

Messiah in the Tanach, 03

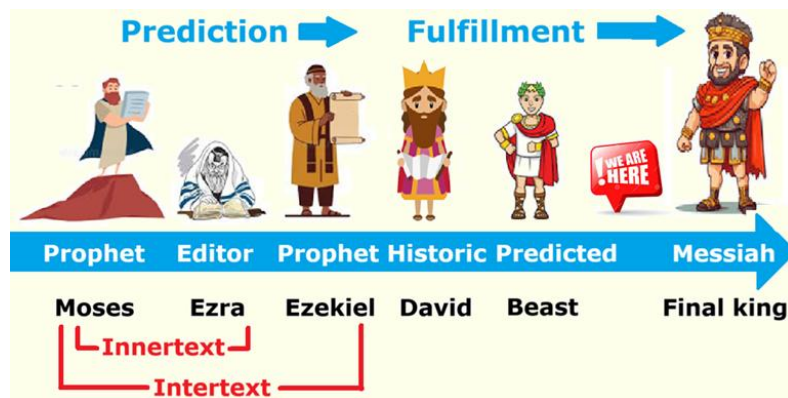
Three apparent messianic predictions

Texts viewed by some Jews as messianic

Gen. 49:8-11, Num. 24:14-19; Deut 18:18-19.

Definitions:

- The text: A passage in a document.
- Innertext: Texts in a same document.
- Intertext: One text referring to another.
- Predictive: About some future figure.
- Historic: A prediction already fulfilled.
- Messianic: About an end-times king.



Genesis 49:8-11 (Tanach NJPS 1985)

⁸ You, O Judah, your brothers shall praise;
Your hand shall be on the nape of your foes;
Your father's sons shall bow low to you.

⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp;
On prey, my son, have you grown.
He crouches, lies down like a lion,
Like a lioness*—who dare rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet;
So that tribute shall come to him**
And the homage of peoples be his.

¹¹ He tethers his ass to a vine,
His ass's foal to a choice vine;
He washes his garment in wine,
His robe in blood of grapes.

* It is the females who hunt for their pride...

** *shiloh* as *shai loh* ... following the Midrash.

Judah's older brothers disqualified (Genesis (NJPS 1985):

34:25 Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, brothers of Dinah, took each his sword, came upon the city unmolested, and slew all the males.

35:22 While Israel stayed in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine; and Israel found out.

Who/What was Shilo?

- 'Until he comes to Shilo.' (šilô ≠ šîlôh)
- Targums: 'Shilo is his name' referring to Isa. 9:6 'peace' & Mic. 5:5 (šālôm).
- Calvin: 'his son', šil + ô. But šil ≠ 'son'.
- 30+ Non-Masoretic manuscript variants read š/h = archaic še ('which'), followed by some Targums and by some Greek versions: 'which belongs to him'.

Ezekiel 21:27 [Heb. 32] (NJPS 1985)

³² Ruin, an utter ruin I will make it. It [royalty, v. 26] shall be no more until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; and I will give it to him.

- An intertext confirmation of Gen. 49:10.
- King Zedekiah was removed (21:24-27).
- To Nebuchadnezzar? Or to Messiah?
- Talmud: This prediction was never fulfilled.

Numbers 24:14-19 (NJPS 1985) Balaam's prophecy.

¹⁴ Let me inform you of what this people will do to your people in days to come... ¹⁵ Word of one who hears God's speech... ¹⁶ What I behold will not be soon: ... A scepter comes forth from Israel...

¹⁷ It smashes ... Moab ... Edom ... Seir... ¹⁸ A victor issues from Jacob...

- Concerns Israel, which would someday be led by a royal figure ('scepter').
- This had to be David or someone(s) in his lineage.
- Moab and Edom would gain their freedom after King Solomon's reign but would later be subjugated again.

Amos 9:11-12 (NJPS 1985)

¹¹ In that day, I will set up again the fallen booth of David: I will mend its breaches and set up its ruins anew. I will build it firm as in the days of old, ¹² So that they shall possess the rest of Edom, And all the nations once attached to My name.

- An 8th century BCE intertextual allusion to Numbers 24:14-19.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 (NJPS 1985)

¹⁸ I will raise up for them from among their own people a prophet like yourself, in whose mouth I will put My words and who will speak to them all that I command; ¹⁹ and anybody who fails to heed the words [the prophet] speaks in My name, I Myself will call to account.

- See Deut. 34:10-12

Four views

- Medieval Jews: Joshua or Jeremiah. (But see Deut. 34:9-10.)
- ‘Prophet’ = collective for all prophets. But none ruled over kings and priests.
- Both historic and messianic. This is the majority view, but there are no clear examples.
- Messianic alone. A unique figure, like Moses and ruling over nations.

Numbers 12:5-8 (NJPS 1985)

⁵ [Adonai] came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward; ⁶ [God] said, “Hear these My words: When prophets of [Adonai] arise among you, I make Myself known to them in a vision, I speak with them in a dream.

Deut. 34:10-12 (NJPS 1985)

¹⁰ Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses—whom [Adonai] singled out, face to face, ¹¹ for the various signs and portents that [Adonai] sent him to display in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his courtiers and his whole country, ¹² and for all the great might and awesome power that Moses displayed before all Israel.

Intertextual support to Deuteronomy 18:18-19

- Num. 12:5-8 defines how Moses unique.
- Deut. 31:33 ‘man of God’ (1X) appendix?
- Deut. 34:10-12 was not yet written.
- Deut. 34:5-6. Grave site long forgotten.
- Deut. 34:10 “Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses” (NJPS).
“Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses” (NRSVue).

Tentative conclusion

- There are apparent messianic passages in the Tanach.
- Later Tanach writers viewed these as messianic prophecies.
- Jewish commentators did the same.
- First-century Jews awaited a messiah.
- (Christians understood messianic passages to be previews of Jesus.)

<http://tanach.site>

