

Messiah in the Tanach, 06

Queries

- Did NT writers quote the Tanach with original authors' intended meaning?
- Did NT writers force their own meanings onto the Tanach?
- Did NT writers employ a Jewish 'midrashic' method of interpretation?
- Are NT writers' quotations from the Tanach valid?

Midrash

To interpret texts allegorically*, or parts of sentences or atomistically**, without regard to context, to historical occasion, or to authors' intent, thus turning history or poetry into predictive prophecies.

*Assigning unrelated meanings.

**Single letters, words, or phrases

New Testament Midrash?

Some conservative scholars defend midrashic interpretation by asserting:

- The Holy Spirit guided NT authors to assign messianic meanings to the Tanach for our edification.
- NT authors employed midrashic methods because their Jewish readers considered this to be acceptable.

New Testament Allegory

Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants... Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. Galatians 4:24-26

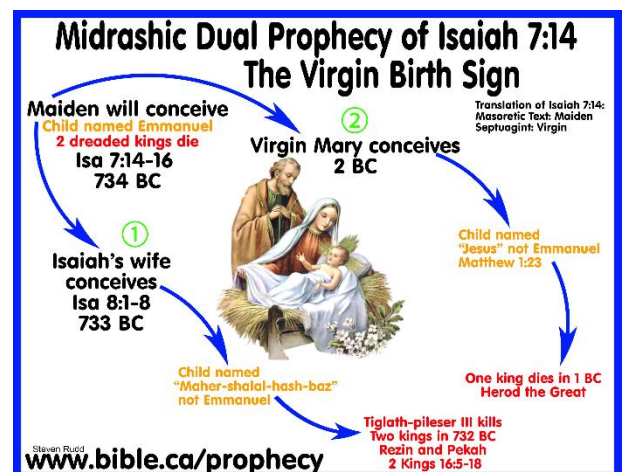
Four NT Messianic Interpretations

- Direct fulfillment: Micah 5:2 in Matt 2:5
- Typical fulfillment: Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15
- Applicative fulfillment: Jeremiah 31:15 in Matthew 2:16
- Summary fulfillment: No specific text in Matthew 2:19-23

Direct fulfillment

And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrath,
Least among the clans of Judah,
From you one shall come forth
To rule Israel for Me—
One whose origin is from of old,
From ancient times. Micah 5:2 [Hb. 5:1] NJPS

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' Matthew 2:5 NRSVue



Two Bethlehem towns

- Ephrath was in the fertile Judean hill country, near the main trade route.
- Bethlehem of Judea/Ephrath lies 10 km (6 miles) south of Jerusalem.
- Not Bethlehem of Galilee (in Zebulun), near Nazareth in the north, mentioned in Joshua 19:15 as part of the tribal allotments.

Messianic Bethlehem

- Targum Pseudo-Jonathan [7th to 12th centuries CE] on Gen 35.21 = Migdal Edar ('flock tower') = "the place from whence the Messiah shall be revealed in the last days."
- Jerusalem Talmud, Berakoth 5a states, "The King Messiah ... From the royal city of Bethlehem in Judah."

Typical fulfillment

- Types are not common in the NT.
- 'A light to the nations' (Isa 49:6) a type of Jesus in Acts 13:47.
- Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4) a type of the Son of God (messiah) in Hebrews 7:1-3.
- Types are identified as such in the NT.
- Similarities are not necessarily types.

I fell in love with Israel
When he was still a child;
And I have called [him] My son
Ever since Egypt. Hosea 11:1 NJPS

Hosea 23-24 Context

- "Thus says יהוה: Israel is My first-born son." NJPS Exodus 4:22-23
- Balaam: "Their King's acclaim in their midst. ... God who freed them [Heb. 'him'] from Egypt... Their ruler shall rise... They shall devour enemy nations."
- Israel had no king at that time.

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." Matthew 2:14-15 NRSVue

Applicational fulfillment

Thus said GOD:
A cry is heard in Ramah—
Wailing, bitter weeping—
Rachel weeping for her children.
She refuses to be comforted
For her children, who are gone. Jeremiah 31:15 NJPS

“Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

‘A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more’.” Matthew 2:17-18 NRSVue

Jeremia 31

- Jeremia was speaking about the far future: “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him” (v. 10).
- He stopped to weep over Israel’s dead and exiled young people.
- Spoke of Rachael as Israel’s ancestral mother (birthed Joseph and Benjamin).
- Matthew knew Jeremiah’s context.

Applicational fulfillment

- Proto-rabbinic use of scripture paid attention to context and true meaning.
- Midrash was a medieval (CE) method, meant to show continued relevance of scripture.
- Applicational fulfillment is the most common interpretive method used in the New Testament.

Summary fulfillment

And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There [Joseph] made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.” Matthew 2:22b-23 NRSVue

- There is no such verse in the Tanach.
- Prophets: plural. All other quotes in Matthew reference a single prophet.
- Quote: All other prophetic quotes in Matthew are introduced by ‘saying’.
- Branch? *nešer* (Isa 11:1). But there is no mention of branch here.
- Nazarite? *nāzîr* (Jud 13:7). = Samson, not messiah. Different root Nazareth (*nšrt*).
- In Matthew’s day, ‘Nazarene’ was a term of derision. ‘Hick, bumkin, peasant.’
- “This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.” Matt 26:71 NRSVue
- “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46
- “No prophet is to arise from Galilee.” Jn 7:52
- “A pack of evil ones [maul] my hands and feet.” NJPS Psalm 22.17 [En 22.16]
- “You know my reproach, my shame, my disgrace” Psalm 69.20 [En 69.19]
- “Thus said GOD... To the despised one.” Isaiah 49:7
- “He was despised, shunned by others, A man of suffering.” Isaiah 53:3