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The Shepherd of Israel



How Jewish scholars see Jesus

This question—asked by Jesus of Nazareth—echoes down through history to be answered by every individual, both Jew and gentile.

How would *you* answer the question? Was Jesus merely a wise man, a teacher? Or was He more? Was He the unique Son of God, the Messiah who had come to save Israel from her sins?

The following roundtable discussion recently took place in the grand ballroom of the mind of the author. While the actual meeting is, of course, a fiction, the statements made by the Jewish authorities are genuine as you will see by consulting the footnotes.

Shepherd of Israel: Thank you, gentlemen, for joining us today for this discussion. Some of you traveled great distances to be here, and I want you to know how much I—and our readers—appreciate it.

I know that with the exception of Benjamin Disraeli, here on my right, none of those present today have expressed belief in Jesus as the

Messiah. I'd like to ask the distinguished Prime Minister of England to comment on the importance of Jesus.

Benjamin Disraeli: The pupil of Moses may ask himself whether all the princes of the House of David have done so much for the Jews as that Prince who was crucified. . . Had it not been for Him, the Jews would have been comparatively unknown or known only as a high Oriental Caste which had lost its country. Has not He made their history the most famous history in the world?¹

S of I: So you are saying that Jesus made Judaism known throughout the world. Do any of you agree?

Dr. Claude G. Montefiore, president of the Jewish Religious Union: We Jews do not mind saying that the greatest influence upon European and American history and civilization has been the Bible. But we too often forget that the Bible which has had this influence is not merely the Old Testament. It is the Old Testament and the New Testament combined. And of the two it is the New Testament which has undoubtedly had the greater

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PART THREE

Who Do You Say That I Am?

influence and has been of the greater importance.²

S of I: That's all well and good, but what do you think of Jesus?

Dr. Montefiore: Jesus is the most important Jew that has ever lived, to whom the sinner and the outcast age after age, have owed a great debt of gratitude.³

S of I: Is that your opinion too, Rabbi Enelow?

Rabbi H. G. Enelow, D.D., reform rabbi and scholar: What does the modern Jew think of Jesus? A Prophet? Yes, crowning a great tradition, and who can compute all that Jesus has meant to humanity? The love he has inspired, the solace he has given, the good he has engendered, the hope and joy he has kindled—all that is unequalled in human history.⁴

S of I: Thank you, rabbi. Let me ask another rabbi present—Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler, president of Hebrew Union College—to have the last word on the subject.

Rabbi Kohler: No ethical system or religious catechism, however broad and pure, could equal the efficiency of this great personality, standing, unlike any other, midway between heaven and earth, equally near to God and to man. . . Jesus, the helper of the poor, the friend of the sinner, the brother of every fellow-sufferer, the comforter of every sorrow-laden, the healer of the sick, the up-lifter of the fallen, the lover of man, the redeemer of woman, won the heart of mankind by storm.

Jesus, the meekest of men, the most despised of the despised race of the Jews, mounted the world's throne to be the earth's Great King.⁵

S of I: Those are strong and beautiful words, rabbi. You say He is the earth's Great King. But what about His claim to be the Messiah, the one sent of God to die as a substitute for the sins of mankind?

Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, reform rabbi, scholar and author: Scores of men have believed themselves to be the

Messiah and have convinced many of their contemporaries, but those who believed Jesus to be the Messiah have built a great church upon the rock of their belief. He is still the living comrade of countless lives. No Moslem ever sings, "Mohammed, lover of my soul", nor does any Jew say of Moses, the Teacher, "I need thee every hour."⁶

S of I: I can see that our illustrious professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College wants to add something. Professor Rivkin, the floor is yours.

Ellis Rivkin: Of these Messianic claimants, only one, Jesus of Nazareth, so impressed his disciples that he became their Messiah. And he did so after the very crucifixion which should have refuted his claims decisively. But it was not Jesus' life which proved beyond question that he was the Messiah, the Christ. It was his resurrection.⁷

S of I: Theologically, then what is your opinion of Jesus?

Hans Joachim Schoeps, theologian and scholar of religious history: I would even go so far as to declare that perhaps no gentile can come to God the Father otherwise than through Jesus Christ. . . The Christian who, according to his belief, comes to the Father through Jesus Christ. . . stands before the same God in whom we Jews believe, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of Moses our teacher, to whom Jesus also said "Father."⁸

S of I: So you men don't consider Jesus to be a heretic?

Pinchas E. Lapide, senior lecturer at Bar-Ilan University: I have the suspicion that Jesus was more loyal to the Torah than I am as an Orthodox Jew.⁹

S of I: Your colleague has something to add. Professor Flusser. . .

David Flusser, professor of religious history at Hebrew University in Jerusalem: I do not think that many Jews would object if the Messiah—when he came—was the Jew Jesus.¹⁰

S of I: That's a remarkable statement, Professor Flusser! Since we all think so highly of Jesus, what should every Jew's response be to the Prophet from Nazareth. . . leading us back to our main topic?

Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, Jewish scholar and author: Every Jew should be proud of the fact that Jesus is our brother, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. We desire to put him back where he belongs.¹¹

S of I: Where, then, does Jesus belong in the minds and hearts of the Jewish people?

Constantine Brunner, Jewish philosopher: What is this? Is it only the Jew who is unable to see and hear? Are the Jews stricken with blindness and deafness as regards Christ, so that to them only he has nothing to say? Is he to be of no importance to us Jews?¹²

S of I: What are you suggesting, Mr. Brunner?

Brunner: Understand then what we shall do: We shall bring him back to us. Christ is not dead for us—for us he has not yet lived; and he will not slay us, he will make us live again. His profound and holy words, and all that is true and heart-appealing in the New Testament, must from now on be heard in our synagogues and taught to our children, in order that the wrong we had committed may be made good, the curse turned into a blessing, and that he at last may find us who has always been seeking after us.¹³

S of I: Well, I see we've run out of time. Thank you, gentlemen, for participating in this interesting and timely discussion. Soon we will be convening another roundtable discussion to which famous Jewish authors have been invited. Until then,



may I leave you with this one final question:

If Jesus wasn't the Messiah, can you name any person in history who better fits the description given of the Messiah in the Tenach or Old Testament?

The final question is a good one for every Jew and gentile to carefully consider. What really was the description of the Messiah given in the pages of the Old Testament? Send in the coupon for a free packet of thought-provoking literature. This "Messianic Portrait" packet includes:

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FOOTNOTES

¹Quoted from *Unto His Own* by Dr. Jacob Gartenhaus, Marshall, Morgan and Scott Publishers.

²Quoted by D.B. Bravin, *The Dawn*, Sept.-Oct., 1932.

³*Jewish Chronicle*, July 14, 1909.

⁴Quoted from *The New Jews* by James C. Hefley, Tyndale House.

⁵Address before the Congress in 1893, quoted by Jacob Jocz in *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, Baker Book House.

⁶*Stormers of Heaven* by Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, Harper & Brothers.

⁷Quoted from "The Meaning of Messiah in Jewish Thought" by Ellis Rivkin, *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation*, Baker Book House.

⁸"A Religious Bridge Between Jew and Christian," *Commentary*, Feb. 1950.

⁹Quoted in *Time*, Apr. 18, 1977.

¹⁰Quoted in *Time*, Apr. 18, 1977.

¹¹*Das Neue Leben*, Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, as quoted in *Unto His Own* by Dr. Jacob Gartenhaus, Marshall, Morgan and Scott Publishers.

¹²*Der Juden Hass und die Juden* by Constantine Brunner (pen name of Leopold Wertheimer), quoted in *The Rebirth of the State of Israel* by Dr. Arthur W. Kac, Baker Book House.

¹³*Ibid.*

The Mystery Of

by Steve Schwartz

Here, for all of you whodunit fans, is a mystery that (strangely enough) Jews often find difficult but which Christians are able to solve with ease. The mystery occurs every year in synagogues throughout the world. This year the mystery will happen on August 23rd.

Read the facts, take a look at the exhibits... and see if you can figure the mystery out!

THE FACTS

Every Sabbath certain portions of the Torah and Haftarah (Prophets) are read aloud in the synagogue. The portions to be read are uniform in every synagogue and temple wherever you go.

This year on the Sabbath which falls on August 16, most of the 51st chapter of Isaiah is read as well as the first 12 verses of the 52nd chapter. Abruptly the reading comes to an end.

The following Sabbath—on August 23rd—the mystery occurs. The reading picks up at the first verse of the 54th chapter, making the 53rd chapter of Isaiah the "missing" chapter.*

If you have a Jewish calendar which includes the Haftarah readings, you can check these facts out for yourself. But what you won't find on your calendar—and what you'll never hear in the synagogue—is that mysterious missing chapter.

EXHIBIT #1

The following verses—from the Jewish Scriptures—were written approximately 700 years before the Common Era. The ancient synagogue affirmed that these verses were predicted of the Messiah. Today this portion of the Scriptures is known as the "Suffering Servant" passage and is the subject of much debate in Jewish circles.

ISAIAH 53

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was



despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the

*We are aware that most Jewish scholars believe the omission of Isaiah 53 is not deliberate. We find, however, a startling admission in *A Rabbinic Anthology* by author Herbert Loewe, an orthodox Jew:

Quotations from the famous 53rd chapter of Isaiah are rare in the Rabbinic literature. Because of the christological interpretation given to the chapter by Christians, it is omitted from the series of prophetic lessons (Haftarot) for the Deuteronomy Sabbaths... The omission is deliberate and striking. (op. cit. p. 544)

The Mystery Of The Missing Chapter



wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

EXHIBIT #2

As already noted, traditional Jewish thought maintains that the above passage is a description of the Messiah.

Wherever you look in the ancient Jewish scholarly writings—the Talmud, the Zohar, the Targums, the Midrashim, the Mahsor, even the great Maimonides himself—all support the view that Isaiah 53 is a portrait of the suffering Messiah.

DO YOU KNOW THE SOLUTION?

Actually, this is a two-part mystery. Now that you've read the missing chapter, figure out:

(1) Why has this chapter been left out of the synagogue readings?

(2) Who in history best fits the description given of the Messiah in this striking passage?

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