

**1** The genealogical record of Yeshua the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham: <sup>2</sup>Abraham begot Itzhaq, Itzhaq begot Yaqov, Yaqov begot Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup>Judah begot Peretz and Zerakh, whose mother was Tamar, Peretz begot Hetzron and Hetzron begot Ram.

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textual variants

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**1:1 of Yeshua the Messiah** - In the family of Hebrew manuscripts the word "Messiah" is omitted and the name is spelled "Yeshu". Shem Tov & Dutillet say: אלה תולדות ישו בן דוד בן אברהם "these are the generations of Yeshu son of David son of Abraham". In some Aramaic dialects the Ayin (ע) is silent, so ישוע would be pronounced Yeshu. But more likely the Jewish scribes intended to allude to our Oral tradition. (*Gn 25:26*) "His hand held the heel of Esav and his name was called Yaqov" עשו ויקרא שמו יעקב here we have the acronym of "Yeshua" going from left to right (as judgment comes from the left side). Yeshua is stretched between Yaqov and Esav. The Ayin in Yeshua's name falls on the first letter of "Esav" (עשו). Although Yeshua was a son of Israel, a Jew, our people nowadays perceive him as a foreign religious leader, and this is because the gentiles hold him by his "Ayin". This is the reason that in Orthodox Judaism he is known as Yeshu (ישו). He has been exiled to the religion of Esav, to the nations of the world (the numerical value of the letter Ayin is 70, which alludes to the 70 nations of the world [*cf. Gn 10*]). That's why he's not properly recognized by his brothers. The value of 'Esav' (עשו) is 376, which equals: 'Vessel of Yeshu' (כלי ישו) = 376.

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commentary

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**1:1 The genealogical record** - What purpose does this genealogy serve? Apparently to demonstrate that Yeshua is the Messiah. But why the rest of the book is not focused on events or attributes that demonstrate that Yeshua is the Messiah? He should quote messianic prophecies and explain how Yeshua fulfilled them. But most of the verses he quotes as a "proof" in the literal level are not messianic prophecies or are not prophecies at all, or do not talk about Messiah. So why quoting them? His exposition is not based on a literal reading of the Torah, but rather on Midrash. So the "evidences" shown in the book only make sense to the initiated. The book was surely written by a Jew, and for an audience that already believed in Yeshua and had a background on Jewish homiletics. The author takes for granted that the reader is going to see beyond the text and develop - according to Jewish exegesis - the Midrashic riddles that are there waiting to be revealed. This is true even for the genealogy, as we are going to see.

**1:1 son of David, son of Abraham** - The genealogy begins with Abraham, emphasizing that he comes from the tribal lineage of the promises, from where all Israel comes. **Son of David** is an indicator that he comes from the proper royal lineage from where, according to the Prophets, the anointed King of Israel must come. Therefore, from the author's perspective Yosef is his biological father, and there are four reasons at least: **(a)** The genealogy is that of Yosef; its *raison-d'être* is that Yosef is his father. **(b)** The prophets are specific in that the Messiah comes directly from the paternal line of King David. He's a branch of the roots of Yisai (*Is 11:1-2*), he's the seed of David that comes out of his bowels (*2S 7:12*), a sprout of righteousness grown from David (*Jer 33:15*). Someone who is simply "adopted" into the tribe of Judah is not fitting for claiming the Messianic throne. **(c)** Throughout the Gospels Yeshua is called "son of David" in the sense of being a biological descendant (*Mt 9:27, 15:22, 21:9; Lk 1:32; Rom 1:3*). **(d)** Yosef is called Yeshua's father - especially in the earlier unaltered versions of Luke (*Lk 2:33, 43, 48, cf. 2:41, Jn 1:45, 6:42*).

**1:2 Abraham begot Itzhaq, Itzhaq begot Yaqov** - The messianic lineage, as our sages say: "carries a whole basket of reptiles" (*Yoma 22b*), in other words: it is cursed with so many blemishes, in the aspect of the verse: "He grew up before him like a tender shoot, like a root out of dry ground... with no beauty" (*Is 53:2*). Abraham was born from Terah, an idol worshipper who angered his master by being intimated with his wife during her menstruation; from which union Abram was born (*cf. Midrash Rabbah 38:19; Jos 24:2*). Itzhaq was born from Abraham, but "the scorners of the generation were saying that Sarah had conceived from Abimelekh, for she had lived with Abraham for many years and had not conceived from him. What did the Blessed Holy One do? He shaped the features of Itzhaq's face to resemble Abraham's, and everyone attested that Abraham had begotten Itzhaq. This is the meaning of what is written here: 'Itzhaq, the son of Abraham', because here is proof that 'Abraham begot Itzhaq'" (*Rashi on Gn 25:19 quoting Midrash Tanhuma, Toldot 1*). Yaqov was born from a barren woman (*Gn 25:21*) and the reason he's the patriarch of Israel is because he desired and stole the birthright from his twin brother Esav (*Gn 25:31, 27:19*).

**1:3 Peretz and Zerakh, whose mother was Tamar** - It is not common to mention a woman in a Jewish genealogy, unless there's something interesting about her. For instance in 1Chronicles some women are mentioned, only to emphasize a union with Cananites (*2:3*), Ishmaelites (*2:17*), or the problem with Tamar (*2:4*). Tamar was Judah's widowed daughter-in-law, who had dressed herself as a prostitute in order to sleep with Judah, and became pregnant of twins. One of them was Peretz; the ancestor of Messiah (*cf. Gn 38:15-29*).

<sup>4</sup>Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahson, Nahson begot Salmon, <sup>5</sup>Salmon begot Boaz, whose mother was Rakhav, Boaz begot Oved, whose mother was Ruth, Oved begot Yisai, <sup>6</sup>and Yisai begot King David. David begot Shlomoh from Uriah's wife. <sup>7</sup>Shlomoh begot Rehavam, Rehavam begot Aviya, Aviya begot Asa.

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commentary

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**1:4 Amminadab begot Nahson** - He also begot Elisheva, who was Aaron's wife (*Ex 6:23*).

**1.5 Salmon begot Boaz, whose mother was Rakhav** - There are two opinions with regard to this verse. Some believe that the Rakhav mentioned here is Rahav, the harlot of Jericho. The reason is that the place and the time totally fit. Salmon (or Salmah *1Chr 2:11*) is in between Aaron's brother-in-law - Nahson - and Boaz, who lived at the time of the Judges of Israel (*Ruth 1:1*). The only Rakhav that we know as being contemporary of Salmon is the one of Jericho. But some of us question this position. First, because when the Nazarenes talk about Rahav of Jericho, they use the designation "the harlot" (*Heb 11:31, Yaqov [Jms] 2:25*), and in the Greek manuscripts the names are written differently; Rahav of the genealogy is Ραχάβ *Rakhav*, and Rahav the harlot is Ραάβ *Ra'av*. In addition, there's an Eastern Christian tradition in which Salmon's wife is Saphila, daughter of Amminadab.<sup>a</sup> Our Oral Tradition gives the opinion that Rahav's family were descendants of Ephraim and that she married Joshua son of Nun, because when she joined the people of Israel, that's the only name the Scripture gives us (*Jos 6:25*). However, our sages say something interesting about this: She had no male children with Joshua, only daughters (*cf. Megillah 14b*).<sup>b</sup> Many theories have been suggested, from the idea that Rahav conceived Boaz before marrying Joshua, to Rahav being Saphila. Rahav's numerical value is 210 (רחב), which is the amount of years that Israel dwelt in Egypt before redemption. As it is also written: "go down there [to Egypt]" (*Gn 42:2*), and the value of "go down" (רד) is 210, which is the number of years they were enslaved in Egypt (*cf. Rashi on Ex 12:40*). The text might be saying that thanks to the merits of Rahav, Salmon begot Boaz; ancestor of the final redeemer.

**1:5 Oved, whose mother was Ruth** - Ruth was a Moabitess (*Rth 1:4*) and God had decreed that "A Moabite cannot enter into the congregation of Israel... never" (*Dt 23:4 [3]*). This means that the lineage of Oved would be, in the eyes of so many people, blemished for having Moabite blood in their veins. That's why Boaz saw necessary to gather the sages of Israel and agree with them that the Torah refers only to a male Moabite (מואבי). So a Moabitess (מואביה) should be allowed to join the people of Israel (*cf. Ketuvot 7a; Yevamot 77b*).

**1:6 Yishai begot King David** - According to our tradition,<sup>c</sup> Yishai decided not to have more children with his wife Nitzevet in a time where his Jewishness was being questioned on account of his descent from Ruth the Moabite. When the time passed he wanted to have a child through his Canaanite concubine, a boy whose identity would not be questioned, but that night Nitzevet took her place and conceived king David. David was in the eyes of his own brothers a bastard, as it's written (*Ps 69:9 [8]*): I am become... an alien unto my mother's children. In addition, Doeg the Edomite pronounced him to be illegitimate (*cf. Yevamot 76b*). It was the Sanhedrin who had to decree once and for all that it is permitted to marry female Moabites (*Yevamot 77a*).

**1:6 David begot Shlomoh from Uriah's wife** - Uriah was one of David's soldiers. David had impregnated his wife, and since all his plans to hide it failed, David sent him to die in battle (*2S 11*). Then he married her and from this union, Shlomoh was born. There was a generally held rumor about Shlomoh: "Is he not the son of Bath-sheva [and consequently illegitimate]?" (*Pesikta Rabbati 6*). Our sages notice that king Shaul's lineage, to which was attached not the slightest blemish in regard to genealogy, did not last. But the line of David, on the other hand, carried around a "basket full of reptiles on its back" [a figurative expression that refers to genealogical blemishes in the bloodline].<sup>d</sup>

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relevant quotes

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"Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: "Why did the reign of Shaul did not endure? Because no reproach rested on him [meaning, we could not point him out to the ignominy of his ancestors], for Rabbi Yohanan had said in the name of R. Shimon ben Yehozadak: One should not appoint any one administrator of a community, unless he carries a basket of reptiles on his back [i.e. his past], so that if he becomes arrogant, one could tell him: turn around!" (*Yoma 22b*).

<sup>a</sup> *cf. "Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan" IV:13:3.*

<sup>b</sup> *cf. Kovetz mefarshim on Yevamot 45a.*

<sup>c</sup> *cf. Yalkut haMakhiri; Sefer haToda.*

<sup>d</sup> *cf. Rabbi Lichtenstein's commentary on Matthew chapter 1.*

<sup>8</sup>Asa begot Yehoshafat, Yehoshafat begot Yoram, Yoram begot Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>Uzziah begot Yotham, Yotham begot Akhaz, and Akhaz begot Hezekiah. <sup>10</sup>Hezekiah begot Menashe, Menashe begot Amon, Amon begot Yoshia, <sup>11</sup>and Yoshia begot Yeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Bavel.

<sup>12</sup>After the exile to Bavel Yeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.

<sup>13</sup>Zerubbabel begot Aviud, Aviud begot Eliaqim, and Eliaqim begot Azor. <sup>14</sup>Azor begot Zadoq, Zadoq begot Akhim, Akhim begot Eliud, <sup>15</sup>Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Mathan, Mathan begot Yaqov.

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—textual variants—

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**1:13 Aviud begot Eliaqim** - A Hebrew manuscript (*DuTillet*) adds another name between Aviud and Eliaqim, namely: Avner אבנר. This unique reading is apparently the Scribe's attempt to fix the text, because according to Mt 1:17 the post-exilic lineage is made of 14 generations, but there are only 13 names in the list (see the commentary on 1:17).

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—commentary—

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**1:8 Yoram begot Uzziah** - It is notorious that the genealogy skips three names between Yoram and Uzziah, namely: Ahaziah, Yoash and Amatziah. **(1)** Ahaziah son of Yoram (*2K 8:25*) was as evil as Ahab (*2Chr 22:3*). **(2)** Yoash the son of Ahaziah (*2K 11:2, 12:1*) started well but ended up selling the consecrated items of the Temple to Syria (*2K 12:18*). **(3)** Amatziah son of Yoash (*2K 14:1, 2Chr 25:25-27*) made what is right before God, but not from heart (*2Chr 25:2*).

**1:11 Yoshia begot Yeconiah** - The name of Yoakim (or Yehoiakim) between Yoshia and Yeconiah is missing (cf. *1Chr 3:15-16*). This makes a total of four generations missing. This is the nature of genealogies. At times some names might be skipped, at times words are not names but adjectives and sometimes different names represent the very same person. Since each genealogy serves a different purpose it is not rare seeing variations or different versions of the same genealogy (compare for instance *1Chr 6:4-14* with *Ezra 7:1-5*).

**1:11 Yeconiah** - The line of Yeconiah had been cursed with four curses (*Jer 22:30*): (1) He would be recorded as childless (2) He would not prosper in his lifetime (3) his offspring would not prosper (4) No one of his house would ever sit on the throne of David nor rule anymore in Judah. Our sages explain that the curse of Yeconiah was lifted because he repented and because exile atoned for his sins (cf. *Sanhedrin 37b-38a*). Certainly he was not recorded childless, for he was registered as the father of Shealtiel - a name that is interpreted as: 'God has heard my prayer' (*Sanh 37b*). He did prosper in his lifetime, as he was elevated above other kings (*2K 25:28; Jer 52:32-33*). And certainly someone of his house ruled over Judah, namely Zerubbabel (*Hag 2:21*). In fact, the Word of God reveals that the king Messiah would come through Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel (*Hag 2:23*).<sup>e</sup> But even though according to our Torah the curse has been lifted, many have pointed to it (and still do) as one of the important blemishes in Yeshua's dynasty.

**1:12 Yeconiah begot Shealtiel** - One additional name has been skipped in this genealogy: Pedaiah, son of Shealtiel (*1Chr 3:18*), but this omission is also present in Scripture, as it's written: "Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel" (*Ezd 3:2; Neh 12:1; Hag 1:1*), so we should not really count it as an omission.

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—relevant quotes—

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"Rabbi Yohanan said: Exile atones for everything, for it is written (*Jer 22:30*), Thus says the Lord: Write this man childless, a man that will not prosper in his days, for no man of his seed will prosper sitting on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah. Whereas after he was exiled, it is written (*1Chr 3:17*), And the sons of Yeconiah-Assir Shealtiel his son, etc. [He was called] Assir אסיר [i.e. imprisoned] because his mother conceived him in prison. Shealtiel שאלתיאל [i.e. I have requested from God], because God אל שתלו did not plant him in the way that others are planted [i.e. he was born in prison]... Another interpretation: Shealtiel because אל שאל God demanded absolution from his oath [which he had made against Yeconiah]" (*Sanhedrin 37b-38a*).

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<sup>e</sup> cf. *Midrash Tanhuma Toldot 20*.

<sup>16</sup>Yaqov begot Yosef, the husband of Miriam, of whom was born Yeshua, called the Messiah.

<sup>17</sup>Thus, all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen, and from David to the exile of Bavel fourteen generations, and from the exile to the Messiah fourteen generations.

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commentary

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**1:17 Thus, all generations... fourteen... fourteen... fourteen...** - This Pesher is an intentional play with numbers. 14 is the numerical value of "David" (ד"ו). Three times 14 is three times 'David' = 42. The number 42 in Judaism is actually very significant. The 42 stations of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land (*Nm 33*) represent every Jew's soul journey through this life (cf. *Baal Shem Tov*). Each 42 steps journey in everyone's life is an Exodus, from this world's bondage to the final redemption, the sanctification of the material world. In short, 42 represents the journey to redemption from beginning to end. It is not a coincidence that the most concealed of God's names is a 42 letters name (cf. *Qiddushin 71a*). So it is significant that the author wanted to allude to the number 42 in this verse, for the Davidic Messiah represents the final redemption.

**1:17 from the exile to the Messiah fourteen generations** - One name is missing in the last set though. From Abraham to Yeshua there are registered 41 names, not 42. So in the way it appears in the text, Yeshua is the 41th generation. Once again, 41 is significant from a Kabbalistic perspective. In the Omer Count<sup>f</sup> the 41 corresponds to Yesod-in-Yesod, which is, as our Mekuvalim teach, Yosef in Yosef, for Yosef is the Tzaddiq, the bridge between exile and redemption. The content of all the Attributes coalesces in the sefirah of Yesod where it is prepared to be transferred to expression and manifestation in Malkhut (the Kingdom). This is also why Yeshua is alluded to as the 42th generation but appears as the 41th name in the list. This alludes to the role that Yeshua actually fulfilled, a manifestation of the Redemptive force called 'Messiah ben Yosef'.

**1:17 fourteen... fourteen... fourteen generations** - As we have seen above, there are four biblical names missing in the genealogy. If we add them to the list, the counting goes like this: Yoakim (31), Yeconiah (32), Shealtiel (33), Zerubbabel (34), Aviud (35), Eliaqim (36), Azor (37), Zadoq (38), Akhim (Yakin) (39), Eliud (40), Eleazar (41), Mathan (42), Yaqov (43), Yosef (44), Yeshua (45). Through this count, Yeshua happens to be the 45th generation. Rabbi Itzhaq Ginsborough once said that the Biblical generations are made of 19 gentile generations and 45 Jewish generations. So the 19 gentile generations are the Eve generations and the 45 Jewish generations are the Adam generations. In gematria, 19 is the value of Eve [Khava **הויה** = 19] and the value of gentile [goy **גוי** = 19]. 45 is the value of Adam [Adam **אדם** = 45], and the value of "redemption" [Geulah **גאולה** = 45], hence Adam and Eve represent all humankind. According to Midrashic interpretation Abraham is counted as the first Jewish soul.<sup>g</sup> From Abraham to the last generation mentioned in Scripture there are 45 [אדם] names. The last two are Elieoinai and Anani (*1Chr 3:24*). The Midrash interprets the last names hermeneutically, linking Anani to Messiah, as it 's written, "Behold, with Anani of Heaven" (*Dn 7:13*).<sup>h</sup> The previous name: Elieoinai, represents the eyes (einai) fixed on Eliyah (the forerunner of Messiah). In gematria, Anani is 4 times "Adam"; so the average value of each letter in "Anani" is "Adam". Therefore there's a connection between Anani (the 'Adam' generation in Scripture) and Yeshua (the 'Adam' generation in this book). The two names together (Anani + Yeshua) equal "Messiah ben Yosef" (=566). עני + ישוע = משיח בן יוסף

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relevant quotes

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"Messiah... from whom does he come? From Zerubbabel. And Zerubbabel from David, as it's written... Zerubbabel... And the sons of Elieoinai... Anani, seven (*1Chr 3:24*). Who is Anani? He is the King Messiah, as it is written, I was visualizing on night visions and behold, with Anani of Heaven (*Dn 7:13*). And the meaning of 'seven'? That which is written about Messiah, They will see the plummet in Zerubbabel's hand. These seven are the eyes of HaShem roving to and fro throughout all the earth (*Zech 4:10*)".

(**Midrash Tanhuma, Toldot 20**).

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<sup>f</sup> The Omer Count (sefirat haOmer): the count of the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot, representing a journey through the 7 emotive sefirot, each one containing a blend of the 7 Emotional Divine Attributes [7x7=49] (cf. *Lv 23:15-16; Megillah 20b, Menakhot 66a; Tosefta on Megillah 20b; A spiritual guide to counting the Omer by Simon Jacobson*).

<sup>g</sup> cf. *Hagigah 3a, Ramban on Lv 24:10*.

<sup>h</sup> cf. *Tanhuma Toldot 20; Targum on 1Chr 3:24*.

<sup>18</sup>The birth of Yeshua was like this: As his mother Miriam was engaged to Yosef, before they came together, she was found to be pregnant from the holy spirit.

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commentary

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**1:18 The birth of Yeshua was like this** - There have always been two interpretations for this passage. The more common interpretation, the traditional, considers the passage to be a literal actual story. A second interpretation assumes that the story is written in an "aggadic manner", intentionally concealing the actual events in a story that should not be taken at face value, for it was customary in ancient Israel that when people wanted to talk of the hidden things of the Torah, they would clothe the matter with in riddles or parables, because until Rashbi they would not speak Kabbalah openly (*Sipurei Maasiot, preface*). The two opinions are valid, as long as Yosef is still considered Yeshua's biological father, as explained above (In the commentary on verse 1:1), for three are partners in the creation of a child: the Blessed Holy One, the father and the mother (*Niddah 31a*).

**1:18 before they came together** - This is traditionally interpreted as "before they cohabitated as husband and wife"; they were engaged and their marriage had not been consummated. Another interpretation: They were yet in their betrothal (*Eirusin*), in the stage of sanctification where each one is still living in their own home. Hence the verse says, "before they came together"; meaning, before they lived together (i.e. the *Nisuin*). In the Gospels the expression "to come together" never refers to sexual intercourse (cf. *Mrk 3:20, 6:33, 14:53, Lk 5:15, Jn 11:33, Acts 1:6, 15:38, 28:17*). In the letters of Paul it is used in the sense of forming a community (*1Co 11:17-20, 14:26*). There's only one instance where Paul uses "come together" in reference to a couple who have decided to live separated for a while, and then come to live together again (*1co 7:5*).

**1:18 she was found pregnant from the holy spirit** - This story is seen from Yosef's perspective. In Luke's account we read that before Miriam was pregnant the angel said, "The holy spirit will come over you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (*Lk 1:35*), resembling the Psalm: "he who abides in the secret of the Most High will dwell in the shadow of the Almighty" (*Ps 91:1*). The picture is that of a bird protecting her eggs. In the traditional interpretation she is found pregnant without having sexual intercourse. In fact, Ruakh haKodesh (i.e. God's breath; the Divine Inspiration and will) caused her to be miraculously pregnant of Yosef. The holy spirit, or God's spirit, hovers over, and comes upon those who will bring about God's will, even if it seems impossible. By holy spirit Bilaam turned his prophecy in favor of Israel (*Nm 24:2*), Israel's fate changed in their war with Mesopotamia (*Jdg 3:10*) or Shaul's messengers prophesied (*1S 19:20*). The holy spirit spoke directly from many of the prophets' mouth (*2S 23:2, Is 42:1, Zech 7:12*).

Miraculous births are not absent in Scripture nor in our tradition. Our patriarchs were born from barren women. "Our mother Sarah was incapable of procreation", as it says, Sarai was barren, and she had no child. She didn't even have a womb! (cf. *Yevamot 64b on Gn 11:30*). Manoa's wife was sterile; then an angel of the Lord announced that she would have a son, a deliverer (*Jdg 13:2-5*). After this she gave birth to Samson (*Jdg 13:24*). We assume that the woman had intercourse with Manoa, but it is not written anywhere. All the text says is that the baby was a miracle. We read of Rivkah that "she was יולדה לבתואל born to Betuel" (*Gn 24:15*). Rabbi Levi Yitzhaq tells us that the expression translated as 'being born' ילדה is "not appropriate for males, as they only הוליד (holid) - beget, plant the seed, but do not bring it into gestation [as it is written, 'Avraham Holid et Itzhaq' - Abraham begot Itzhaq (*Gn 25:19*)]. The use of the word 'Yuldah', as it appears here suggests an immaculate birth, a birth that had not been preceded by insemination" (cf. *Kedushat Levi<sup>1</sup> on Gn 24:14*). When Noah was born, his father Lamech thought he was not human, that he was the son of one of the angels. Enoch had to confirm him that the child was truly his (*Hanokh 106:5-12, 107:2; cf. Genesis Apocryphon [1Q20]*). A Hassidic legend also states that Hershele, the son of the Baal Shem Tov, was born from God's will, within the 14 years in which the Besht refrained from sleeping with his wife (cf. *Shivhei haBesht, 248: The Besht's son*). A non-Pharisaic Midrash says that Melkhi-Tzedek had a virginal birth (*2nd Enoch 71*).

**1:18 she was found pregnant** - According to Luke's narrative, Miriam had been three months with Elisheva (*Lk 1:56*), and when she returned "she was found pregnant" (*Mt 1:18*). This is why Yosef thought she had been with another man. In Judaism three months without sexual contact is a safe amount of time for one to safely assume he's not the father of a pregnant woman's child (cf. *Ketubot 60b*),<sup>j</sup> because "pregnancy is not noticed until after three months from conception" (*Bereshit Rabbah 85:10*).

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<sup>i</sup> Taken from *Kedushat Levi, Eliyahu Munk's translation*. The Rabbi explains that the verse refers to Rikvah's birth from Abraham's good deeds, who were "spilled" even over people like Betuel, and therefore Rikvah was miraculously born with part of Abraham's soul, being kept away from the sinful nature of her father. The interpretation is in no way denying that in the literal level Rikvah was Betuel's daughter, or that Rikvah had a mother at all.

<sup>j</sup> For instance, the Hallakha says that a widowed pregnant woman must wait 3 months before performing the Levirate marriage with the brother of her deceased husband, just to ensure who is the child's father (*Yevamot 42a*).

<sup>19</sup>Because Yosef her husband was a righteous man and did not want to defame her, he intended to release her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But when he was thinking of these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Yosef son of David, do not be afraid to take to yourself Miriam, your wife, because what is being conceived in her is from the holy spirit.

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commentary

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**1:19 Yosef her husband was a righteous man** - That is, a Tzaddiq, someone who endeavors to live according to the Torah (cf. *Lk 1:6*). In the words of our sages, "One whose merit surpasses his iniquities is a Tzaddiq" (*Yevamot 49b-50a*).

**1:20 Yosef son of David** - the angel recognizes that Yeshua's position as heir of the Messianic throne is due to Yosef being a son of David. In the same manner it is said in Luke, "the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father" (*Lk 1:32*).

**1:20 Do not be afraid to take to yourself Miriam, your wife** - A betrothed woman is already called "a wife" (*2S 3:14*).<sup>k</sup> Therefore their betrothal can only be dissolved with a formal divorce. Yosef intended to adopt the most private form, handing the letter of divorcement to her in presence of two witnesses (*Dt 24:1-2; Sota 3b*), that is; without public exposure and without the presence of a traditional Rabbinical court.

According to Hallakha (Jewish law) there are three ways to acquire [i.e. to betroth] a woman [all of them with the woman's consent]: through money, a contract or by intimate relations (*Mishna Qiddushin 1:1*). But according to Luke, Miriam was not acquired by intimate relations, because she was already betrothed when she said, "I know no man" (*Lk 1:27, 34*). The intended meaning is that Yosef had good reasons to consider Miriam guilty of adultery. He had not slept with her, and she was pregnant! There are those who consider this story to be an Aggadah (a Jewish pious legend with midrashic morals based on the actual events). There's no sin in having an opinion, since there's nothing transcendent about it, except that the pregnancy was a miracle. Jewish sects who believed in Yeshua such as the Ebionites were totally unaware of a virginal birth; it was also the case for the Gnostics. In fact the idea of a virginal birth is only alluded to in Matthew and Luke; the rest of the N"t - including Paul and the writers of Mark and John - don't show any interest about it, unlike the later creeds of Christianity. So those who interpret that this story is an Aggadah and that in the real life there was not any virginal birth are permitted to do so.

**1:20 what is being conceived is from the holy spirit** - What is being conceived is God's work, is God's will. Why would anyone want his Messiah to come in those problematic circumstances? He could be perceived as a Mamzer (i.e. born from an illicit union)! The 2nd century Greek philosopher Celsus spread the rumor that Yeshua's father was a roman soldier named Panthera (*Contra Celsum 1:69*). This idea found room in Oral Traditions and was finally perpetuated in the medieval satire known as "Toldot Yeshu". The question is, why was necessary for this genealogy to carry a whole basket of reptiles on its back and culminate with Yeshua being born apparently without a Davidic father, or without a father at all? That would be a complete fail in the Messianic expectations! Rabbi Lichtenstein says that since Messiah comes from such a (so-to-speak) problematic lineage, it should not come as a surprise if Messiah's mother is accused of adultery (cf. *Pirush al Mattai 1:3-6*). In addition there's a deeper Kabbalistic reason.

The great souls that are part of the cycle of souls of Messiah [i.e. such as Abraham, or David] are born simpletons and sometimes even to evil people, with nothing apparently special, in the likeness of the verse, "with no beauty that we should desire it" (*Is 53:2*). This is because the level of holiness of Messiah's soul is so high, that in its cycle its holiness is concealed from the Klipot (i.e. the evil husks that conceal the holy light). This is done through sins and problematic situations that are simply ruses to trick the Other-Side. The Impure Forces would think that since this Soul comes from a place that needs so much correction, it will cause the body to further sin; so it is concealed from them that it's going to submit totally to God and manifest Godliness to the world (cf. *Shaar haGilgulim almost at the end of ch. 38*).<sup>l</sup>

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<sup>k</sup> see the process of Betrothal (Eirusin) in Kiddushin 5b, 2b (cf. *Yevamot 113b; Gittin 49b; Shulkhan Arukh, Even haEzer 61:1*).

<sup>l</sup> I heard a Vort from Rav Kaduri (*on Hannukah, 5766*), based on Shaar haGilgulim and on Yoma 22b that the Blessed Holy One brings Messiah in an outer form that looks so-to-speak like it's being done in an unholy manner, and by doing so the matter will be hidden from the eyes of Samael.

<sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and his name will be called Yeshua, because he will save his people from their sins. <sup>22</sup>All this took place that it might be fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"Behold, the virgin will be pregnant and she will bear a son, and she will call his name Imanu'el" - which means that with us is God.

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—commentary—

**1:21 Yeshua** - Yeshua ישוע is the nominal form of ישועה yeshuah; salvation. It is both a Hebrew and an Aramaic name (*1Chr 24:11, 2Chr 31:15*). The author uses the same Hebrew root for "he will save" (Yoshia): "Yeshua, because he will save his people" *ישוע כי הוא יושיע את עמו*. 'Yeshua' equals "David ben Yishai" in gematria.

**1:22 that it might be fulfilled** - In Judaism, something that is 'fulfilled' especially in relation with the Torah does not necessarily imply the fulfillment of a prophecy. When we obey or teach Torah we are fulfilling it.<sup>m</sup> In this case, the author has not in mind a literal messianic prophecy. He quotes a verse that was a sign for king Ahaz (*Is 7:1, 14-17*). The specific sign was that Ahaz's enemies (Samaria and Damascus) would be desolated before a child - that was not yet born - would grow enough to distinguish between bad and good (*Is 7:16*). The child and the maiden mentioned here are Isaiah's own son and wife, as it is written (*Is 8:3*), 'and I was intimate with the prophetess... and she bore a son', and immediately after it is repeated that Samaria and Damascus would be desolated before the child learns to say Father and Mother (*Is 8:4; cf. Rashi*). The "She will call his name" implies that she will be inspired with holy spirit. "Imanu'el" is one of the many prophetic names that appear in Isaiah, it means that Samaria and Damascus will not succeed because 'God is with us' (*cf. Is 8:10*).

**1:22 the virgin will be pregnant** - As the fathers of the church point out, the original Matthew text was written in Hebrew,<sup>n</sup> and he probably used the word "Almah" (a young maiden) as it appears in Hebrew manuscripts in agreement with Isaiah. However, the word is rendered in Greek and Aramaic as "virgin" (*Parthenos* and *Betulah* respectively), following the traditional LXX interpretation (I say 'traditional' because (a) the sages only translated the Torah into Greek; we don't know who translated Isaiah, and (b) there have been found two alternative variants in the Dead Sea fragments, so not all LXX's said the same thing). the word "virgin" makes sense in the context of our narrative, but not so much in Isaiah's direct context, since we are explicitly informed that Isaiah intimated with the maiden. As a matter of fact, in the old Greek 'Parthenos' is a non-married or a young girl, whether she is virgin or not.<sup>o</sup> The final choice of "Betulah" (virgin) might have been an interpretative intentional choice, due to Almah and Parthenos carrying a strong connotation of virginity, even though neither of them mean necessarily that.

So basically, Isaiah's sign is taken in a totally midrashic manner and is applied to Yeshua's case. This in Judaism is called 'Peshet' and it was a very common method of interpretation among the Qumran communities.<sup>p</sup> It is also used in other books such as the Zohar.

The sign to Ahaz was completely fulfilled in the days of Hezekiah (*cf. Rashi*). He was the paradigm of Messiah. What is true of Hezekiah is also true of Messiah. Rabbi Hillel II held that we will not savor the "Messiah" that comes in its time (in the redemption), because that one was Hezekiah (*cf. Sanhedrin 99a, Rashi*). Other sages consider the Isaiah portion of Hezekiah as messianic in nature: (*Is 9:5 [6]*) "for a child was born to us" (this is, Hezekiah, Ahaz's son, whose mission was to lift Judah). "And he will accept the Torah upon himself to keep it, and his name shall be called... ..the Messiah in whose days peace will increase upon us" (*Targum Isaiah 9:5*).

We have already seen how Miriam is interpreted as the maiden of Isaiah. When interpreting the sign of Ahaz as a Peshet, Samaria and Damascus are to be understood as spiritual forces. Samaria and Damascus intended to steal the Davidic kingdom, but before the child grows enough to distinguish good from bad, these forces will end. These spiritual forces are applied to king Herod. A spirit is called Samaria because of the mixture of heathendom with Judaism that Herod observed. The other is called Damascus because it is the "head of Aram" (*Is 7:8*), which represents the pagan conquering forces, for paganism is called 'Aramiyu'uta' (*cf. Mishna Megillah 4:9; Yerushalmi Megillah 4 [75c]*). So the term Aramean - ארמי *Arami* - is interpreted in Remez as meaning 'Roman' - רומי *Romi*. This represents the Herodian kingdom that existed before Yeshua's days, because Herod had been made king of the Jews by the Roman senate (*Josephus*

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<sup>m</sup> Rabbi Yonathan taught: "whoever fulfils the Torah in poverty, his end will be fulfil it in wealth" [i.e. he will be rewarded for his obedience] (*Avot 4:9*).

<sup>n</sup> "Matthew wrote his narrations in Hebrew language but each one interpreted them as he could" (*Exegesis of the Dominical Logia; cf. Ecclesiastical History 3:39:15-16; Adversus Haereses 3:1*).

<sup>o</sup> See for instance its use in Homer; the standard textbook to learn Greek ( *Cf. Iliad 2.514. Also: Pindar, Pythian Odes 3.34; Sophocles, Trachiniai 1219; Aristophanes, Nubes 530*).

<sup>p</sup> *cf. George Brooke: Qumran Peshet: Toward the Redefinition of a Genre. In: Revue de Qumran 10, 483-503.*

<sup>24</sup>When Yosef woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took his wife for himself. <sup>25</sup>But he did not know her until she gave birth to a son, and his name was called Yeshua.

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commentary

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"*Jewish wars*", 1:14.4). The king of Assyria destroys these two forces, for there was relief (Asshur אשור) when Herod died shortly after Yeshua's birth, and his kingdom was split, and Yeshua's life was no threatened anymore.

**1:24 took his wife for himself** - He uplifted and consummated the second part of the wedding (the Nisuin), which consists of reading the Ketubah (marriage contract), the recitation of seven blessings under the Khupa (canopy) and culminates with the husband bringing his wife to live in his home.

**1:25 but he did not know her until she gave birth to a son** - The plain meaning of this phrase is that Yosef waited to sleep with Miriam until she delivered the baby. To "know" a woman refers to sexual intercourse, as it is written, "And Adam knew Eve his wife" (*Gn 4:1*). Building a Jewish family is a serious task. Yosef and Miriam were both Jews, and did everything according to the Torah (*Lk 2:22, 41*). The first commandment that a married couple is honored to fulfil, is the command of *Puru u'rvu* (be fruitful and multiply), which in Jewish law is interpreted as a command to have children, no less than two (*Yevamot 61b*). A couple that has the possibility to fulfil the Mitzva<sup>q</sup> but refuses to do so is guilty of diminishing the Divine Presence in the world (*cf. Even haEzer 1:1*). This command is so important that the Torah regulates laws of levirate marriage when a husband dies childless. Yosef and Miriam had sons after Yeshua, their names were Yaqov, Yosef, Shimon and Yehudah, and they had also daughters (*cf. Mt 13:55, Mrk 6:3*). Yeshua's brother, Yaqov the Just, became the head of the Nazarene movement after Yeshua (*cf. Gal 1:19*).

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textual variants

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**1:25 but he did not know her** - In the Old Syriac and the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae this part is absent in the text. Instead it is written, "And she bore to him a son", in other words, she bore a son to Yosef. This makes clear that - at least for the communities who used those manuscripts - Yeshua was Yosef's biological son, regardless of whether they believed in a miraculous virginal birth (which is the common interpretation) or in a natural conception (which is the position held by those who don't take this narration at face value or have alternative interpretations).

**1:25 until she gave birth to a son** - In other manuscripts the phrase 'and she gave birth to a son' is rendered as "she gave birth her firstborn son"; thus corroborating the idea that they had more than one son after Yeshua.

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relevant quotes

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"Behold, the wife of Nir, Tzponima, was sterile and had never conceived a child from Nir. She was in her old age and at the time of her death. And she conceived in her womb, but Nir the priest had not slept with her since the day that the Lord had appointed him to conduct the liturgy before the people. (...) the angel Gabriel appeared to Nir and said to him, (...) 'this child which is to be born from her is a righteous fruit, and one whom I shall receive into paradise, so that you will not be the father of a gift of God' (...) And behold the badge of priesthood was on his chest, and it was glorious in appearance. Noah said to Nir [his brother], 'Behold, God is renewing the priesthood from blood related to us, just as He pleases'. Noah and Nir hurried and washed the child, they dressed him in the garments of the priesthood, and they gave him bread to eat and he ate it. And they called him Melchizedek"

**(*Enoch II, chapter 71 [23], 1st century independent Midrash*).**

[see commentary on 1:18]

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<sup>q</sup> Mitzvah is the Hebrew for Commandment. In ancient Aramaic Tzavta (which comes from the same root) refers to attach or to join, for example, "the mother bird being attached to the daughter bird" (*cf. Bava Bathra 80a*). In this sense, a Mitzvah creates a bond between the Commander (i.e. God) and the one who obeys. Therefore, refusing to obey a Mitzvah causes the opposite effect.