah:**

**“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit  
of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they  
have pierced, they shall mourn for him,  
as one . . . weeps over a firstborn” Zech. 12:10**

~ ~ ~

**“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him  
not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him  
stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he  
was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us  
peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we  
have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity  
of us all” Isa 53:3-6**



# **The Scriptures record divergent pictures of Messiah in his nature & accomplishments:**

**In Micah 5:2 he is born in Bethlehem, a humble  
village. But in Daniel 7:13-14 the prophet tells us  
he will arrive riding on the clouds of heaven.**

~

**Is he the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 or  
the royal king portrayed in Psalm 2?**

# The Earliest Rabbinic commentators were more willing to consider the humble Messiah portrait

אמר רבי אלכסנדרי רבי יהושע בן לוי רמי כתיב (דניאל ז, יג) וארו  
עם ענני שמיא כבר אינש אתה וכתוב (זכריה ט, ט) עני ורוכב על  
חמור זכו עם ענני שמיא לא זכו עני רוכב על חמור

13

Rabbi Alexandri says: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi raises a contradiction between two depictions of the coming of the Messiah. It is written: “There came with the clouds of heaven, one like unto a son of man...and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom...his dominion is an everlasting dominion” (Daniel 7:13–14). And it is written: “Behold, your king will come to you; he is just and victorious; lowly and riding upon a donkey and upon a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Rabbi Alexandri explains: If the Jewish people merit redemption, the Messiah will come in a miraculous manner with the clouds of heaven. If they do not merit redemption, the Messiah will come lowly and riding upon a donkey.

This section is from  
Talmud, Tractate  
Sanhedrin 98a, par.13  
written c. 250-500 CE  
Davidson translation,  
Sefaria.org

## An Early Targum (Aramaic translation/commentary) recognizes Beit-Lechem as the birthplace of Messiah

*“As for you, Bethlehem Ephrath, you were too little to be numbered among the tribes of the house of Judah. From you before me the **Messiah** will go out to be a servant, a ruler (or ‘a servant of rulership’) over Israel, whose name has been spoken from the beginning, from days of antiquity.”*

“Targum Jonathan”  
Yonatan ben Uzziel,  
student of Hillel the Elder,  
originally written c. 40 CE,  
redacted in Babylonia c. 300 CE

## Prominent Rabbis saw Messiah ben Yosef as an unrecognized sacrifice

*“Mashiach ben Yosef, when he comes, does not come in order to establish his own dynasty, rather he comes to re-establish the Davidic dynasty. He will even sacrifice his own life in order to accomplish this. His blood will atone for the sins of the Jewish people. His atonement will take the form of the Davidic dynasty being restored to the Jewish people as an everlasting Kingdom.”*  
– (Shelah, Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Vayeshev-Miketz- Yayigash, Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz [1565-1640])

*“This is one of Yosef’s attributes. Not just in his generation but in every generation, Mashiach ben Yosef recognizes his brothers and they do not recognize him. It is an act of the Satan which conceals Mashiach ben Yosef’s attributes, such that the Jews unfortunately do not recognize his footsteps and in fact scoff at them... If not for this, our troubles would already be over. If Israel recognized Yosef, Mashiach ben Yosef footsteps comprising the ingatherings of the exiles, we would already be completely redeemed.”* – (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna – The “Vilna Gaon” 1720-1797 Kol HaTor 2:39)

- 1. Messiah ben Joseph: atonement for sin**
  - 2. Messiah ben David: kingdom establisher**
- come together in one person: Yeshua Ha-Mashiach**

## **One Messiah in Two Appearances**

**So, what's this have to do with  
Dispensationalism??**

**PROGRESSIVE REVELATION!**

**The principle is that as revelation unfolds,  
more and more of 'the plan' is evident**

# Messiah ben Joseph or Messiah ben David?

*Digging Deeper Resources:*

## **The Messiah of the Tanach, Targums, Talmuds**

2012, compiled by F. Kenton Beshore, World Bible Society, Costa Mesa, CA

~

**Ha-Mashiach**, by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Ariel Ministries 2014

~

**Messiah ben Joseph** by David Mitchell

pub. By CreateSpace, 2016

**Sof, Sof**

*(the end)*