



The Suffering Servant

**HASHEM'S PLAN
TO BE WITH YOU**

**A PROPHECY OF THE
MASHIACH'S ARRIVAL**

**HOPE THROUGH YOUR
SACRIFICES AND STRUGGLES**



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A Promise of Salvation



01

The Rodrigues family didn't have much time. The Gestapo had already come for other Jewish families—how much longer would it be until they heard banging on their own door? Abraham Rodrigues, a successful textile merchant, knew that he needed to take rapid action to protect his wife and their two children, Elly and Henry.

It was 1943 in Amsterdam, Holland, and restrictions for Jewish families were growing tighter and tighter. They began with small forms of control but quickly intensified. Since 1942, Jews had been required to sew yellow stars on their clothing to display their identity. If they were seen without this symbol, they risked paying a high fine! Jews could no longer go to many public locations such as cafés, movie theaters, restaurants,

and libraries. They couldn't even walk in the parks!

Twelve-year-old Elly had attended a public school, but soon, Jews were no longer allowed to attend school with non-Jewish children, forcing them to go to the Jewish Lyceum instead.

By now, Abraham recognized that even their small remaining freedoms would soon be taken away. They would likely be arrested and taken to concentration camps, so he began devising a plan to protect his family.

Elly was spending time with her neighborhood friend Barry one day, when she solemnly announced that she had a secret to tell him: "Barry, what I am about to tell you, you must NEVER repeat to anyone, not even your father and mother, because my life would be in danger."

After Barry had agreed to keep the secret, she continued, "Tonight, around 1 in the morning, my parents, my brother Henry, and I are going away; we are going into hiding." The two friends stood together in silent sadness as they considered how their lives would change. They would never see each other again.

Temporary Safety

Abraham had arranged for his family to hide in the attic of Bert Bochove, a Dutch pharmacist in Amsterdam. And they arrived not a moment too soon! Two days later, the Gestapo came for the



Rodrigues family at their home, only to find that they were gone.

This attic became the home of the Rodrigues family and other Jews for 11 months. It could hardly have been called a home, though. The space was cramped; the air was thick and stuffy. During the operating hours of the drugstore below, the occupants couldn't move or make a sound for fear that customers would hear them.

Bochove had taken a risk in choosing to hide these Jews. Rumors began to circulate in the neighborhood about his actions. What was to stop someone from informing the Gestapo?

He would have to make one of the most difficult decisions for a parent to make.

A Sacrificial Decision

Abraham realized that his whole family could not remain much longer in the attic. He would have to make one of the most difficult decisions a parent could ever make: the family would have to separate. He hoped that the children would have a greater chance at safety if they parted ways. It was a courageous choice, and one that would save Elly and Henry's lives.

Abraham searched through his customer list and telephoned Margriet Bogaards, a single schoolteacher who lived in the countryside.

"We have to flee," he explained to her.

Without hesitation, she responded, "Give me Elly; I'll take her. I will make a phone call to my sister, who will take your son."

Elly and Henry left the Bochoves' home in an ambulance—a vehicle less likely to be searched. The children, not yet teenagers, were on their way to the homes of strangers;

they didn't realize they would never see their parents again. Both parents were eventually arrested by the Gestapo and perished in Auschwitz.

Margriet's Risk

At first, Elly's father sent money to help support Margriet in caring for Elly, but when Elly's father and mother were arrested, the money stopped coming. Fears filled Elly's mind. What would she do now? Would Margriet no longer wish to care for her?

But to Margriet, Elly had become like a daughter. "You are now mine," Margriet said to her. "If all I have is half a sandwich, I will cut it into quarters and share it with you."

When the money supply dwindled, she even sewed clothing for Elly from her own curtains.

Margriet lived out the meaning of sacrifice, risking her own life and livelihood by having Elly in her home. Elly took a different name and posed as Margriet's niece, but one day at school, a slip of Elly's tongue made the teacher suspicious. It was only by a miracle that the school chose not to turn Margriet in to the police.

Despite the danger, Margriet would not have done anything differently; she would still have taken these risks to protect Elly. Why? Because Margriet lived her life with a purpose above and

beyond herself. Because of her sacrifice—and that of Elly's parents—Elly's life was spared when only 11 percent of European Jewish children survived the horrors of the Holocaust.¹

Sacrifice—A Reflection of God's Character

As human beings, God has placed in us the desire to live our lives for the purpose of blessing and uplifting our families and communities. This desire is particularly ingrained in the Jewish people. The Jewish Agency for Israel puts it this way:

“Judaism has always been about people in relation to something else, something larger than themselves. Some would suggest that the Jew is most truly a Jew

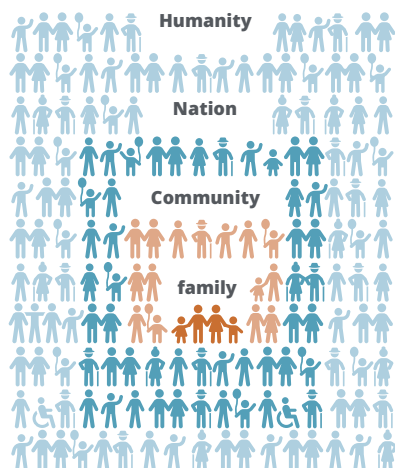
when he/she is relating to things larger than her- or himself. Ultimately, a Jew may be truly called a Jew when he/she is part of circles of belonging—to family, community, the nation, and the world of humanity. It is when the Jew consciously realizes his/her place in the midst of these concentric circles of responsibility uniting the individual with the world, that the inner nature of the Jewish story can be fulfilled properly. A feeling of connection with people is not a true relationship without an accompanying feeling of responsibility for them.”²

At times, this sense of responsibility for others will even lead us to make very difficult sacrifices, just



Photographer: © Unsplash

Judaism has always been about people in relation to something larger than themselves.



like the people in Elly's life did. You might also have stories of personal sacrifices you have made to care for and protect your loved ones.

As people made in the very image of God (Genesis/Bereishit 1:27), this willingness to sacrifice for others has been placed in our hearts to reflect Him. Is it possible that the Almighty Himself is willing to experience pain and loss for the benefit of others?

Yes, it is! Prophecies in the Tanakh speak of God and the sacrifices He would be willing to make on behalf of His people. We'll explore some of those prophecies. But before we do, we need to understand some backstory.

A Tragic Beginning

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in a perfect

environment, the Garden of Eden. Every need was met, and every desire satisfied. God only gave them one stipulation: they were not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 3:17).

One day, Eve found herself wandering a little closer to the tree than she had planned. A dazzling sight caught her attention. What was that creature in the tree?

She was entranced by the beautiful serpent, but even more surprised when it began to speak to her. The serpent began to question God's instructions regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from all the trees of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1). Eve began to doubt God, and in doing so, she disobeyed His instructions and led Adam to do the same.

The disobedient couple deeply felt the effects of sin. Their connection with God was broken, and they ran to hide from Him when He came looking for them in the Garden. Adam blamed Eve for his sin, bringing discord into their relationship with one another. Misery and ruin would become commonplace on the earth. Adam and Eve would experience pain when their very own son Cain would murder

his brother Abel. Their perfect life was gone.

The Promise of the Mashiach

God did not leave His people without hope. The Martyr's Hymn, sung by persecuted Jews throughout history, is a short song based on the 12th of Maimonides' 13 articles of faith. The simple words remind us of the blessed promise we hold dear:



I believe with complete faith
In the coming of the Mashiach,
I believe

Believe in the coming of the Mashiach
In the coming of the Mashiach,
I believe
Believe in the coming of the Mashiach

And even though he may tarry
Nonetheless I will wait for him
And even though he may tarry
Nonetheless I will wait for him

Nonetheless I will wait for him
I will wait every day for him to come
Nonetheless I will wait for him
I will wait every day for him to come

I believe.





The Mashiach was the hope for Adam and Eve and generations to come. The word *mashiach* is mentioned 39 times in the Tanakh; nine of those references speak specifically about a future Mashiach of salvation (see 1 Samuel 2:10, 35; Psalms/Tehillim 2:2; 20:7; 28:8; 84:10; Habakkuk 3:13; Daniel 9:25, 26). In chapter 4 of this magazine, we will examine Daniel 9:25, 26, one of the passages concerning the Mashiach's arrival.

The Almighty gave a beautiful promise at the very beginning, right after Adam and Eve's sin. He assured them, "I will put animosity

between you [the deceiving serpent] and the woman—between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The devil, represented by the serpent, has wielded his power of death and destruction since the time of Adam and Eve. But the offspring—the seed—of the woman would challenge that power and "crush" the head of the serpent, bringing about his demise.

Although the verse prophesies that the serpent's head will be crushed, it also states that the Mashiach's heel would be crushed—an implication of pain and loss.

What would it take for God to save His people? Similar to the story of Margriet and Elly, would He need to make a sacrifice to bring about ultimate deliverance? Would victory require the Mashiach to suffer?



***He will crush your
head, and you will
crush his heel.***

GENESIS 3:15

Reference

1. Story sourced from Hearst, Elliot L., *Escape from the List: Courage, Sacrifice, Survival*, Remember.org, 2016, remember.org/escape.
2. "The Modern Jewish World and Me – An Interactive Approach to Examining Jewish Identity Today," The Jewish Agency for Israel, archive. jewishagency.org, Nov. 13, 2014.



The Pain in Restoration



02

Do you know what it's like to suffer the pain of separation from people you love? No doubt, Elly and Henry's parents longed to be with them. It must have broken their hearts to send them away, and yet they were willing to make this difficult sacrifice in hopes of saving their children's lives.

Did you know that God also longs to be with His people? He never intended to be separated from us, unable to see us face to face.

Before sin entered our world, God came to the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening and walked together with Adam and Eve. Picture the joy of fellowship as God showed them the beauty of His creation, perhaps taking them to beautiful waterfalls or luscious meadows!

God had an important lesson to teach them through this heartache.

But that connection between God and humanity was broken when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Because God is holy, sin cannot be in His presence. He could no longer be face to face with His people.

Like a father who would do anything to be with his children, *HASHEM* needed a way to reconnect with those He had created, so He gave them the promise of Genesis 3:15. He also provided them with a visual reminder of it: the sanctuary system and its restorative ceremonies.

The First Sacrifice

Tears filled Rachel's eyes as she hugged her beloved pet. The dog had been hers for over ten years—even before she and her husband had had children. But after it bit a worker at their home and then a child in the neighborhood, Rachel knew they couldn't keep the dog any longer. The thought of giving him away filled her with

sorrow. The pain of losing an animal is difficult.

Think about how Adam and Eve must have felt when they saw the first animal die! They had never encountered death before; it must have caused their hearts to ache. But God had an important lesson to teach them through this heartache. Genesis 3:21 records, “*ADONAI Elohim* made Adam and his wife tunics of skin and He clothed them.”

God did not use linen, cotton, or any other material to clothe Adam and Eve. Instead, He killed an animal and used its skin to cover the two people.

Through the death of this animal, Adam and Eve learned that sin causes pain and death; it requires sacrifice. Later, we find Adam and Eve's son Abel bringing a lamb as an offering to God (Genesis 4:4).

From the time of Adam to the time of the Israelites in Egypt, God's people brought animal sacrifices to God. For example, Noah offered sacrifices to God after the flood (Genesis 8:20). The patriarch Abraham built altars to commune with God during His journey to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:8; 13:4, 18). The sacrifices were symbols of their agreement with God's covenant—the promise God had given to save His people. And whenever they came into God's presence, they brought a sacrifice to symbolize

how the connection with God would someday be restored.

God's Plan to Be with His People

The descendants of Abraham grew into a great nation while in Egypt. Eventually, they were enslaved by the Egyptian people, and while there, many Israelites lost sight of their relationship with God. When God delivered them from Egypt, He longed to be close to His people once again.

We notice a glimpse of the fatherly heart of God as He declares, “Have them make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them” (Exodus/Shemot 25:8). The Hebrew word here for “dwell” is *šākan*—the same root as the word for the Shekhinah, or the presence of the Almighty. His presence would be in the midst of

His people through this sanctuary in the center of their camp.

God gave specific instructions to Moses for the building of the sanctuary: “You are to make it all precisely according to everything that I show you—the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all the furnishings within—just so you must make it” (Exodus 25:9). He also provided him with directions for the sacrifices that would be part of the sanctuary service; many of them are recorded in Leviticus/Vayikra.

The Sacrificial System: God's Way?

Leviticus provided specific instructions for what individuals in the camp were to do if they sinned. The individual had to take a perfect bull, sheep, or goat and walk through the camp to the sanctuary



at the center of the Israelite camp. The individual would enter through the gates of the sanctuary and come to the altar of sacrifice. There, he would lay his hand on the animal and confess his sins. Then came the hardest part—he himself had to take a knife and slit the throat of the innocent animal. Can you imagine the tears that must have welled in his eyes as he realized the result of his sin? His sorrow was a small taste of the pain that sin causes in our world.

But these sacrifices were not attempts to earn God's favor. God's people were very different from the ancient tribes of Mesopotamia that surrounded them. In contrast to the practices of these people—the Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, who would sacrifice their children to appease bloodthirsty gods—the system of *HASHEM* had a far different purpose. It was a reminder to the people that sin brought death and separation. Forgiveness and restoration could only come through sacrifice.

You see, God cared more about the hearts of His people than about the sacrifices they brought to Him. He did not want the Israelites to fall into a round of rituals like those of the tribes around them. David expressed in the Tanakh: “For You would not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it, nor be pleased by burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:18, 19). God wanted His people to understand the greater meaning of the sacrifices and the way in which they pointed to reconnection with Him.

Sadly, the sanctuary service began to lose its meaning. Many forgot the ultimate purpose of the sacrifices and instead offered them in the same way that pagan nations did. Some even turned to other gods, trying to appease them with gifts and offerings.

But because of His great love, God still had a plan to reunite with His people—a plan, though painful, that would bring about full restoration.

”
*The sacrifices of
God are a broken
spirit.*

PSALM 51:19



An illustration of a young girl with dark skin and long dark hair, wearing a white dress, standing next to a man with long dark hair and a brown coat. The man is gesturing with his hand. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads are visible, looking towards the pair. The background is a cloudy sky.

A Suffering Redeemer?

03

The young girl cowered as she stood on the slave block in the middle of the busy city square. At a time when slavery was legal in the United States, she had been taken from her family and home against her will to become part of this horrible trade.

Now, she knew that she had little hope of being bought by a kind master. All the men looked so hardened and cruel. Some of them carried whips. One gruff slave master stepped toward the young girl, his eyes scrutinizing everything about her. She looked down at her feet, avoiding eye contact with him.

Soon, the bidding began.

It went on for some time, and the number continued to rise. Then, a new person—a very stern

man—joined the bidding battle. *Please don't allow him to purchase me*, the girl prayed in her heart, but she knew her preference didn't really matter; after all, she was a slave.

The stern man would not give up. At last, his competitor refused to go any higher. She had been sold to the one she most dreaded.

As the auction closed and the crowd dispersed, the slave master motioned to the girl he had just purchased. "Come." She obediently walked behind him, fearful of what her future would hold.

The man's home was not far from the town, and they soon neared it. The home was a simple cottage—far different from the elaborate houses of wealthy plantation owners. The girl began to wonder why he had paid so much for her. What value did she have in his eyes?

Before reaching the front entrance, the man turned around. His face had softened from its sternness, and he looked at her with kind eyes.

"You may be wondering why I have purchased you," he began. "My wife and I have purchased you so that you can be free. We will raise you like we would raise our own daughter, and when you are older, we will help you to reunite with your family."

The girl could hardly believe what she was hearing! Could she truly be free? And yet, weeks and months would prove his words to be true. The man and his wife were not wealthy, but they poured out their love, care, and protection, providing for all her basic needs and giving her an education. Her life would never be the same, for she had been redeemed.



Redemption in the Tanakh

Redemption/*ge'ulah* is a very important concept. During the celebration of Passover/Pesach, we are reminded of the history of our ancestors who were slaves in Egypt. We remember the way in which God redeemed them. Redemption is more than simply being freed from slavery. Redemption is about a complete restoration. Pesach is also a reminder of the coming redemption of God's people by the Mashiach. At that time, when God's people have been restored to what life was like before sin, they can live joyously during the reign of the Mashiach.

The book of Isaiah/Yeshayahu in the Tanakh refers to God as Redeemer 13 times (Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 49:26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16). God's people needed redemption

from their enemies, but they had a deeper problem: They also needed redemption from sin so that they could be connected with God once again. Isaiah writes, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2).

But what was the solution to the problem of sin and separation?

The Servant in Isaiah

Isaiah 53 does not use the word *redeemer*, but it speaks of one who would take upon himself "the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:12). Who is this individual? The Almighty, speaking in Isaiah 53:11, identifies him as "the Righteous One, My Servant."

Many are quick to suggest that the "servant" of God referred to in Isaiah is Israel. They present verses such as Isaiah 41:8, 9: "But



you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, My friend—I took hold of you from the ends of the earth, and called from its uttermost parts, and said to you, ‘You are My servant—I have chosen you, not rejected you.’ ”

Indeed, this passage clearly refers to the nation of Israel, which descended from Abraham and Jacob.

But in some passages that mention the word “servant,” there is a progression from a *collective* servant to an *individual* servant. Isaiah 49:5, 6 is an example of the word “servant” being used to speak of an individual:

“So now says *ADONAI*, who formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, to gather Israel back to Him. For I am honored in the eyes of *ADONAI* and My God has become my strength. So He says, ‘It is too trifling a thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved ones of Israel.’ ”

This servant is one who will “restore the preserved ones of Israel.” It cannot also be Israel. It must be someone other than Israel.

Let’s look at the description of the servant in Isaiah 53:

- › “He was despised and rejected by men” (vs. 3).
- › He carried the griefs and sorrows of the people (vs. 4).

- › He was “stricken, struck by God, and afflicted” (vs. 4).
- › He suffered for the sins (or iniquities) of the people (vss. 5, 8, 10, 11).
- › He was “like a lamb [being] led to slaughter” and “was cut off out of the land of the living” (vss. 7, 8).

This passage of the suffering servant has often been applied to Israel because it speaks of the suffering that God’s people have experienced throughout history.

However, this servant was to suffer *for* the sins of God’s people; he would carry them himself. It’s not possible, then, that the servant could be the same entity as God’s people; the servant must be someone distinct from them.

The Midrash offers some interesting insight on Isaiah 53:

“[Mashiach] of our justice [Mashiach Tsidqenu], though we are Thy forebears, Thou art greater than we because Thou didst bear the burden of our children’s sins, and our great oppressions have fallen upon Thee. . . . Among the peoples of the world Thou didst bring only derision and mockery to Israel. . . . Thy skin did shrink, and Thy body did become dry as wood; Thine eyes were hollowed by fasting, and Thy strength became like fragmented pottery—all that came to pass because of the sins of our children.”¹

”

*He has borne our
diseases and he has
borne our sufferings*

TALMUD B. SANHEDRIN 98B.

Could Isaiah 53 be referring to the Mashiach?

A tradition in the Talmud b. Sanhedrin surrounding Isaiah 53 speaks of the Mashiach bearing the sufferings and diseases of the people:

“What is the name of the [Mashiach]? . . . Our sages said: ‘The Leper is his name, according to the School of Rabbi, for it is said, “He has borne our diseases and he has borne our sufferings, and we have considered him as a leper, smitten by God and humbled.” ’ ”²

It appears that Isaiah 53 points to a Mashiach who would come to identify with the suffering, sickness, and sins of His people. It even speaks of him being “cut off from the land of the living” (Isaiah 53:8)—a description of death. Could God’s redemption come through sacrifice on the part of the Mashiach?

This is not the only passage that speaks of the Mashiach being wounded in some way. His name is prominent in Daniel 9, one of the most remarkable prophetic passages. According to verse 26, the Mashiach is predicted to be “cut off.” Let’s look at this passage more closely.

References

1. Pesiqta Rabbati, Piska 37.
2. Talmud b. Sanhedrin 98b.

A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a brown robe, is seated on a balcony. He is looking out over a city with a blue wall and a domed building in the background. The scene is set in a warm, sunny environment with green trees and a clear sky.

A Prophecy of the Mashiach's Coming



04

Daniel knelt reverently by his window as had been his custom for over seven decades. He was one of the Jewish captives taken to Babylon, but years had gone by since the day he first set foot in this land now ruled by the Medo-Persians.

Back then, he'd been just a teenager—a captive teenager, stripped of everything familiar and marched to a foreign land. His family had probably been killed—the Babylonians had not seen value in them. But Daniel had potential. He, along with many other young men his age, had been chosen by royal decree to receive the finest education in Babylon.

From the beginning, Daniel faced challenges. The new environment was so unlike the Jewish culture he had been raised in. His first test came

when the king's delicacies were placed before him and the other young men (Daniel 1:8–16). Daniel chose not to eat this food because he knew it was not kosher. Then, he was given a new name, one of the names of the Babylonian gods, and he had to learn a new language. All these changes were the Babylonians' attempts to integrate Daniel into their culture. *We can fit him into our mold and make him forget his Jewish ways*, they thought. But Daniel chose to remain faithful to God, and God blessed him abundantly because of it.

God bestowed superior wisdom and understanding on Daniel and his friends, resulting in their promotion to administrative positions in the Babylonian kingdom. When King Nebuchadnezzar had some foreboding dreams, Daniel, through the wisdom given him by God, interpreted these dreams (Daniel 2). Eventually, the heathen king became a follower of *HASHEM* because of Daniel's influence.

After Nebuchadnezzar's reign ended, Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. Even in such a tumultuous political situation, God preserved Daniel's life, and he once again found favor in the eyes of the king—this time, King Darius.

Throughout all these experiences, Daniel must have kept in mind the promise that God had given through the prophet Jeremiah: that after 70

years of exile, God would bring His people back to their land.

Daniel's Prayer for Israel

As Daniel knelt to pray in that first year of King Darius's reign, he must have reflected on how God had blessed him and brought him to this point.

But he was also concerned. The period of 70 years was nearly over. Wouldn't God fulfill the promise He gave to the prophet Jeremiah? "After 70 years for Babylon are complete, I will visit you, and fulfill My good word toward you—to bring you back to this place. . . . Then you will call on Me, and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me, when you will search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:10, 12, 13).

Daniel determined to seek God more deeply for the forgiveness of his people so that they could be restored to their land. He clothed himself in sackcloth and ashes as a sign of mourning. He earnestly prayed to God in confession:

"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and mercy with those who love Him and keep His *mitzvot*, we have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have acted wickedly; we have rebelled; we have turned away from Your *mitzvot* and from Your rulings" (Daniel 9:4, 5).

Though Daniel had been faithful to God, he identified himself with his people and their sins. In earnestness, he included all of Israel in his prayers and claimed God's mercy and forgiveness for them:

“Give ear, my God, and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolation and the city called by Your name. We do not present our supplications before You because of our own righteousness, but because of Your great compassions. Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and act! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay! For Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Daniel 9:18, 19).

The 70 Weeks

God didn't ignore the prayer of His servant Daniel. He sent him the angel Gabriel with a special vision.

“Daniel, I have come now to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your requests, a message went out, and I have come to declare it to you, for you are greatly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision,” Gabriel said (Daniel 9:22, 23).

The vision began with a time-based prophecy:

“Seventy weeks are decreed concerning your people and your holy city” (Daniel 9:24).

These 70 weeks are equivalent to 490 days. When God speaks through prophecy, days represent years. For example, God instructed the prophet Ezekiel to lie on his side for a certain number of days—each day representing a year (Ezekiel 4:5, 6). Or, another time, when God required the Israelites to stay in the wilderness rather than

entering the Promised Land, He referred to the same principle: “For 40 years, corresponding to the number of the 40 days you explored the land—one year for each day—you will suffer for your iniquities” (Numbers/Bamidbar 14:34).

This day-for-a-year interpretation has been held by Jewish scholars and commentators, who interpret the



70 weeks in this passage accordingly.¹ Using this principle, the prophetic 70 weeks in Daniel 9 represent 490 literal years. Or think of it this way: $70 \times 7 \text{ days} = 490 \text{ prophetic days} = 490 \text{ literal years}$.

In the Tanakh, numbers hold great significance. The length of this time prophecy is no different. The number seven was important in the Jewish economy because every seven years was *Shemittah*—the year when all were released from their debts. After seven cycles of *Shemittah*, the 50th year was Jubilee/*Yovel*, when slaves were freed and land that had been sold was returned to its original owners (Leviticus 25:8–10).

What was to happen in this 490-year period? Gabriel continued:

“Seventy weeks are decreed concerning your people and your holy city,
to put an end to transgression
to bring sin to an end,
to atone for iniquity,
to bring in
everlasting righteousness,
to seal up vision and prophecy,
and to anoint the Holy of Holies”
(Daniel 9:24).

The 70-week prophecy symbolizes the forgiveness of *HASHEM* and the release of debt. This prophecy was an answer to Daniel’s prayer! God had heard his pleas for the forgiveness of his people and would answer Daniel in two ways. First,

as history reveals, the Jewish people miraculously returned to their land after the completion of the 70 years foretold by Jeremiah.

But God had a greater plan to bring His people back to Himself. Remember, His purpose all along has been to be with His people. In this prophecy given to Daniel, He promised that within 490 years, there would be a way to make an end of sins and provide forgiveness and reconciliation.

Notice that three different words are used in this passage to describe disobedience to God: sin, transgression, and iniquity. God wanted to deal with every aspect of sin and how it separated His people from Himself.

It also says that “everlasting righteousness” will be brought in. The word used here is *tsedek*, which means “righteous as though they never sinned.” Not only was sin going to be dealt with, but God also wanted to make His people as though they had never sinned! The forgiveness spoken of in the 490-year prophecy would be a complete forgiveness—something that could only be possible through the Mashiach.

The Timeline of the Prophecy

This incredible, complete forgiveness was going to take place within the timeline of the 490 years. But to know exactly when that was, we need a starting point for the prophecy. The good news is that Gabriel

This prophecy was an answer to Daniel's prayer!

provided Daniel with that starting point! In Daniel 9:25, he said, “So know and understand: From the issuing of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem until the time Mashiach, the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks.”

Historians identify three different decrees that were given for restoring and building Jerusalem:

- ❶ The decree by Cyrus the Great in 537 BCE (Ezra 1).
- ❷ The decree by Darius I in 521 BCE (Ezra 6).
- ❸ The decree by Artaxerxes I in 457 BCE (Ezra 7).

The third date best fits the description of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem because it encompassed the first two decrees and completed them. It not only allowed for the rebuilding of Jerusalem but also established Israel with political power because Artaxerxes had decreed that Ezra should set up magistrates and judges over the people (Ezra 7:25).

Ezra 6:14 records: “So the elders of the Jews continued building and

prospering through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and according to the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.”

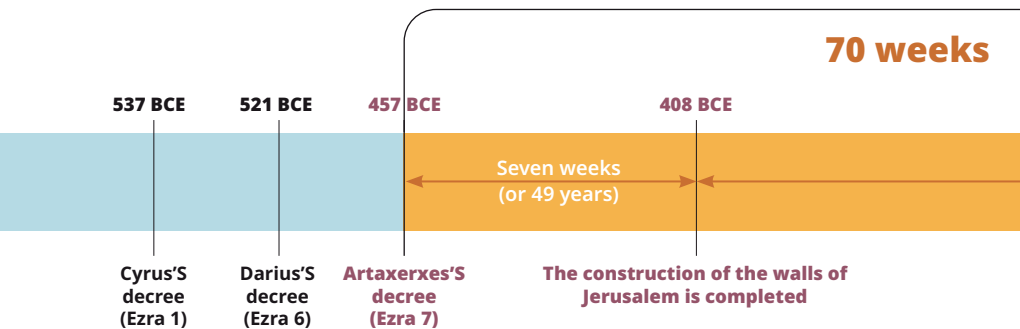
Ezra 7, which provides the full decree, tells us that it took place in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:8). Based on numerous historical documents, such as Ptolemy's canon and the Jewish calendar, the seventh year of King Artaxerxes would have taken place in 457 BCE. That year gives us our starting point.

The prophecy in Daniel 9 indicates that from this command to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BCE to the time of Mashiach would be a time period of “seven weeks and 62 weeks”—a total of 69 weeks or 483 days. Remembering that one prophetic day in prophecy equals one literal year, this is 483 years.

What would occur after this time? Did the predicted period refer to the 70 literal *years* prophesied by Jeremiah, or the 70 prophetic *weeks* described to Daniel? These are two separate time prophecies, and it is important to distinguish between them. Yes, Daniel expected a mashiach to free Israel from its captors, and that mashiach did come after the 70 years predicted by Jeremiah in the form of King Cyrus of the Persians (Isaiah 45:1).

But God was going to answer Daniel's prayer in a greater way. During

70 weeks



the 70 weeks (490 years), a universal Mashiach would come to redeem the people from their deeper problem of sin. He would be the Mashiach of Jubilee (Isaiah 61:1, 2), looking forward to when God will create “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17). At that time, there will be no more sin to ruin the earth’s beauty and the connection God longs to have with His people. God and humankind would finally be united.

Unexpected Sacrifice

Looking back on your own life, have you ever had unexpected experiences? Perhaps they were negative or challenging. I don’t think Elly Rodrigues realized what would be required for her to survive the Holocaust. Did she expect that she would never see her parents again? Did she know that they would die in concentration camps when she was sent to hide in the country? Probably not.

The prophecy in Daniel 9 also has an unexpected part—a sacrifice that would be necessary for the forgiveness and freedom of God’s

people. Daniel 9:26 continues, “Then after the 62 weeks Mashiach will be cut off and have nothing.”

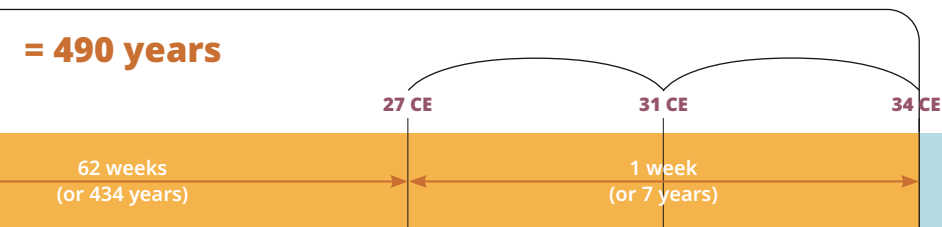
Cut off? This doesn’t seem to fit our understanding of a victorious Mashiach! The Hebrew word for “cut off” is *kārat*. It means “to destroy or exterminate,” and in the Torah it is often used in the context of a person being condemned to death. One example is Leviticus 18:29, “For whoever does any of these detestable things, the souls that do them are to be cut off [*kārat*] from the midst of their people.”

Would the Mashiach really be condemned to death?

Kārat also has another association. The word is related to the making of covenants and the sacrifices associated with those covenants.

For example, in Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him the land of Canaan. Verse 18 tells us, “On that day *ADONAI* cut [*kārat*] a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘I give this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River.’”

= 490 years



“From the command to rebuild Jerusalem to the time of Mashiach”

In Jeremiah/Yirmeyahu 34:13, God Himself declared, “I made [*kārat*] a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Together with that covenant, He established the sanctuary services. Through the sacrifices made in the sanctuary, people received forgiveness for their sins. Leviticus 17:11 explains, “For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.” (See also Leviticus 4–7.)

Remember, the purpose of the 490 years of this prophecy was to “put an end to transgression, to bring sin to an end, to atone for iniquity” (Daniel 9:24)—the exact same purpose for which God had given His covenant and the sacrificial system.

Don’t miss what Daniel 9:27 tells us about the covenant: “Then he

[speaking of the Mashiach] will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.”

By being cut off, the Mashiach would confirm the covenant that God made in the beginning with Adam and Eve—the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. And by confirming that covenant, the system of sacrifices and offerings would also be fulfilled, for they all pointed forward to the Mashiach, who would die for forgiveness of sins and reunite God and humans.

The prophecy has taken an unexpected, perhaps unwanted, turn. Could it be that the Mashiach spoken of in Daniel 9 would be cut off in fulfillment of this covenant? Could it be that the sacrificial system established by God pointed forward to the great sacrifice of the Mashiach?

Reference

1. Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel: A New Translation with Commentary, Anthologizing from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, 1979).

A close-up photograph of a person's hands placing puzzle pieces on a light-colored wooden surface. The puzzle pieces feature a painting of a white lamb with its eyes closed, resting on a nest of brown, root-like structures. The lamb is positioned on a white puzzle piece, which is being placed next to a red puzzle piece. Other puzzle pieces with various colors and patterns are scattered around, some already in place and others being held by the hands. The text "Who Is the Mashiach in Daniel 9?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the lower left portion of the image.

Who Is the Mashiach in Daniel 9?



05

Have you ever put together a large puzzle—one with 500 or 1,000 pieces? If you have, you know the satisfaction of seeing the picture come together piece by piece. But see if this scenario is familiar too: You carefully scan through the pieces, looking for tabs that would fit into specific holes, and when you think you've found two that look similar, you test them. On occasion, the pieces appear to be a perfect match! *They must fit together*, you think. But when you test them, they fit together awkwardly, as though they had been forced together.

When we read the Tanakh, we sometimes do the same thing. We assume that certain ideas or concepts are true. Then, we try to fit those ideas

into the text. In the end, the interpretation might seem to fit, but it is forced.

And we are at risk of doing the same with the prophecy in Daniel 9. As we've explored this prophecy, we're left with some questions: If the prophecy of the 490 years began in 457 BCE, it would have ended in 34 CE. Does this mean that Mashiach already came? And more importantly, who is he?

To fit the prophecy, this individual would have had to:

- › Begin his ministry exactly 483 years from 457 BCE (27 CE).
- › Claim to be the Mashiach.
- › Exhibit the qualities of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.
- › Fulfill the Israelite sacrificial service and die three and a half years later.

Only one individual in recorded history perfectly fits this description: Yeshua. Let's look at the evidence.

Evidence for Yeshua as the Mashiach in Daniel 9

The prophecy in Daniel 9 extended 69 weeks (483 literal years) to "*Mashiach*, the Prince." Counting 483 years from 457 BCE (plus 1, since there was no year 0), we arrive at 27 CE—the exact time in history when Yeshua began his ministry.

How do we know he began his ministry at this time?

The book of Luke is very precise in dating the year in which Yeshua was immersed in the Jordan River. Luke 3:21, 22 records: "Now when all the people were immersed, *Yeshua* also was immersed. And while He was praying, heaven was opened and the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* came down upon Him in bodily form like a dove. And from out of heaven came a voice, 'You are My Son, whom I love—with You I am well pleased!' " According to Luke, these events occurred in "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (Luke 3:1) which history reveals was 27 CE.

Daniel 9 looks forward to the Mashiach—the anointed one—who would begin his ministry within the 70-week prophecy. Paul the apostle, looking back in history from his time, marks Yeshua's immersion in the Jordan River as his anointing and the beginning of his ministry: "God anointed *Yeshua* of *Natzeret* with the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* and power . . . He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

John the Immerser himself made a very strong declaration of Yeshua: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). By these words, he brought the minds of the people back to the sanctuary service.

The sanctuary had been foreshadowing this role of the Mashiach, had it not? Animals were sacrificed to provide for the forgiveness of the people when they sinned. But these animal offerings were not the ultimate purpose of the service; they pointed forward to the sacrifice of the Mashiach.

Isaiah 53 reiterated this idea when speaking of the Suffering Servant. The prophet Isaiah described him as a sacrificial offering:

“Like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth” (vs. 7).

And finally, Daniel 9:26, 27 emphasized that the Mashiach would be “cut off and have nothing. . . . In the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.” The last week of the prophecy began in 27 CE—at the beginning of the ministry of Yeshua—and ended in 34 CE. The “middle of the week” was 31 CE, following Yeshua’s three and a half years of ministry. He was to be condemned to death to bring forgiveness for the sins of the people. As a result, the offerings of the sanctuary service were no longer needed because he himself was the fulfillment of those sacrifices.

But you may still wonder, *Could Yeshua really be the fulfillment of*

this prophecy? What about more traditional interpretations of Daniel 9?

We’ll look at one such interpretation. And we’ll find that the “puzzle pieces” don’t fit very well together.

Could Onias III be the Mashiach in Daniel 9?

Many scholars, both Jewish and Christian, believe that the Mashiach mentioned in Daniel 9 is Onias III, a high priest during the time of the Seleucid Empire who stood for the Jewish people and was murdered as a result.

There are two important reasons, however, why the Mashiach in Daniel 9 cannot be Onias III.

First, the timing of Onias III’s death does not align with the timing of the prophecy. Daniel 9 speaks of the prophecy beginning at the time of the decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem.

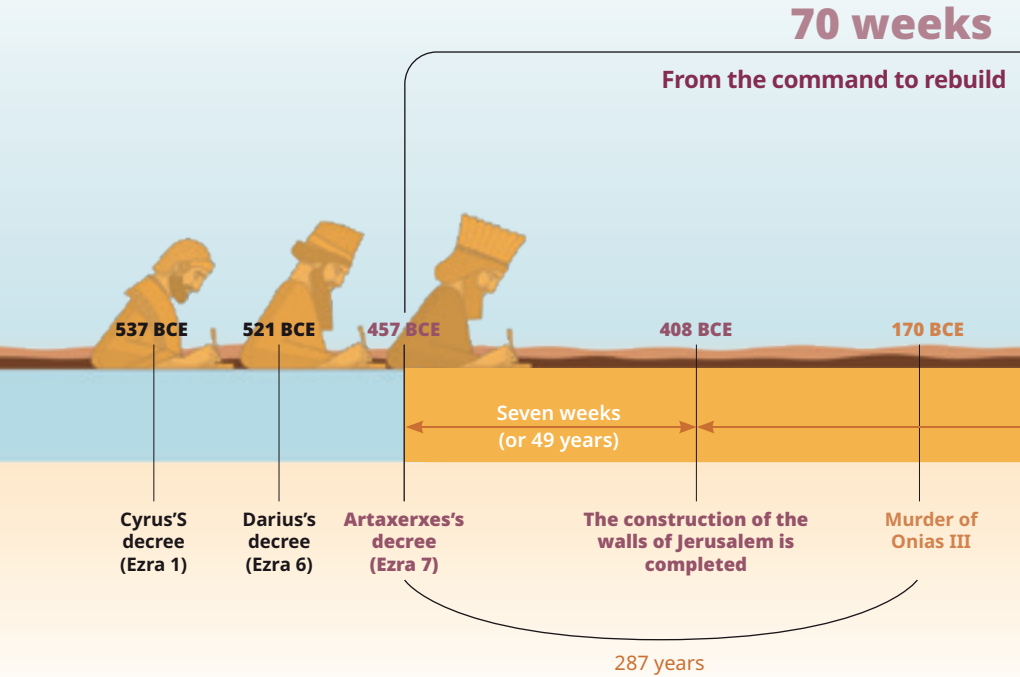
As we have already mentioned, there were three decrees:

- ❶ The decree by Cyrus the Great in 537 BCE (Ezra 1).
- ❷ The decree by Darius I in 521 BCE (Ezra 6).
- ❸ The decree by Artaxerxes I in 457 BCE (Ezra 7).

The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BCE was the most complete of all the decrees. Adding 490 years to 457 BCE brings us to 34 CE. Onias III, however, was murdered in 170 BCE—only 287 years from the

starting point. And even if we used one of the earlier decrees as our starting point, we would still only complete 367 or 370 years instead of the full 490 years of the prophecy.

Second, Daniel 9:24 clearly delineates the purpose of the 490 years: “To put an end to transgression, to bring sin to an end, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness,



The Day-Year Principle

When God speaks through prophecy, days represent years. For example, God instructed the prophet Ezekiel to lie on his side for a certain number of days—each day representing a year (Ezekiel 4:5, 6).

Or, another time, when God required the Israelites to stay in the wilderness rather than entering the Promised Land, He referred to the same principle: “For 40 years, corresponding to the number of the 40 days

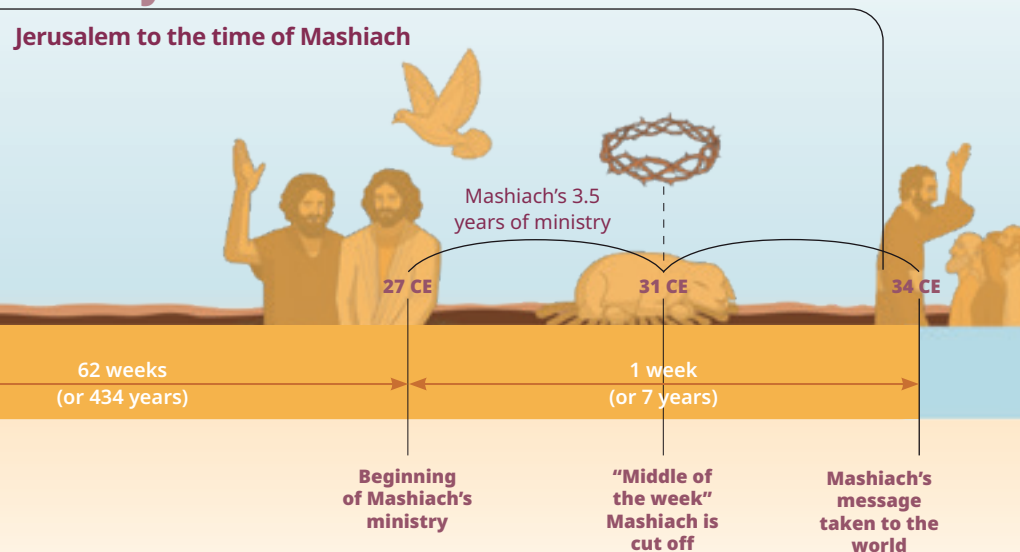
to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.”

Did Onias III fulfill any of these goals through his death or ministry? No. He did not finish the

transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, or bring in everlasting righteousness. It's not possible that he was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

= 490 years

Jerusalem to the time of Mashiach



you explored the land—one year for each day—you will suffer for your iniquities” (Numbers 14:34).

This day-for-a-year interpretation has been held by Jewish scholars and commen-

tators, who interpret the 70 weeks in this passage accordingly. Using this principle, the prophetic 70 weeks in Daniel 9 represent 490 literal years. Or think of it this way: 70×7 days = 490 prophetic days = 490 literal years.

That brings us back to Yeshua.

But even if Yeshua was the fulfillment of this prophecy, what do we make of his death? *Would God have condoned a human sacrifice?* you wonder. After all, the system God set up for His people was different from those of the heathen nations who were sacrificing children in the worship of

their gods. If Yeshua were a mere human, then God would have been contradicting His very own system!

But if Yeshua was who he indeed claimed to be—fully divine—then God did not contradict himself and it would not be the sacrifice of a human. Let's explore this further in the next chapter.

***If Yeshua was who
he indeed claimed
to be—fully divine—
then God did not
contradict himself.***



A Mashiach Who Understands You

06

The sun had reached its peak on a warm day in Samaria. Few went to the well at this time of day, but a lone figure could be seen making her way there, a pitcher balanced on her head.

She wiped the sweat off her brow with the back of her hand. The sun felt particularly warm, but at least she could avoid the crowd of women who would whisper about her. She was an outcast.

As she approached the well, she cringed as she noticed a man sitting there.

She focused on the task at hand and hurriedly lowered her pitcher into the well, hoping he would not speak to her.

“Give me a drink,” the man requested.

She was surprised that he would engage her in conversation. Everyone in town spurned her for her sinful mistakes. Didn’t he know who she was?

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is who is saying to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water,” the man continued.

These words piqued her interest. Could there be something to satisfy her thirsting heart?

“You’re not greater than our father Jacob, are You? He gave us this well. He drank out of it himself, with his sons and his cattle,” she replied.

The man pressed his point again: “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never be thirsty. The water that I give him will become a fountain of water within him, springing up to eternal life!”

She craved the satisfaction and fulfillment he spoke about. “Give me this water,” she said. Though he had asked her for water, now she made the request.

He was so gentle and kind, but he also pointed out her sin. What he told her next made her realize that he knew who she was: “You’ve had five husbands, and the man you have now isn’t your husband.” She tried to avoid the conversation about her sin by switching to a topic of religious controversy. And yet, as she



tried to redirect the conversation away from her shameful past, this man wouldn’t be thrown off. He kindly kept pressing his way towards the spiritual yearning in her heart.

Who could this man be? the woman began to wonder.



She voiced her thoughts, “I know that Mashiach is coming (He who is called the Anointed One.) When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

His response came back without hesitation: “I—the One speaking to you—I am.”

Who was the man who made this claim to her?

It was Yeshua. In this story recorded by his Jewish disciple John (John 4), Yeshua claimed to be the Mashiach who could offer her hope in the midst of her struggle.

What other claims did he make?

The I AM

During Yeshua’s ministry, some of the religious leaders—particularly the Pharisees—tried to find ways to challenge Yeshua’s teachings. Once, Yeshua told them, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled” (John 8:56).

The Pharisees scoffed, “You’re not even fifty years old and you’ve seen Abraham?” (vs. 57)

Yeshua boldly responded, “Amen, amen I tell you, before Abraham was, I am!” (vs. 58)

In using the words *I am*, Yeshua was declaring himself to be the one who spoke to Moses in the burning bush and who said, “I AM WHO I

AM” (Exodus 3:14)—the same God that led the people of Israel out of Egypt, that established the sanctuary service, and that directed the offering of sacrifices.

And if he was indeed what he claimed to be, then his death would not have been the sacrifice of a human. Instead, it was the willing self-sacrifice of God Himself. Yeshua, in choosing to give himself as the Sacrificial Lamb, affirmed his oneness with God and his role as the Mashiach.

This was not the only time he made this claim, either. Those who plotted against Yeshua eventually arrested him and brought him to trial before the high priest. People came forward, presenting false testimonies against Yeshua. Many of the testimonies conflicted with one another, creating confusion in the courtroom. And yet, Yeshua chose not to defend himself. As Isaiah 53:7 describes, “Like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.”

The high priest realized that he was not making progress in bringing about Yeshua’s condemnation. He suddenly stood up in frustration. The room must have gone silent.

“Do You have no answer? What is this they’re testifying against You?” he demanded. Yeshua remained silent.

But then, the high priest asked him a question which he could not

decline to answer, for he would not dishonor God. The high priest's question was direct: "Are you *Mashiach*, Son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:61).

Yeshua did not deny his identity. "I am," he responded. "And you shall see 'the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Powerful One,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven!'" (Mark 14:62).

Again, Yeshua invoked the title of the eternal God, the name that would have quickly brought his hearers back to Moses's encounter with God in the burning bush. But he went even further. He also called himself the Son of Man. Those listening would have immediately known that he was referring to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13, 14:

"I was watching in the night visions. Behold, One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days, and was brought into His presence. Dominion, glory and sovereignty were given to Him that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed."

Yeshua was claiming to be the Son of Man—a name which had been used for the *Mashiach*. He was claiming that he had come from

heaven and would return there to receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

The high priest knew what Yeshua meant, and in fury, he exclaimed, "Why do we still need witnesses? You've heard the blasphemy. What seems right to you?" (Mark 14:63, 64). He accused Yeshua of committing blasphemy—of being a man who was claiming to be God. According to Leviticus 24:16, this was a sin worthy of death.

"And you shall see 'the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Powerful One,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven!'"

MARK 14:62

But what if Yeshua had spoken the truth instead of committing blasphemy? When he began his ministry, he announced: "Now is the fullness of time . . . and the kingdom of God is near!" (Mark 1:15).

In these words, he proclaimed himself as the fulfillment of the 490-year prophecy in Daniel 9. What if he was indeed the Mashiach, the I AM, and the prophesied Son of Man?

Hope Through Suffering

Prior to his birth, an angel instructed Yeshua's mother to give him that name, which means "to deliver, to save, or to rescue" in Hebrew. This name bore great significance: Yeshua was to "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He came with the purpose of saving his people from the awful effects of sin that began when the first man and woman chose to disobey God and believe the enemy of humanity. Yeshua claimed authority to forgive sin (Mark 2:10) and to give power to live free from sin (John 8:11).

His work fulfilled so many predictions in the Tanakh:

- › *HASHEM's* promise of salvation in Genesis 3:15.
- › The system of sacrifice in the Israelite sanctuary.
- › The description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.
- › The purpose outlined in Daniel 9—"to put an end to transgression, to bring sin to an end, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness."
- › The role of the Son of Man mentioned in Daniel 7:13, 14.

All the evidence points toward the conclusion that Yeshua is the Mashiach.

Daniel and his people had suffered in the exile to Babylon. They had longed for the hope of forgiveness and restoration, and God provided them with hope through the promise of the Mashiach in the 490-year prophecy. He would come and make an end to sin and reunite them with *HASHEM*.

That hope reaches every individual.

One example is the woman at the well, who had suffered throughout her life and had longed for something better. Yeshua, as the Mashiach who fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel, gave her hope.

And *HASHEM* does not overlook your suffering, either. He has seen the hardships the Jewish people have endured through the past couple of centuries: the tears that have been shed, the homes they have had to leave, the families that have been split, the loved ones that have died—He sees and values each sacrifice.

He also sees the sacrifices that you must make today, whether it be enduring prejudice, working hard to provide for your family, or being mistreated for remaining faithful to the Torah.

And He, by giving the Mashiach, chose to identify with your sacrifices. The prophecy in Isaiah 53 told us that the Mashiach would

***Whatever
circumstance
you're facing, he
assures you that
your life is not
without a purpose.***

be a suffering Servant—so that he could empathize with you and give you hope.

Whatever circumstance you're facing, he assures you that your life is not without a purpose. Someday soon, he will return as the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven to set up his eternal kingdom—a kingdom in which no tears fall, and sadness and pain will no longer exist. A place where happiness reigns, where our sufferings will be forgotten, and where we will finally be reunited with God. It will be a place where everyone will realize that all the sacrifices we have made—and above all, the sacrifice of the Mashiach—have been worthwhile to bring unity and restoration.

Many people who have claimed to follow Yeshua have misconstrued who he truly is. But this magazine has given you the opportunity to see him in a different light. He is the divine Mashiach who was foretold by the prophets. He fulfilled the prophecies of Daniel 9 and Isaiah 53 by coming to this earth to sacrifice himself for his people. He became the Suffering Servant of the Tanakh so that he could offer hope as the victorious Son of Man.

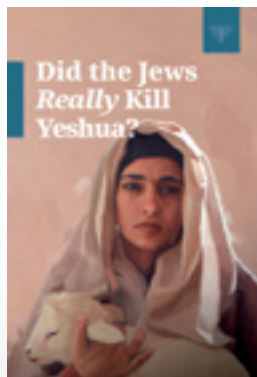
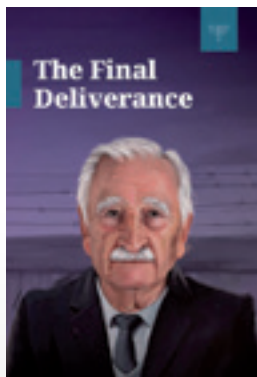
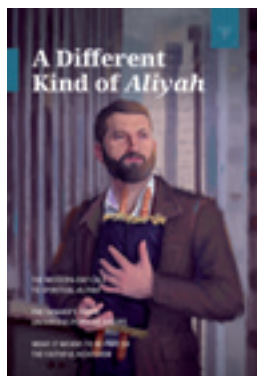
Will you grasp that hope of his coming reign by choosing to accept Yeshua as your Mashiach? You can take that step today by praying the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, I want to thank you for Yeshua and the sacrifice that he chose to make when he came to this earth. Thank you that he has given me an example of how I can live a life of selflessness for others. Today, I choose to accept him as my Mashiach from sin and to receive the hope of life in his eternal kingdom someday. Help my gratitude and love for him to grow each day. Amen.

To become better acquainted with Yeshua and learn more about that coming reign of the Mashiach, please see the information on the next page or the back of this magazine.



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