

Israel and the Anti-Christ

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

Who is the Anti-Christ? That is a complicated question. First, let me say that the Anti-Christ will be an actual person. However, like Judas Iscariot, he will not become this person until Satan himself enters him. We read, *"Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve" (Luke 22:3, NKJV).*ⁱ Second, let me say that it is currently impossible to identify this person. The Bible tells us this man will be revealed to the world at a specific point in time.

It is written, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God... And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Therefore, this teaching is not to discover the Anti-Christ's identity but rather to understand his genealogical relationship and prophetic fulfillment related to the nation of Israel.

There is much debate among Christian scholars about the end-times, in theological terms, called Eschatology. I hold a pre-millennial view of scripture, meaning I believe that Christ has come once and is soon to return to establish His earthly millennial kingdom (1,000-year rule) in Israel, from Jerusalem. The alternate view suggests we are presently living in the millennial kingdom, and the one-thousand years are figurative, not literal.

Pre-millennial teachings perceive, from scripture, that the nation of Israel will go through a seven-year time of difficulty before Yeshua returns.ⁱⁱ This period is called "the tribulation," and the last three and one-half years is called "the great tribulation." Towards the end, it becomes even more difficult for the Jewish people.ⁱⁱⁱ

The church's pervasive view about the Anti-Christ is that he will most likely be a Gentile, possibly of Italian origins and a descendant of the Roman empire. This view comes from an interpretation of the Book of Daniel that describes four kingdoms that will rule over Israel, the last being the Roman Empire.^{iv} While the Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D.,^v some theologians believe this empire will be revived during the tribulation period.

A less popular view is that the Anti-Christ will be a Gentile of Babylonian origin, a remnant of the Roman Empire that at one time spread to modern-day Iraq. Still, others speculate the Anti-Christ

could be an Assyrian, namely from a reference in the book of Daniel to the “king of the north,” which geographically lies north of Israel.

These are all exegeses, interpretations of the Bible that, for me, somehow miss the Jewishness of scripture. In other words, why would the Jews be looking for a king who is a Gentile? I have studied these verses and other documents and have come to a completely different conclusion that might surprise you.

We need to remember that the Bible, for the most part, is presenting a narrative of God’s relationship with His chosen people and nation—Israel. It is not that the Gentiles are excluded. Quite contrary. God has a plan to redeem His entire creation. But we need to interpret scripture from a Jewish perspective, meaning how the narrative reveals God’s dealing with Israel, often through the Gentiles. Yeshua said, *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near” (Matthew 24:32).* Israel is, therefore, God’s time clock for all human history.

The other point we need to remember is the rabbis are not ignorant of God’s written word or His Law. They understand the same Messianic prophecies we do; only they are blind regarding the recognition of Yeshua as the fulfillment of these prophecies. While the church primarily focuses on the Messiah as the anointed Son of God and Savior of the whole world. Israel is mainly looking for the rightful heir of King David to become their anointed king.^{vi}

The following are excerpts from one of Israel’s most famous rabbis—Maimonides. His writings bring a startling revelation and clarity about the Jewish people’s expectations concerning their long-awaited Messiah. We read, in part:

If a king shall arise from the House of David who delves deeply in the study of the Torah and observes its mitzvot like David, his ancestor; if he, by his personal excellence within the realm of Torah, will compel all of Israel to walk in the way of the Torah, and reinforce the breaches in its observance among the entire Jewish people; and if he will fight the wars of God, thus removing all obstacles to Torah observance in the world at large, we may, with assurance, consider him the Messiah. If he succeeds in the above... builds the Beit Hamikdash (Temple) on its site, and gathers in the dispersed remnant of Israel, he is definitely the Messiah. At this stage, when it becomes possible to observe the Torah and its mitzvot in their totality, the era of the Messiah will have actually begun [Laws of Kings and Wars 11:4].

Because the king who will arise from the seed of David will possess more wisdom than Solomon and will be a great prophet, approaching Moses, our teacher, he will teach the whole of the Jewish people and instruct them in the way of God; and all nations will come to hear him, as it is said, And at the end of days it shall come to pass that the Mount of the Lord’s house shall be established as the top of the mountains (Micah 4:1; Isaiah 2:2) [Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Teshuvah 9:8-10].

The king Messiah will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its former state and original sovereignty. He will rebuild the sanctuary and gather the dispersed of Israel. All the ancient laws will be reinstated in his days; sacrifices will again be offered; the sabbatical and jubilee years will again be observed in accordance with the commandments set forth in the Torah [Laws of Kings and Wars 11:1].

His [the Messiah's] name will be great and fill the earth to its uttermost bounds. It will be a greater name than that of King Solomon and mightier. The nations will make peace with him and lands will obey him by reason of his great rectitude and the wonders that will come to light by his means. Any one that rises up against him God will destroy and make him fall into his hand [Introduction to Helek].

Given what we just read, let us explore from scripture the eschatology of the Anti-Christ and see how it coincides with the rabbinic narrative. The Book of Daniel tells us about a king of the north and a king of the south fighting for several years. It then tells us that another king will rise in place of the king of the north. Therefore, we can conclude that the king of the north is not the Anti-Christ.

If we continue reading, we see this second king is also not the Anti-Christ because it says he dies. We read, *"There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle" (Daniel 11:20)*. Notice, the verse speaks of "the glorious kingdom." Biblically, the glorious kingdom can only be a reference to Israel that will one day be at the very heart and center of God's Kingdom when Christ returns.^{vii}

It is written, *"A land flowing with milk and honey.' For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:9-12)*. Once again, the "glorious kingdom" is not a reference to Rome, America, or any Gentile nation. It is a reference only to the land Israel.

We continue reading in Daniel that another unique king arises. It says, *"And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue" (Daniel 11:21)*. This third king also comes to power in the glorious kingdom.

Once again, we see a scriptural reference to the Kingdom of God, which is Israel. Therefore, we surmise this king must be an Israelite. However, we are told that, "They [Israel] will not give the honor of royalty," meaning they will ultimately reject this king. Israel denying his royalty suggests this man is an Israelite but not a descendant of King David. If this man were a Gentile, the Jewish people would be rejecting his governing authority, the same way the Jews rejected the control of the Roman officials governing Israel at the time of Jesus. But here, we see the

Jewish people leaving this man as their king. Now that sounds a lot like what happened to Yeshua, as it is written, *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him"* (John 1:11).

Daniel is not referring to this man as the rightful king of Israel. He is talking about a *vile* person. In contrast, Yeshua is beautiful and perfect, loving, compassionate, and full of truth and grace of our Heavenly Father. Therefore, this vile king must be a false Messiah, one who tries to deceive the Jewish people into convincing them he is their long-awaited Messiah.

I have spoken to several Orthodox rabbis about their understanding of who they believe the Messiah will be. Most recognize from scripture that the Messiah, the anointed one of God, will be the rightful king of Israel and God's representative in the earth. And he *must* be of the lineage of King David. Otherwise, the Messianic prophesies would be false.

The evidence of his Messiahship is established, not only by overcoming and making peace with Israel's surrounding enemies but by his establishing universal peace with every nation.^{viii} In other words, he will be a man of peace.

You can ask almost any Jewish person today this one question (assuming they believe in God): Why do you reject Jesus as the Messiah? They will almost always give you the same answer: Because Jesus never established universal peace for Israel. The most important attribute the Jewish people are looking to validate the Messiahship is to make world peace.

The Rambam, one of Israel's greatest sages, said: "Presently, there is confusion over who is the real Messiah. But when the real Messiah comes, he will say, 'I am here.' He will teach the world ethics and values, and he will truly bring peace to the whole world. Spontaneously, everyone will join the Messiah and come together, and the whole world will be at peace."

Correlating this man of peace to scripture, we read, *"He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time"* (Daniel 11:24). Notice that this man enters *peaceably* into the land of Israel. However, concerning Israel's enemies, he will, initially, be a man of *war* against every nation that comes against the Jewish people.

The Old Testament gives us metaphors, also called shadows or types of future prophetic events.^{ix} King David, historically, was one of the greatest kings of Israel. His military strength and prowess substantially enlarged Israel's kingdom and established Jerusalem as her political capital and spiritual center. However, David's son, Solomon, would become the man of peace and build the Temple in Jerusalem. The Hebrew name given to King Solomon (*Shlomo*) is derived from the Hebrew root *Shalom* (שָׁלוֹם).

Notice the prophetic shadow. The man of war who expands Israel's kingdom (reflecting king David) precedes the man of peace (reflecting King Solomon), who ultimately establishes global peace through a covenant with many nations.

Some rabbis believe that there will be two Messiahs who will usher in the Messianic era.^x The first one will be *Mashiach ben Yossef* (Messiah, son of Joseph from the tribe of Ephraim), and the second and final one will be *Mashiach ben David* (Messiah, son of David, from the tribe of Judah).^{xi}

Messiah, son of Joseph, will serve as a precursor to Messiah, son of David.^{xii} He will prepare the world for the coming of the final redeemer, regathering the Jewish exiles and rebuilding the Holy Temple (*Bet Hamikdash*) in Jerusalem.^{xiii} However, Messiah's principal task, son of Joseph, will be to wage war against the forces of evil that oppress Israel, specifically, going to battle against Edom, the descendants of Esau.^{xiv}

Edom is a designation for the enemies of Israel who the progeny of Joseph will crush.^{xv} It is written, *"Will I not in that day, says the Lord, Even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau...? For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever... But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau, For the Lord has spoken" (Obadiah 1:8-18).*^{xvi}

Could it be that Messiah, son of Joseph, will be the Anti-Christ? Quite possibly. Yet, this false Messiah will also serve the Lord's purpose in ushering in His final judgments against Israel and her surrounding nations. These judgments will pave the way for the ultimate progeny of King David and King Solomon, Yeshua, to inherit His throne as the rightful King of Israel and true Prince of peace.^{xvii}

I recently taught about the coming battle of God and Magog. This conflict breaks out between Israel and the nations that presently surround her, many of whom are Muslim nations descendant of Esau. Israel will be victorious in this conflict, although not without a high cost, and yes, she will also take much plunder from these nations.^{xviii}

But there is even more to understand about the future kingdom of the Anti-Christ.

Many of the Orthodox rabbis have yet to recognize the modern state of Israel, or at least its governmental authority. The reason is that God created Israel and commanded her to function as a theocracy, where the priests, the sons of Aaron, would govern the people per the Law of Moses.

Today, Israel has a democratic parliamentary government that is incompatible with this biblical system. While the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the rabbinic courts are part of Israel's judicial system, they only have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage, divorce, and a few other civil matters.^{xix}

As we just read, many rabbis believe that it will be the Messiah, son of Joseph, who will not only gather the dispersed and exiled remnant of the Jewish people but will be the chief builder of the Messianic Temple itself.

Additionally, the rabbis are uncertain about the location of the ancient Holy of Holies. Therefore, they believe that God will raise a prophet who will speak for the Lord and reestablish the third Temple's precise location. As it is written, *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear"* (Deuteronomy 18:15).

We now begin to see a complete picture of the false restoration of David's *royal* house and the *priestly* lineage of Aaron. In the end-times, a false Messiah, the Anti-Christ, and a false prophet will partner and cooperate with this great deception of God's chosen people.

In the Book of Revelation, there is a reference to a dragon and two beasts. One beast is believed to be the Anti-Christ, and the second the false prophet. It is written, *"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet"* (Revelation 16:13).

The nations of the earth worship the dragon and the beast, and the beast has military power over all people, as we read, *"So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"* (Revelation 13:4).

One final detail. We read in Daniel that this *vile* king, who I believe is the Anti-Christ, rules the nations from Jerusalem, which is called "the great city." As it is written, *"The great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified"* (Revelation 11:8). Therefore, Israel will have become the global center of political, economic, and spiritual power at this time.^{xx}

This false Messiah, an Israelite from the tribe of Ephraim and Joseph's lineage, will profess to be the rightful king of Israel. He will subdue Israel's enemies and greatly expand her land, and he will rebuild the next Temple in Jerusalem, putting in place a false priesthood deceived by a false prophet. The conditions were similar at the time of Jesus—an illegitimate king, Herod, ruled over Israel alongside an equally illegitimate and perverse priesthood.

In the middle of the seven-year covenant, we read in Daniel. The Anti-Christ will, *"Exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done"* (Daniel 11:36).^{xxi}

At this time, the Jewish people discover the hidden identity of the Anti-Christ, and they will rebel against this man. In turn, the Anti-Christ will bring his full wrath against the Jewish people and persecute them for more than three years. Simultaneously, the Gentile nations that the Anti-Christ made a covenant of peace will also turn against him and the Jewish people collectively,

and the Anti-Christ will be killed. As it is written, *"He [the Anti-Christ] shall come to his end, and no one will help him"* (Daniel 11:45).

The sages affirm this by saying, "The immediate results of this war [of Gog and Magog that culminates in the battle of Armageddon] will be disastrous: Messiah, son of Joseph, will be killed.^{xxii} His death will be followed by a period of great calamities. These new tribulations shall be the final test for Israel."^{xxiii}

For three and one-half years before Christ returns, the nations will once again defile the Holy Temple. We read, *"Leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months [which is three and one-half years]"* (Revelation 11:2).

Yeshua told His disciples, *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men"* (Matthew 5:13). He was affirming that if the Jewish people continued to reject their true Messiah, they and their land would be overrun by the nations.

The sages affirmed this in saying, "If they [Israel] will not repent., the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a ruler over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, thus causing Israel to repent, and thereby bringing them back to the right path."

Oh, how great the darkness that is coming to the earth. It is written, *"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people..."* (Isaiah 60:2). And Yeshua warned the Jewish people, saying, *"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect"* (Matthew 24:24).^{xxiv}

But for the church, Yeshua has made us aware of the things that are to come. Paul said, *"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness."* (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5).

So, let us not be troubled by current events happening on the earth. It is written, *"For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled"* (Revelation 17:17).

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ The Hebrew calendar follows a lunar cycle. Seven full moon cycles complete one week. Since the solar year does not perfectly align with the lunar cycles, there are either twelve or thirteen months in a Hebrew calendar year. Every seven years is a Sabbatical year, called a Shemitah. This seven-year cycle is also called a week.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 24:21-22.

^{iv} Daniel 2:29-35.

^v Wikipedia.

^{vi} Matthew 2:2.

vii Acts 1:6.

viii Daniel 9:27.

ix Hebrews 10:1.

x Schochet, J. Immanuel. *Moshiach 101, Appendix II*. Chabad.org.

xi Sukah 52b; Zohar I:25b; *ibid.* II:120a, III:153b, 246b and 252a. (See Sha'arei Zohar on Sukah 52a for further relevant sources in the Zohar-writings.) Sukah 52a-b; Zohar I:25b; *ibid.* III:246b and 252b etc.; and Midrash Agadat Mashiach; use the term Mashiach ben Yossef. Targum Yehonathan on Exodus 40:11; Zohar II:120a; *ibid.* 153b, 194b, and 243b etc.; Midrash Tehilim 60:3; and other Midrashim refer to Mashiach ben Ephrayim. Pesikta Rabaty, ch. 36-37 (ed. Friedmann, ch. 35-36) refers to Ephrayim Meshiach Tzidki (Ephraim, My righteous Mashiach); the term Ephraim, though, may relate here to collective Israel, thus referring to Mashiach ben David. Pirkei Heichalot Rabaty, ch. 39 (Batei Midrashot, ed. Wertheimer, vol. I) and Sefer Zerubavel (*ibid.*, vol. II), offer his personal name as Nechemiah ben Chushiel (likewise in Midrash Tehilim 60:3), adding "who is of Ephraim the son of Joseph." (Interestingly enough, Pirkei deR. Eliezer, ch. 19, calls him Menachem ben Ammi'el, the very name the other sources - and Zohar III:173b - attribute to Mashiach ben David. Targum Yehonathan on Exodus 40:11 traces his descent to Joshua (cf. below, note 7). Other sources state that he is a descendant of Yeravam ben Nevat, with practical implications in the Providential scheme for this genealogy; see Zohar Chadash, Balak:56b; commentary of R. Abraham Galante on Zohar II:120a (cited in Or Hachamah there); and Emek Hamelech, Sha'ar Olam Hatohu:ch. 46. Cf. Devash Lefi, s.v. mem:par. 18. (Note also the sources cited in Sha'arei Zohar on Sukah 52a with regards to other views about his lineage.)

xii The harmony and cooperation between Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yossef signifies the total unity of Israel, removing the historical rivalries between the tribes of Judah and Joseph; see Isaiah 11:13 and Rashi there. (Cf. Bereishit Rabba 70:15; and Torah Shelemah on Genesis 29:16, note 49.)

xiii See Pirkei Heichalot Rabaty, ch. 39; Sefer Zerubavel; Midrash Agadat Mashiach (most of which is quoted in Lekach Tov, Balak, on Numbers 24:17ff.); and cf. Rashi on Sukah 52b, s.v. charashim. See also Ramban, Commentary on Song 8:13.

xiv Note that the final battle of Mashiach ben Yossef is said to be against Armilus, ruler of Edom. See the Messianic Midrashim Zerubavel; Agadat Mashiach; Vayosha etc. (Specific references are offered in R. Margolius, Malachei Elyon, part II, s.v. Armilas; and see also the sources cited below, notes 18-19.) Note that the final battle of Mashiach ben Yossef is said to be against Armilus, ruler of Edom. See the Messianic Midrashim Zerubavel; Agadat Mashiach; Vayosha etc. (Specific references are offered in R. Margolius, Malachei Elyon, part II, s.v. Armilas; and see also the sources cited below, notes 18-19.)

xv Edom is the perpetual enemy of Israel (see Sifre, Beha'alotecha, par. 69, cited by Rashi on Genesis 33:4; and see also Megilah 6a) and its final foe: the present galut is referred to as the galut of Edom (see Bereishit Rabba 44:17; Vayikra Rabba 13:5; and parallel passages) and Edom will be defeated ultimately by Mashiach (Obadiah; Yoma 10a; Midrash Tehilim 6:2; and cf. Tanchuma, Bo:4). Interestingly enough, according to Pirkei deR. Eliezer ch. 28 (in non-censored versions), the Ishmaelites (Arabs) will be the final kingdom to be defeated by Mashiach. Other sources state "Edom and Ishmael" (see Torah Shelemah on Genesis 15:12, note 130). Note, however, Pirkei deR. Eliezer, ch. 44 (and cf. Midrash Tehilim 2:6 and 83:3) that Edom and Ishmael have become intermingled. See also Mayanei Hayeshu'ah, Mayan 11:8.

xvi "The progeny of Esau shall be delivered only into the hands of the progeny of Joseph." Baba Batra 123b. Targum Yehonathan on Genesis 30:23. Tanchuma, ed. Buber, Vayetze:15; and Bereishit Rabba 73:7; and the parallel passages cited there. See Bereishit Rabba 99:2, that Edom shall fall by the meshu'ach milchamah (the one anointed for battle; see below, note 10 for this term) who will be descended from Joseph. Mashiach ben Yossef's battle against Edom is analogous to, and the culmination of, Israel's first battle against Edom (Amalek) after the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17:5ff.). In that first battle, the Jewish army was led by Joshua - who is also of the tribe of Ephraim, and (according to some) this Mashiach's ancestor (see above note 2); see Ramban on Exodus 17:9, and R. Bachaya on Exodus 18:1. Cf. also R. Bachaya on Exodus 1:5, drawing an analogy between the role of Joseph in Egypt and the role of the Mashiach descended from him in the ultimate redemption.

xvii Isaiah 9:6.

xviii Psalm 83. Jeremiah 49:10. Obadiah 1:17:18.

xix Wikipedia.

xx Revelation 11:8.

xxi Revelation 13:5-6.

xxii Targum Yehonathan on Exodus 40:11, and on Zechariah 12:10 (manuscript-version in ed. A. Sperber); Agadat Mashiach; Pirkei Heichalot Rabaty (in version cited by Ramban, Sefer Hage'ulah, sha'ar IV; ed. Chavel, p. 291); and Rashi on Sukah 52a; identify the battle of Mashiach ben Yossef with the war of Gog and Magog.

xxiii Pirkei Heichalot Rabaty, ch. 39 (cited in Sefer Hage'ulah, sha'ar IV); Sefer Zerubavel; Agadat Mashiach (cited in Lekach Tov, *ibid.*). See R. Saadiah Gaon, Emunot Vede'ot VIII:ch. 5, adding Scriptural "prooftexts" or allusions for all details; and the

lengthy responsum of R. Hai Gaon on the redemption, published in Otzar Hageonim on Sukah 52a, and in Midreshei Ge'ulah, ed. Y. Ibn Shemuel, p. 135ff. Cf. Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Zechariah 12:10; Ibn Ezra and Redak on Zechariah 13:7.
^{xxiv} Sanhedrin 97b.