

# GENEALOGICAL SCAMS AND FLIMFLAMS<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries have been placing a lot of emphasis on the messianic significance of genealogies – the two genealogies recorded in the New Testament and carefully selected genealogical data from the "Old Testament" (the Christian version of the Hebrew Bible), and other sources. Their intent is to focus one's attention on declarations made in the New Testament concerning Jesus being the Messiah and on the arguments to support it drawn from so-called Scriptural evidence found in both the New Testament and the "Old Testament".

In this essay, various Christian missionary claims and arguments are examined, primarily those claims that are based on information drawn from the "Old Testament". The analysis demonstrates that such claims are not supported by the Hebrew Bible and, therefore, have no validity for Jews.

## II. THE TWO GENEALOGIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian messianic paradigm is founded on two genealogies recorded for Jesus in the New Testament. Though the genealogical information recorded in the New Testament is irrelevant to Judaism, some observations are helpful in assessing its general validity. One genealogy appears in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 1:2-16), and Christians agree that it depicts the lineage of Jesus through Joseph. The other genealogy is found in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 3:23-38), but there is no consensus among Christians on whether it represents the lineage of Jesus through Mary, or another lineage through Joseph.

Several characteristics of these two genealogies are worth noting:

† The genealogy recorded in the Gospel of Matthew runs forward in time from Abraham to Jesus, and is divided into three series of 14 generations each, totaling 41 generations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letters that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ה is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized שׁ (אֶשׁ אִשׁ אֵשׁ) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

The first, and earliest series in time, spans 14 generations - from Abraham to David; the second series spans 14 generations - from Solomon to Jechonias; and the third series spans 14 generations - from Jechonias to Jesus.

- ✠ The genealogy recorded in the Gospel of Luke runs backward in time from Jesus to God [sic]<sup>3</sup>, and is divided into four series. The first, and latest series in time, spans 21 generations - from Jesus to Zorobabel; the second series spans 21 generations - from Salathiel to Nathan; the third series spans 14 generations - from David to Abraham; and the fourth series spans 21 generations from Thare to God, where it concludes with:

**Luke 3:38(KJV) – Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.**

It is interesting to note here that the author makes no distinction between the son of a mortal man and the son of God.

- ✠ The Matthew genealogy ends this way:

**Matthew 1:15-16(KJV) – (15) And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; (16) And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.**

The last verse seems to have been carefully constructed to "set the stage" for the later narrative of the allegedly miraculous "Virgin Birth" of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).<sup>4</sup>

- ✠ The Luke genealogy starts this way:

**Luke 3:23-24(KJV) – (23) And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, (24) Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,**

The first verse seems to have been carefully fashioned to "harmonize" it with the earlier narrative of the allegedly miraculous "Virgin Birth" of Jesus (Luke 1:26-35).

In Section IV below, the segments that start with King David and end with Jesus, and which pertain to the focus of this essay, the Messiah's lineage, are provided in tabular form (Table IV.A-1) and analyzed in detail.

### III. GOING BACK TO BASICS: THE MOST ELEMENTARY JEWISH MESSIANIC CONCEPTS

A messianic vision is an original concept that is at the heart of traditional Judaism, and the dream of an eventual redemption is one of its foundations. The Hebrew phrase אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים (*aharit ha'yamim*), **the end of days**, that is often associated with a future blissful era known in Judaism as the "messianic era", appears in the

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<sup>2</sup> A superficial count shows 42 generations. Since Jechonias is listed twice, he appears last in the second series of 14 generations and first in the third series of 14 generations, there are only 41 generations.

<sup>3</sup> Author's explanatory note: The notation [sic] is generally used in written texts to indicate that the previous word or phrase exactly reproduces the original, which may be an unusual form or even an error. In this particular case, the word "God" is used as it appears in the King James Bible.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that some ancient sources assert that Joseph was the one who "begot" Jesus, i.e., that he was the biological father of Jesus (Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 216-217, Fortress Press (1981)).

Hebrew Bible as early as Genesis 49:1, where Jacob summons his sons in order to bestow his blessings upon them. This chapter and the blessing of Judah, the father of the commanding Tribe of Israel, in particular (Genesis 49:8-12), could be viewed as the cornerstone of traditional Judaism's messianic paradigm. In his blessing of Judah Jacob said:

**Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff, until Shiloh come, and to him shall gather the nations.**

Though there are several different translations and interpretations of the term שִׁילֹה (*shiloh*) by both ancient and modern Jewish Sages, they all involve messianic notions. However, these are beyond the scope of this essay and will not be discussed herein. The closing phrase in the blessing given to Judah defines the role of מָשִׁיחַ (*mashi'ah*), the promised **Jewish Messiah**, in the world. Ultimately, his job is to gather the nations under the banner of the One God of peace. If a gathering of the nations for the sake of peace is the first explicit description of the messianic era, it clearly suggests something that is natural, recognizable, and human.

With Judah's destiny defined, one can expect the next significant messianic statement to be made during the reign of King David, the first king of Israel out of the Tribe of Judah. Sure enough, the Davidic dynasty, from which מָשִׁיחַ is to emerge, was established when the prophet Nathan conveyed to David the following promise from God:

**2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.**

This promise includes the following elements:

- ✧ An everlasting dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, is established with David
- ✧ David's heir to the throne, through whom this dynasty shall pass, will be one of his natural (biological) sons
- ✧ The son who inherits the throne from David is the one who will build the Temple in Jerusalem
- ✧ The Davidic dynasty will propagate through David's seed (זֶרַע [*zera*]), i.e., via his direct descendants
- ✧ Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will be a mortal man
- ✧ Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will have a special "father-son" relationship with God, so that when he sins, he will be duly punished
- ✧ Even when future kings (in David's seat) commit iniquity, God will keep the Davidic dynasty intact, and not terminate it as He did with Saul's kingship

The promise, although rather comprehensive, does not include these elements:

- ⊗ The throne of David will always be occupied by a reigning king
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will be fathered by someone who is not a direct descendant of David
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will be conceived by and born to a virgin who will remain a *virgo intacta* throughout the full term of her pregnancy
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will be a deity, and even share a triune godhead with God
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will be born and remain forever free of sin
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will preside over a heavenly, not an earthly kingdom
- ⊗ A special future king (in David's seat) will "build" a heavenly, not an earthly Temple

Several of these elements will be applied to the analysis of Christian missionary claims in the next section of this essay.

#### IV. CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY CLAIMS CONCERNING MESSIANIC LINEAGE

Popular Christian missionary claims about the lineage of the Messiah abound, and new claims continue to surface as existing ones are refuted. The following analysis demonstrates that the arguments being used to justify Jesus as a bona fide heir to the throne of David do not survive under rigorous scrutiny.

##### A. Genealogical myths: Whose genealogies are these anyway?

The two genealogies recorded in the New Testament share a common span of time with the genealogies listed in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. This makes it possible to compare the data in these two sources. Specifically, since the Hebrew Bible generally provides only genealogies that reflect biological descent, it is reasonable to compare David's progeny, as recorded in 1Chronicles 3:5-24(JPT – Judaica Press Tanach), with the genealogy listed in Matthew 1:6-16(KJV). To facilitate further comparisons, Table IV.A-1 also includes the genealogy listed in Luke 3:23-31(KJV). For simplicity, the names used in the genealogy from the Hebrew Bible are the anglicized rather than phonetic Hebrew renditions.

**Table IV.A-1 – Comparing Genealogies: Hebrew Bible vs. New Testament**

Hebrew Bible			New Testament*			
#	1Chronicles 3:5-24(JPT)	Remarks	#	Matthew 1:6-16 (KJV)	#	Luke 3:23-31 (KJV)
1.	<b>David</b>		1.	<b>David</b>	1.	<b>David</b>
2.	<b>Solomon</b>	Also listed as David's sons by Bathsheba are: Nathan, Shimea, Shovav.	2.	<b>Solomon</b>	2.	<b>Nathan</b>
3.	Rehoboam		3.	Roboam	3.	Mattatha
4.	Abijah		4.	Abiah	4.	Menan
5.	Asa		5.	Asa	5.	Melea
6.	Jehoshaphat		6.	Josaphat	6.	Eliakim
7.	Joram		7.	Joram	7.	Jonan
8.	<b>Ahaziah</b>				8.	Joseph
9.	<b>Joash</b>				9.	Juda
10.	<b>Amaziah</b>				10.	Simeon
11.	Azariah	Also known as Uzziah.	8.	Ozias	11.	Levi
12.	Jotham		9.	Joatham	12.	Matthat
13.	Ahaz		10.	Achaz	13.	Jorim
14.	Hezekiah		11.	Ezekias	14.	Eliezer
15.	Menasseh		12.	Manasses	15.	Jose
16.	Amon		13.	Amon	16.	Er
17.	Josiah		14.	Josias	17.	Elmodam
18.	<b>Jehoiakim</b> (changed from <b>Eliakim</b> by Pharaoh Necho)	Also listed as Josiah's sons are: Johanan (the firstborn), Mattaniah (also known as Zedekiah, the last king of Judah), and Shallum (also known as Jehoahaz).			18.	Cosam
					19.	Addi
					20.	Melchi
19.	<b>Jeconiah</b>	Also listed as a son of Jehoiakim is Zedekiah.	15.	<b>Jechonias</b>	21.	Neri
20.	<b>Shealtiel</b>	Also listed as a son of Jeconiah is Assir.	16.	<b>Salathiel</b>	22.	<b>Salathiel</b>
21.	<b>Pedaiah</b>	Also listed as Shealtiel's sons are: Malchiram, Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.				
22.	<b>Zerubbabel</b>	Also listed as a son of Pedaiah is Shimei.	17.	<b>Zorobabel</b>	23.	<b>Zorobabel</b>
23.	Hananiah	Also listed as Zerubbabel's sons are: Meshullam, Ohel, Berechiah, and Hasadiah-Jushab-Hesed.	18.	Abiud	24.	Rhesa
24.	Jeshaiah	Also listed as a son of Hananiah is Pelatiah.	19.	Eliakim	25.	Joanna
25.	Rephaiah		20.	Azor	26.	Juda

26.	Arnan		21.	Sadoc	27.	Joseph
27.	Obadiah		22.	Achim	28.	Semei
28.	Shechaniah		23.	Eliud	29.	Mattathias
29.	Shemaiah		24.	Eleazar	30.	Maath
30.	<b>Neariah</b>	Also listed as Shemaiah's sons are: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, and Shaphat.			31.	Nagge
31.	<b>Elioenai</b>	Also listed as Neariah's sons are: Hezekiah and Azrikam.			32.	Esli
		Listed sons of Elioenai are: Hodaviahu, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Dalaiah, and Anani.			33.	Naum
					34.	Amos
					35.	Mattathias
					36.	Joseph
					37.	Janna
					38.	Melchi
					39.	Levi
			25.	Matthan	40.	Matthat
			26.	Jacob	41.	Heli
			27.	<b>Joseph</b>	42.	<b>Joseph</b>
			28.	<b>Jesus</b>	43.	<b>Jesus</b>

\* **Bold names** indicate names of special interest. Underlined **bold names** indicate intermediate points of convergence for the two genealogies of the New Testament.

According to Christian theology, Jesus was the promised Messiah. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with the "evidence" offered by the authors of the New Testament in support of this doctrine:

† **The authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to Jesus as the son of David:**

**Matthew 1:1(KJV) – The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.** [See also Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30,31, 21:9,15, 22:42; Mark 10:47,48; Luke 18:38,39]

† **The author of the Gospel of John, and Paul, the author of Romans, 2Timothy, and several other book in the New Testament, refer to Jesus as the being of the seed of David:**

**Romans 1:3(KJV) - Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;** [See also John 7:42; 2Timothy 2:8]

If these statements were true, Jesus would have met the requirement stated in the Hebrew Bible, that the Messiah must be a direct descendant of King David.

Consider the two genealogies in the New Testament, which are displayed in the right hand portion of Table IV.A-1, and note the following issues:

† **In addition to sharing common start and end points – David, and Jesus, respectively – these two genealogies have three intermediate points at which they converge – Salathiel, Zorobabel, and Joseph.**

This is a rather complex, perhaps impossible, scheme. It should be noted, by contrast, that the 14 generations listed in the first series of the Matthew genealogy (from Abraham through David) match (in reverse order) the 14 generations listed in the third series of the Luke genealogy (from David through Abraham).<sup>5</sup>

† **The approximate span of time from the birth of David to the death of Jesus was 1,070 years. This would translate to an average of approximately 38 years per generation for the Matthew genealogy, and about 25 years per generation for the Luke genealogy.**

An increase of 52% in the average generational span for the Matthew genealogy relative to the Luke genealogy or, conversely, a decrease of 34% in the average generational span for the Luke genealogy relative to the Matthew genealogy, is a significant variance that cannot be attributed to chance alone.

† **Christians agree that the Matthew genealogy is that of Jesus via Joseph, yet they do not agree on whose the Luke genealogy is. Some say it is Mary's genealogy, even though her name is missing from it; others hold that it is Jesus' lineage via Joseph "by Law", and the Matthew genealogy is his lineage via Joseph "by Nature".**

Complicating the problem of the Luke genealogy leading to David via Nathan and not Solomon is the dilemma for the Luke genealogy being Mary's. According to Torah, Tribal lineage is determined exclusively by the biological (natural) father (e.g., Numbers 1:18). Consequently, female genealogies are irrelevant to bloodline and, in general, are not listed in the Hebrew Bible.

Several serious problems arise from the other claim, that both are genealogies of Jesus – Matthew's being his genealogy "by Nature", and Luke's being his genealogy "by Law":

- **If, according to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was the natural father of Jesus, then Jesus cannot be the natural son of Joseph; and, since tribal lineage is a blood-right, the claim to David's throne cannot be passed from Joseph to Jesus merely through "adoption".**
- **On the other hand, if Joseph was the natural father of Jesus, then the Curse of Jeconiah (see Sec. IV.C) is passed on from Joseph to Jesus along with the tribal lineage and any other blood-rights and, then too, Jesus would be mortal.**
- **One class of arguments being offered to explain the convergence of the two genealogies at Zorobabel, Salathiel, and Joseph, and ending at Jesus, involves the idea of a "Levirate Marriage" taking place at various points along the way.<sup>6</sup> An**

<sup>5</sup> These parts are not shown in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> The *Law of Levirate Marriage* is stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This Law states that, when a married man dies and leaves no heirs to carry on his name, and if the deceased has an unmarried brother, then this brother must marry the widow and (attempt to) have children. In the absence of an eligible brother, a close male relative on the father's side may qualify (as was the case of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, who married Ruth [see Book of Ruth]). The first-born son of such a marriage is regarded as if he was the son of the deceased brother, and is named accordingly. It is important to note that, in the case of the two brothers, they must have at least a common father, i.e., they must be paternal brothers. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* does not apply to uterine brothers, i.e., brothers who share only a mother; children born of such a union are considered illegitimate. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* also contains provisions for the

analysis of these arguments reveals that the last such marital union, which resulted in the birth of Joseph, was not a valid “Levirate Marriage”.

- Another class of arguments being offered to explain the convergence of the two genealogies at Zorobabel, Salathiel, and Joseph, and ending at Jesus, combines the notion of a “Levirate Marriage” taking place in the last stage, of which Joseph was the product, with an assumption that the Zorobabel and Salathiel in the Matthew genealogy were different persons from the Zorobabel and Salathiel in the Luke genealogy. In view of the fact that these two names are rare in the Hebrew Bible – they belong to only a single pair of individuals – it is rather unlikely that they represent persons in the Luke genealogy who are different from those bearing the same names in both the Matthew and 1Chronicles 3 genealogies.

† The Matthew genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Matthew had to take the following actions:

- Leave out the generations that correspond to Kings Ahazia, Joash, Amaziah, and Eliakim/Jehoiakim.
- Leave out the generation that corresponds to Pedaiah, the son of Shealtiel.
- Create new names for the generations going forward from Zerubbabel, none of which match the names that appear for the corresponding generations in the genealogy of 1Chronicles 3.
- Leave out the generations that correspond to Neariah, the son of Shemaiah, and Elioenai, the son of Neariah.

† The Luke genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Luke had to take the following actions:

- Come up with a set of new names except for Shealtiel and Zerubbabel.
- Decrease the average generational span to ~25 years relative to the average generational span of ~38 years in the Matthew genealogy, a reduction of ~13 years or ~34%, which is significant.

*Given the choices of genealogies from King David going forward – the two genealogies in the New Testament or the genealogy of 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible – which would you accept as trustworthy and accurate?*

It is interesting to note what Paul wrote about genealogies:

**1Timothy 1:4(KJV) - Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**

**Titus 3:9(KJV) - But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.**

Perhaps he recognized the problems with the two hopelessly irreconcilable genealogies recorded in the New Testament. He teaches Christians that certain parts of the Bible – the genealogies, which include those of Jesus – are akin to fables and foolish questions, and, therefore, must not be given heed and should

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case when the surviving eligible brother refuses to fulfill his obligation. [Note: The term “*levir*” is a Latin word that means a husband's brother, thus it is not used in the Hebrew Bible.]

be avoided, since they raise questions and have no value.<sup>7</sup> Yet, in spite of these admonitions, Christian missionaries persist with their genealogical mind games.

**Conclusion:** The two genealogies recorded in the New Testament are internally inconsistent and irreconcilable, and significant portions thereof are at variance with corresponding spans listed in the Hebrew Bible. It is, therefore, not possible to rely on the information contained in them, nor is it possible to identify, with any degree of certainty, whose they are.

## B. Christian Missionary myths

### 1. **CLAIM:** Jewish genealogical records were destroyed in 70 C.E.

As part of justifying the two genealogies found in the New Testament, Christian missionaries often claim that the source of the information therein were the meticulously kept Jewish genealogical records, which were stored in the Temple in Jerusalem. They go on and claim that these records were destroyed when the Temple was ransacked and burned to the ground by the Romans in the year 70 C.E. Therefore, Christians claim to have at least a semblance of the true genealogical link between Jesus and David, while the Jews, even when they eventually recognize someone as Messiah, will have no genealogical records to furnish as proof that he, indeed, is the Messiah.

### ☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

The problem with this argument is that it is based on a fallacy. The assertion that all genealogical records of the Jewish people were destroyed with the destruction of the Second Temple around 70 C.E. is untrue and unfounded. No such event ever occurred in Jewish history, and there exists neither a credible historian nor any other reliable ancient source to support this claim. The genealogies of the twelve tribes of Israel were not stored in the Temple and, therefore, they could not have been destroyed with it. A majority of the Jewish people did not live in the Land of Israel during the first century C.E., and their genealogical records, if they were maintained and kept, would not have been affected by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. Of the estimated six million Jews in the world in 50 C.E., approximately one third lived in the Land of Israel, another one third lived in Egypt (mostly in the populous area around Alexandria), and the rest lived throughout the Roman Empire (primarily in Europe).<sup>8</sup>

Most Jews of modern times do not know their tribal affiliation. The likely reason for this is that today's Jewish people are either descendants of the

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<sup>7</sup> By contrast, has any Jewish Sage ever taught that parts of the Hebrew Bible are not to be heeded and should be avoided and/or ignored?

<sup>8</sup> Taken from p. 62 in *Discovery*, Published by Aish HaTorah (June 1996); Library of Congress Card Catalogue Number 95-80691.

tribes which comprised the Kingdom of Judah (Judah, Levi, and part of Benjamin), or descendants of a major wave of proselytes during the period from around 100 B.C.E. to around 100 C.E. There were, of course, converts to Judaism throughout all of the history in the Common Era (and before), but those were relatively small in numbers. This matter may be turning into a non-issue with today's advances in genetics research, where genetic markers related to tribal affiliation have been discovered, and are in the process of being identified with specific tribes. A genetic marker for Aaron's descendants, the כֹּהֲנִים (*kohanim*), **priests**, has also been identified. An amazing fact about these scientific discoveries is that all tribal genetic markers were found to be residing on the Y-chromosome, which is carried only by males.<sup>9</sup> This could serve as scientific confirmation of the part of Jewish Law which states that blood-rights, such as tribal pedigree, priestly descent, and any other lineage-related attributes, are transmitted exclusively from (biological) father to his son(s).

Concerning the matter of known tribal affiliations among the Jewish people, it is worthwhile to comment on the descendants of the Tribe of Levi. There is no segment among the Jewish people whose members are more aware of their tribal affiliation and more mindful to properly transmit and preserve this distinctive ancestry than those from the Tribe of Levi. From Biblical times onward, it has always been of utmost importance for members of the Tribe of Levi to be aware of their unique place and status among the people of Israel. There are numerous distinct laws in the Torah which pertain only to this Tribe, such as a כֹּהֵן (*KOHEN*), **a priest**, may only marry certain women, a כֹּהֵן is prohibited from coming into contact with a dead body, thus barred from attending any part of a funeral service (with some exceptions for immediate family). Also, only descendants from the Tribe of Levi may take part in the ritual Aaronic Priestly Benediction ceremony, where the כֹּהֲנִים bless the congregation by chanting Numbers 6:24-26, performed on every festival in many traditional synagogues throughout the world. The clans from the Tribe of Levi have been known among the Jewish people throughout history.

According to Jewish Law, lineage is passed along exclusively by the (biological) father (e.g., Numbers 1:18), while the identity as a Jew is either transmitted by the mother (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Ezra 10:2-3) or acquired through proper ritual conversion to Judaism. In this fashion, the priestly lineage is identified (and has, thus, been preserved over history) on the eighth day following the birth of a son of a father who is a כֹּהֵן, when, as part of the circumcision ritual, the child is also given his Hebrew name, to which is appended the Hebrew title כֹּהֵן (*ha'kohen*), **The Priest**. Similarly, when a son is born of a father who is a לֵוִי (*levi*), **a Levite**, the child's Hebrew name is appended with the Hebrew title הַלֵּוִי (*ha'levi*), **The Levite**. A male descendant of the Tribe of Levi is identified in this manner on all legal Jewish

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<sup>9</sup> Males have the X-Y Chromosomes in their DNA; females have the X-X Chromosomes in their DNA.

documents, such as records of birth and death, marriage contracts, and divorce decrees. This custom has been carried on as part of the Jewish tradition since the days in the desert, in accordance with Exodus 40:15. It was well known and well documented among the Jewish people who these individuals were, and this information was carefully passed down from father to son, and often recorded in a family's record book of family genealogy. Nehemiah refers to סֵפֶר הַיְחָשׁוּ (SEfer ha'YAhas; Nehemiah 7:5) as such a genealogical record, and in Modern Hebrew it is called סֵפֶר יוֹחֲסִין (SEfer yuhasin).

**Sidebar Note: The role and importance of genealogies in Judaism** - The fact that genealogies are listed in the Hebrew Bible indicates that they had, and still have, a place in Judaism. For instance, as explained above, the proper identification of the descendants from the Tribe of Levi was particularly important since the Priestly and Levitical lines had to be kept pure (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:12-13; Ezra 2:61-62).

Christian missionaries insist that, since genealogy was important for the priesthood, the same standard must be applied to the Messiah. The response to this suggestion is simple. Anyone can learn to imitate the rituals that Priests and Levites perform as part of their Temple service and claim to be from the Tribe of Levi. This is why the recorded genealogies are important in validating that people are indeed who they claim to be. On the other hand, as the past 2,000 years have demonstrated, there were many individuals who claimed to be the Messiah, yet they all turned out to be *false messiahs*. Did their respective genealogies disqualify them? No, they did not! What disqualified them was the fact that they failed to fully execute the messianic agenda that is described in the Hebrew Bible.

The promised Jewish Messiah, מָשִׁיחַ, will complete the messianic agenda and bring about the conditions described therein as part of his sovereignty, though some of this will happen prior to his being identified as מָשִׁיחַ. As a human being, מָשִׁיחַ lives/will live in a world of recognizable realities of military requirements and political alignments. He will have to deal with these realities, and emerge victorious within the constraints that they engender.

Will מָשִׁיחַ be required to furnish a certified record of his genealogy as proof that he is a descendant of King David? Will he have to submit himself to a blood test to determine if he is from the Tribe of Judah? This is rather unlikely, since the *litmus test* will be very simple: *Do the conditions described in the messianic agenda exist or not?* The classical quality of the messianic prophecies by the Jewish prophets is that they are exhaustive and exclusive, which means that when they are realized everyone will know it, e.g., when one watches the news program on TV or looks at the front page of a daily newspaper, it will be obvious that a new era has arrived. No faith will be required in order to experience these prophecies when they are fulfilled. Thus, the genealogy of מָשִׁיחַ will be a non-issue, since "*seeing is believing*" will convince everyone that he is the one.

**Conclusion: The claim by Christian missionaries that the Jewish genealogies were kept in the Temple in Jerusalem and were destroyed in 70 C.E. is bogus. A related claim, that the two genealogies in the New**

Testament were derived from those records stored in the Temple and are, therefore, the most accurate reference source for the relevant data, has already been proven as false in Section IV.A above.

## 2. CLAIM: Promises to David's successors were conditional

In order to protect the sanctity and necessity of the "Virgin Birth" in Christian theology, Christian missionaries claim that the successors of King David are ineligible progenitors of משיח. They argue that, although the promise God made to David was eternal, the promise that He made to David's sons, i.e., to the successors to his throne, was *conditional* and depended on stipulations and contingencies that had to be met. Since Solomon in particular, as well as many of the other kings of Judah, "did that which was evil before the Lord", the Messiah of Christianity, who has to be "perfect", i.e., without the "blemish of sin", cannot have an earthly father out of this "tainted" lineage. According to the claim, this unacceptable lineage had to be cut-off or terminated at some point, and this problem was solved through the miracle of a "Virgin Birth".

### ☆ JEWISH RESPONSE:

Two verses are often cited to support the allegation about the different promises. The first of these is the *unconditional* promise to David:

**Psalms 132:11 - The Lord has sworn in truth to David, from which He will not turn back, "Of the fruit of your body I shall seat upon your throne."**

This is followed by the alleged *conditional* promise regarding David's descendants:

**Psalms 132:12 - "IF your sons will keep My covenant, and this, My testimony, that I shall teach them, THEN also their sons will forever sit upon your throne."**

However, there is a problem here – the consequences for violating the stipulations in Psalms 132:12 are missing. *Is this an open-ended set of conditions, the violation of which will result in unspecified consequences?*

As is often the case, Christian missionaries convey only part of the full story – the portion that suits their claim. Surely, the Hebrew Bible should be more specific here, as it is elsewhere, such as the prophetic passage quoted in Section III, 2Samuel 7:12-16, in which both the promise and consequences of disobedience are specified; other passages in the Hebrew Bible do the same. For instance, regarding the promise to David:

**Psalms 89:29-30 – (29) "I will forever keep My kindness to him [David], and My covenant will remain true to him. (30) And I shall make his seed endure forever, and his throne like the days of heaven."**

The consequences for not obeying follow the promise:

**Psalms 89:31-33 – (31) "IF his sons will forsake My Torah, and will not walk in My judgments, (32) IF they profane My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, (33) THEN I shall punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with plagues."**

Note the similarity between Psalms 89:33 and 2Samuel 7:14. But wait! There is more. God abounds with kindness, love, and mercy:

**Psalms 89:34-38 – (34) "And I shall not completely remove My loving kindness from him, and I shall not betray My faithfulness. (35) I shall not profane My covenant, nor shall I alter the utterances of my lips. (36) One thing have I sworn by My holiness - that I would not be deceitful to David. (37) His seed will be forever, and his throne like the sun before Me. (38) Like the moon, which is established forever, and witness in the sky, eternally true."**

Do these proclamations convey the message that the Davidic lineage will be cut-off when David's successors transgress, and that it will resume in the future with a sinless being who is born of a virgin? No, there is no need to speculate about the consequences that accrue for the disobedience that was spoken of in Psalms 132:12; these were already described earlier.

**Conclusion: Those Kings of Judah who followed King David and transgressed God's Law were punished as promised. However, the Hebrew Bible reiterates that the Davidic dynasty, from which דָּוִד will eventually emerge, will not be eliminated. King David was promised that his seed and throne would endure forever. God doesn't lie.**

### 3. Issues concerning Solomon and Rehoboam

† **CLAIM:** Solomon has been disqualified as the progenitor of דָּוִד.

Christian missionaries claim that, because he was expected to obey God's Law and failed to do so, Solomon was disqualified from being the forefather of דָּוִד. *Is this claim a Scriptural fact, or is it fiction?*

☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

After relating Solomon's grandeur and successful accomplishments during his early years as King of Israel (1Kings 1:38-10:25), the Hebrew Bible tells of his failures (1Kings 11:1-10). The account starts with his acquisition of many horses – a violation of the prohibition the Torah placed on kings of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:16), it continues with his marriage to many women, likewise a violation of the Biblical prohibition placed upon the kings (Deuteronomy 17:17), many, if not most, of whom were foreign women, yet another violation of a prohibition in the Torah (Deuteronomy 7:3). This is followed by an account of God's anger with Solomon and the consequences:

**1Kings 11:11-13** – (11) And the Lord said to Solomon, "For as this has been with you and you have not observed My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and shall give it to your servant. (12) However, in your days I will not do this, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I shall tear it. (13) But I shall not tear the entire kingdom away from you; one tribe I shall grant to your son for the sake of David My servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, [the city] which I have chosen.

This is a severe punishment, indeed, but there is no mention anywhere in the Hebrew Bible of any forfeiting of the right to kingship or disqualification from being the progenitor of מְשִׁיחַ. Even the righteous King David sinned, although not on as grand a scale as did his son Solomon and many of his successors, yet he was promised to be the ancestor of מְשִׁיחַ.

**Conclusion:** This claim is a bogus issue. According to the Hebrew Bible, the iniquity of Solomon and some of his legitimate successors did not disqualify any of them from being the progenitor of מְשִׁיחַ.

† **CLAIM:** Rehoboam was a Jew via his father, not via his mother.

This issue has been raised by Christian missionaries as a challenge to a rule in Jewish Law, that a person's identity as a Jew is determined either by having a birth mother who is a Jewess or via a formal ritual conversion to Judaism. Christian missionaries claim that, if a person's mother has to be a Jewess to make that person a Jew, then Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother, Na'amah the Ammonitess, was not a Jewess, and they cite the following passage in support of this claim:

**1Kings 14:21** - And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah; forty-one years old was Rehoboam when he became king, and seventeen years he reigned in Jerusalem, the city that the Lord has chosen to place His Name there out of all the tribes of Israel; and his mother's name was Na'amah the Ammonitess.

They argue that, according to Torah, Ammonites and Moabites were not allowed to convert to Judaism:

**Deuteronomy 23:4** - An Ammonite [אֲמוֹנִי] (*amoni*) and a Moabite [מוֹאָבִי] (*mo'avi*) shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even their tenth generation shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever.

They correctly note that the Torah requires a king of Israel to be a Jew:

**Deuteronomy 17:15** - You shall surely set over yourself a king whom the Lord, your God, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you may not place over yourself a foreign man, one who is not your brother.

Therefore, the Christian missionary argument continues, since God would not violate His own rule and place a non-Jew on the throne of David, Rehoboam had to be a Jew, not by his mother, Na'amah the Ammonitess, but by his father, Solomon, the Israelite and Jew.

#### ☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

On the surface, this challenge may appear to be a "slam-dunk" for the Christian missionaries and, hence, for Christian theology. On the one hand, if their claim that one's identity as a Jew is passed by the father were to hold up, they would have demonstrated that the requirement of having a mother that is a Jewess is a later addition to Jewish Law by the Rabbis. On the other hand, if that challenge is defeated, the Christian missionaries may come back and claim that Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother was not allowed to convert to Judaism, thus he would be disqualified from having משיח emerge from his lineage. Since he was the only son of Solomon named in the Hebrew Bible, it would imply that Judaism has on its hands a serious problem with the origin of its Messiah. To remedy this problem, they suggest that the miracle of a "Virgin Birth" was the divine solution to bring forth the Messiah.

In order to deal with this claim, a look beyond the surface is required. The following is stated in the Torah concerning intermarriage with several nations that the Israelites will face upon entering the Promised Land:

**Deuteronomy 7:3-4 – (3) And you shall not intermarry with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, and his daughter you shall not take for your son. (4) For he will cause your son to turn away from following Me, and they will serve other gods; then the wrath of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will soon destroy you.**

The Hebrew wording and the knowledge of Torah are required for the correct understanding of the message these two verses convey. The Torah teaches two important concepts here. On the one hand, with the understanding that the "he" in Deuteronomy 7:4 refers to the Gentile father-in-law, the one referred to as "your son" is the son of the Israelite father, a Jew, who is marrying the daughter of the Gentile father. The verse then states that this Israelite son will "serve other gods", which means that any children of this marriage will be Gentiles, following the religious identity of their Gentile mother.

Alternatively, with the understanding that the "he" in Deuteronomy 7:4 refers to the Gentile whom the daughter (a Jewess) of an Israelite father, a Jew, marries, "son" is understood to mean "grandson".<sup>10</sup> So that, by

<sup>10</sup> Given the known fact that the term "son" is used loosely in Semitic languages, so that relationships in many instances cannot always be established with certainty (except where so noted), the term "son" as used here may actually refer to the grandson. Such cases appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, e.g.,

calling the “son” of an Israelite mother (a Jewess) and Gentile father the “son” of the Israelite grandfather (a Jew) in Deuteronomy 7:4, it follows that this child was to be regarded as being of the same religious identity as the mother, a Jewess.

In either case, and according to Jewish Law, the child of a father who is a Jew and a mother who is a Gentile follows the religious identity of the mother. Here are several examples from Scripture that support this Law:

**Exodus 21:4 - If his [the Israelite servant's] master has given him a wife, and she has born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he [the Israelite servant] shall go out by himself.**

According to Torah, an Israelite master may not give an Israelite bondmaid as a wife to someone other than his own son, or take her as a wife for himself (Exodus 21:8-9). Therefore, Exodus 21:4 refers to a Gentile bondmaid given as wife to a Hebrew slave. The children remain slaves when their father is freed, showing that they bear their mother's status.

In the following example, the son of a mother who is a Jewess and a father who is a Gentile is subjected to the Jewish Law as stated in Torah:

**Leviticus 24:10-16 – (10) And the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel; and this son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel fought in the camp; (11) And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him to Moses; and his mother's name was Sh<sup>o</sup>lomit, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan; (12) And they put him in custody, that the will of the Lord might be shown to them. (13) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, (14) "Bring forth him who has cursed outside the camp; and let all who heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. (15) And you shall speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. (16) And he who blasphemes the Name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger, as he who is born in the land, when he blasphemes the name of the Lord, shall be put to death'."**

While it could be argued that the above example applies to both Jews and Gentiles, the following example clearly demonstrates that the children of fathers who are Jews and mothers who are Gentiles were to be cast out along with their Gentile mothers, to "**be done according to the Torah**":

**Ezra 10:2-3 – (2) And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken foreign wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this matter. (3) And now, let us make a covenant with our**

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Zechariah is listed as the **son** of Iddo [Ezra 5:1] even though his biological father was Berechiah, who was the biological son of Iddo [Zechariah 1:1]; Zerubbabel is listed as the **son** of Shealtiel [Haggai 1:1], even though his biological father was Pedaiah [1Chronicles 3:17], who was the biological son of Shealtiel.

God to cast out all such women, and those born of them, according to the counsel of the Lord, and of those who hasten [to perform] the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the Torah.

These examples demonstrate the fact that a person's identity as a Jew is determined by the mother, not by the father. Moreover, recent research in genetics has isolated a genetic marker that identifies female Jewish ancestry. This marker resides in the DNA of the female's mitochondria, which scientifically confirms the provisions of Jewish Law. Namely, that this genetic marker is passed exclusively from a mother who is a Jewess to her daughters, thereby making the mother the one who determines the identity as a Jew of her children.

**Conclusion: The Hebrew Bible proves that the Christian missionary allegation about Jewish Law having been changed by the Rabbis [from the father determining one's identity as a Jew to the mother determining one's identity as a Jew] is bogus!**

This leaves the other side of the missionary argument to be examined, that Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother was not allowed to convert to Judaism, thus he was disqualified from having מְשִׁיחַ emerge from his lineage.

Two powerful arguments refute this claim. First, of course, is the Torah requirement that a king of Israel must be a Jew (Deuteronomy 17:15) and, according to 1Kings 11:13, God approved Rehoboam to reign as king. Since God would not break His own rules, it may safely be concluded that Rehoboam was indeed a Jew. Exactly how he acquired his identity as a Jew is not detailed in the Hebrew Bible, and therefore must not be an important piece of information. There are only two options available here – either his mother, Na'amah, converted to Judaism before she bore him, or he himself formally converted to Judaism.

Second, there is Deuteronomy 23:4, according to which an Ammonite and a Moabite are prohibited from converting to Judaism. The Hebrew text uses the terms עַמּוֹנִי and מוֹאָבִי, which translate as **an Ammonite male** and **a Moabite male**, respectively. The corresponding Hebrew terms for females are: עַמּוֹנִית (*amonit*), **an Ammonite female**, and מוֹאָבִית (*mo'avit*) [also מוֹאָבִיָּה (*mo'avi'yah*)], **a Moabite female**. The reason for this prohibition is stated immediately following the prohibition itself:

**Deuteronomy 23:5-6 – (5) Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way, when you left Egypt, and because he [Balak, the King of Moab] hired Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim against you, to curse you. (6) But the Lord, your God, did not want to listen to Balaam; so the Lord, your God, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord, your God, loves you.**

This prohibition and the reason for it are repeated by Nehemiah:

**Nehemiah 13:1-2** – (1) On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and was found written in it that the Ammonite [עַמּוֹנִי] and the Moabite [מֹאבִי] should never come into the congregation of God; (2) **Because they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them; but our God turned the curse into a blessing.**

Since Ruth was a Moabitess, according to the Christian missionary claim, she could not have converted to Judaism due to the prohibition stated in Deuteronomy 23:4. Given that the mother determines her children's identity as Jews, how could Ruth have become the ancestor of King David, the greatest king of the Jewish people? Clearly, she converted to Judaism, and she indicated her intentions to Naomi, her mother-in-law, when she said to her, **"For where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your God is my God;"** (Ruth 1:16-17). The Sages explain in the Talmud the reason only Ammonite and Moabite males may not convert to Judaism.<sup>11</sup> It is because the man, not the woman, was expected to leave his house and bring food and drink to the sojourner; a woman was not expected to do that for the obvious reason – her personal safety. Accordingly, the interpretation of the law (Deuteronomy 23:4), which had to be rendered by ten elders, is that the prohibition to enter into the assembly of the Lord, i.e., to be admitted into the community of Israel, applies only to Ammonite and Moabite males.

**Conclusion:** The Christian missionary claim that the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:4 prevented Na'amah the Ammonitess, Rehoboam's mother, from converting to Judaism is bogus! Na'amah qualified to convert to Judaism just as Ruth the Moabitess, King David's great-grandmother, was able to do it several generations earlier.

### C. The Curse on Jeconiah

King **Jehoiachin** of Judah [יְהוֹיָכִין] (*y<sup>e</sup>hoyachin*), who is also known by the names, **Jeconiah**, [יְכָנְיָה] (*y<sup>e</sup>chan'yah*) and **Coniah**, [כְּנִיָּהוּ] (*con'yahu*), was one of the kings of Judah about whom is written that **"he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord"**, for which his punishment is spelled out in the Hebrew Bible:

**Jeremiah 22:24-30** – (24) "As I live," says the Lord, **"even if Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet [חֹתָם] (*hotam*) upon My right hand, I would tear you off.** (25) And I will give you to the hand of those who seek your life, and to the hand of those whose face you fear, to the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and to the hand of the Chaldeans. (26) And I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, to another country, where you were not born; and there shall you die. (27) But to the land to which they desire to return, there shall they not return. (28) Is this

<sup>11</sup> See Babylonian Talmud Tractate Yevamot, Folio 76b, and Tractate Ketubot, Folio 7b.

man Coniah a despised broken vessel? An object that no one cares for? Why are they cast out, he and his seed, and banished to a land which they know not? (29) O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." (30) Thus says the Lord: "Inscribe this man [Coniah] childless, a man who WILL NOT PROSPER [לֹ-יִצְלַח] (LO-yitzLAH) in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper [לֹ-יִצְלַח], sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

This passage, which comes at the end of a chapter where Jeremiah lists a series of judgments against several kings of Judah, Shallum (who is believed to also be Jehoahaz), Jehoiakim, and Coniah, appears to signal the termination of the royal branch through Jeconiah. The judgment that applies specifically to King Jeconiah is known as the *Curse on Jeconiah*.

† **CLAIM: David's line ended since father-son chain of ascension was broken**

Some Christian missionaries seize on this *Curse on Jeconiah* and claim that it, in effect, ended David's royal line. Even though Zedekiah reigned for 11 years following the removal of Jeconiah, they still maintain their claim is valid for two reasons. First, since Zedekiah, Jeconiah's uncle, followed Jeconiah, the usual father-son chain of ascension to the Davidic throne was broken.

☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

This is a false argument since the promise to King David contains no stipulation that a reigning king's (biological) son will always take over the kingdom from his father. The stated requirement is that a king had to be a direct descendant of King David, via King Solomon. *What would happen in the event that a king did not have any sons? Would this end the promised eternal Davidic dynasty?* Certainly not!

**Conclusion:** The Christian missionary claim that the break in the common father-to-son progression on the throne of King David when Zedekiah became King of Judah signaled the end of the Davidic dynasty's ability to bring forth מְשִׁיחַ, is not supported in the Hebrew Bible.

† **CLAIM: David's line ended since the royal seed was eliminated**

Second, the missionaries cite the following verse to support their claim that, not only were all the sons of Zedekiah killed, but that the rest of the *royal seed* was eliminated as well:

**Jeremiah 52:10(KJV)** - And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah [אֶת-כָּל-פְּרִי הַיְהוּדָה] (ET-KOL-sarei y<sup>o</sup>HUDAH) in Riblah.

Since, according to this rendition, the entire royal pool of heirs to David's throne was wiped out, the missionaries conclude that the only way the Messiah could

now be brought forth would be via the miracle of a "Virgin Birth", which, according to them, was God's plan from the outset. *Is it true that the natural Davidic lineage ended because of the events at Riblah?*

## ☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

The answer to this question is provided in the following two sections.

### **1. Multiple descriptions of the same event**

A somewhat different account from that given in its rendition of Jeremiah 52:10 is provided by the KJV in the following passage:

**Jeremiah 39:6(KJV) – Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah**  
**אַתְּ כָּל-בְּנֵי-יְהוֹדָה] (ET KOL-hOREI y<sup>h</sup>HUDAH)].**

Clearly, both passages describe the same event, and the two Hebrew phrases, **אַתְּ כָּל-בְּנֵי-יְהוֹדָה** and **אַתְּ כָּל-בְּנֵי-יְהוֹדָה**, are synonymous. Thus, Jeremiah 52:10(KJV) and Jeremiah 39:6(KJV) are inconsistent. *Which one of these two is consistent with the Hebrew text?*

The Hebrew Bible contains a third passage in which the same event is documented in greater detail:

**2Kings 25:7,18-21(KJV) – (7) And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.**  
**(18) And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: (19) And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city: (20) And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah: (21) And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.**

The author explicitly identifies those who were slain along with Zedekiah's sons – the noblemen – not all the other princes (the royal seed) of Judah.

**Conclusion: Jeremiah 52:10 is mistranslated in the KJV whereas Jeremiah 39:6 is consistent with the Hebrew text.**

Evidently, some of the royal seed survived the massacre at Riblah, a fact that is confirmed elsewhere in Hebrew Bible and correctly translated in the KJV:

**2Kings 25:22,25(KJV)** – (22) And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler. ...  
(25) But it came to pass in the seventh month, that **Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal**, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

**Conclusion: The Christian missionary claim that all eligible heirs to David's throne were wiped out at Riblah is bogus!**

It is interesting to note the way another passage that describes Gedaliah's assassination is rendered in the KJV:

**Jeremiah 41:1(KJV)** - Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that **Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king** [רַבֵּי הַמְּלָכִים] (*v<sup>e</sup> rabeI ha'MElech*), even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

This account clearly shows that not all royal seed was slain at Riblah. This is consistent with the KJV renditions of Jeremiah 39:6 and 2Kings 25:18-21 and conflicts with the KJV rendition of Jeremiah 52:10.

Christian missionaries do not use Jeremiah 39:6, 41:1, and 2Kings 25:25 to support their claim. Rather, to support their claim, they cite the mistranslated Jeremiah 52:10, as if it were the only recorded account of the event.

**Sidebar Note:** The possessive plural of the Hebrew noun שָׂר [SAR], namely, שָׂרִי [sarei] is rendered as **princes of** by the KJV at Jeremiah 52:10) in the Hebrew Bible. The noun שָׂר appears in the Hebrew Bible 421 times (in the singular, plural, with and without prepositions, and within compound phrases), in various contexts, such as nobleman, official, ruler, commander. There is not a single case in the Hebrew Bible where שָׂר refers to "a royal prince".

**Conclusion: The KJV and other Christian translations cannot be relied upon to accurately reflect the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible.**

## 2. From which Royal Branch May מְשִׁיחַ Emerge?

Given that Jeconiah's royal branch has been cursed, so that none of his offspring is eligible to sit on the throne of David, and Zedekiah's royal branch appears to have been eliminated by the slaying of his sons at Riblah, from where can מְשִׁיחַ be expected to emerge?

Recall that God's promise to David in 2Samuel 7:12-16 requires the Davidic dynasty to pass through the one son of David who would build the Temple, and this turned out to be Solomon (see 1Kings 8:15-20; 1Chronicles 17:11-15, 22:9-10, 28:3-7). From that point on, no further restrictions are stated

about any one particular royal branch being preferable over another. Thus, **דָּוִד** may emerge from *any* royal branch that leads to Solomon.

To help put into perspective the magnitude of the extensive network of royal branches from which **דָּוִד** may emerge, data from the Hebrew Bible on four Royal Families of the royal seed of Judah is summarized in Table IV.C.2-1.

**Table IV.C.2-1 – Biblical statistics concerning four Royal Families**

King	# Wives	# Concubines	# Sons	# Daughters	Source/Remarks
Solomon	700	300	1 + ?*	2 + ?	1 Kings 4:11,15, 11:43
Rehoboam	18	60	28	60	2 Chronicles 11:18-22
Abijah	14	?	22	16	2 Chronicles 13:21
Josiah	2	?	4	?	1 Chronicles 3:15
<b>Total</b>	---	---	<b>55+?</b>	---	<b>Sons only</b>

\* A ?-mark indicates the information is not listed in the Hebrew Bible

The following important observations may be drawn from the data in the table:

- ⊙ The only named children of Solomon are his son Rehoboam and daughters Taphat and Basmat. Since it is highly unlikely that only three children would issue from 700 wives and 300 concubines, it is reasonable to conclude that only those who were Jews are accounted for in the Hebrew Bible.
- ⊙ Given that the messianic line must go through Solomon, and Rehoboam is his only named son, it follows that the messianic line *must* pass through Rehoboam.
- ⊙ 55 sons are listed for the four Royal Families. If Rehoboam were taken out of this total, as many as 54 legitimate royal branches that lead to David through Solomon and Rehoboam remain. [Since only a limited amount of additional information is recorded about the various sons, the exact number of royal branches, even for these four Royal Families, cannot be determined. In other words, the Hebrew Bible does not elaborate on what actually occurred with these various persons (whether or not they married, whether or not they left male progeny, etc.) from whom the messianic line leads to Solomon.]

**Conclusion:** The *Curse on Jeconiah* and the slaughter of Zedekiah's sons at Riblah are moot issues, and have no bearing on the viability of a flesh and blood **דָּוִד** sprouting from the seed of David. The lineage of **דָּוִד** is not restricted to either of these two allegedly "problematic" branches of monarchs. As has been demonstrated, and according to the Hebrew Bible, **דָּוִד** may emerge from *any* royal branch that leads to David through Solomon.

† **CLAIM:** The *Curse on Jeconiah* was temporary and eventually it was lifted

Some Christian missionaries take a different approach and argue that the *Curse on Jeconiah* was just a temporary measure that was eventually lifted.<sup>12</sup> Their "end game", however, is similar since they say that no one ruled after Zerubbabel, and argue that the Davidic line ended there, so that the only way to bring forth a Messiah was through the miracle of a "Virgin Birth", which, according to them, was God's plan from the outset.

As support for this paradigm they cite a passage that tells of the release of Jeconiah from his prison cell in Babylon, and his being invited to sit at the head of the table of all the other nations' exiled kings held captive in Babylon:

**Jeremiah 52:31-34** – (31) And it was in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, that Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, in the year of his coronation, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah and released him from prison. (32) And he spoke with him kindly and placed his seat above the seat of the kings who were with him in Babylon. (33) And he changed his prison garb, and he ate meals before him regularly all the days of his life. (34) And his meals, were regular meals given to him from the king of Babylon, each day's need in its day, all the days of his life. [See also 2Kings 25:27-30.]

This act is claimed as evidence that the proclamation made in the curse, that Jeconiah is "a man who will not prosper [נִצְּחֹן-לֵבָיִם] in his days" (Jeremiah 22:30), was reversed.

#### ☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

A careful reading of the passage reveals that it does not mention anything about Jeconiah actually prospering in his days – the Hebrew phrase for **[he] will not prosper**, נִצְּחֹן-לֵבָיִם, is not countermanded. In fact, Jeconiah never returned to Judah, never returned to sit on the throne of David, and he died in exile, just as was foretold by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 22:27-28).

#### † **CLAIM: The Curse on Jeconiah was lifted since Zerubbabel ruled Judah**

Also offered in support this claim is the idea that Zerubbabel, Jeconiah's great-grandson, prospered and ruled Judah:

**Haggai 2:23** – "On that day," says the Lord of Hosts, "I will take you, O Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, My servant;" says the Lord, "and I will make you LIKE A SIGNET [וְנִצְּחֵנִי (ka'hOTAM)]; for I have chosen you," says the Lord of Hosts.

<sup>12</sup> This is a rather curious position, since it is consistent with the opinion of the Sages of the Talmud, that Jeconiah repented while in exile, and that exile atones for all sins (e.g., Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 37b-38a). In this case, the Christian missionaries actually admit, perhaps unwittingly, that the shedding of blood is not required to bring about the remission of sins!

This carefully selected passage is claimed to be messianic since it "connects" with the opening verse in the *Curse on Jeconiah* (Jeremiah 22:24) via the **signet ring**, חֹתֶם, which is claimed to symbolize kingship.

#### ☆ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

This argument contains major flaws. First, the Haggai passage does not point to the messianic era (the days of the Third Temple). The Hebrew tenses indicate that Zerubbabel has been chosen to do a certain job, and that he will be made like a signet. In Haggai 2:23 the Prophet refers to the previous verses, Haggai 2:20-22, in which he assures Zerubbabel of God's protection, and where he also describes the defeat of the Persian Empire at the hands of the Greeks, an event that occurred not long after this prophecy was spoken.

Next, consider the signet ring and its significance throughout the Hebrew Bible. The noun חֹתֶם, **a signet ring**, appears in the Hebrew Bible on 14 instances, none of which imply any connection with being chosen as king or, perhaps, even חֹתֶם (Genesis 38:18; Exodus 28:11,21,36, 39:5,14,30; 1Kings 21:8; Jeremiah 22:24; Job 38:14; Haggai 2:23; Song of Songs 8:6[2x]). This is also the case with the more common noun טַבַּעַת (*taba'at*), **a (generic) ring**, which appears in the Hebrew Bible on 49 occasions, seven of which are in the context of **a signet ring** (Genesis 41:42; Esther 3:10,12, 8:2,8[2x],10). Genesis 41:42 and Esther 8:2 clearly demonstrate that **a signet ring symbolizes authority, but not kingship**. In both accounts, the king, who is alive at the time, gives his signet ring to the other person.

*Is there a connection between a signet ring and one's right to kingship?* The phrase in Jeremiah 22:24 is conditional, "**even if Coniah ... were a signet**". Given that Coniah already was the king at the time the curse was put on him and on his descendants, the context here is that, due to Coniah's wickedness, even if he were vested with God's authority, such as when he first took the throne, it would surely have been removed from him.

*What is the meaning of God's saying to Zerubbabel, "**I will make you like a signet; for I have chosen you**"?* The answer to this question is in the fourth chapter in the Book of Zechariah, where Zerubbabel is told that he has been chosen (anointed) to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Although Jeconiah was wicked, his great-grandson, Zerubbabel, was righteous and played a central role in the restoration of the second commonwealth; he was given the authority to rule over the Jewish people as *Governor* of Judah (e.g. Haggai 1:1, Ezra 5:14). However, this authority was limited since he did not sit on the throne of David and rule as king of Judah.

Thus, the claim by Christian missionaries that Zerubbabel's appointment reversed the phrase "**for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of**

**David, and ruling any more in Judah**", does not hold, since the "prospering" is linked to being *King* of Judah, not to being *Governor* of Judah.

**Conclusion:** God showed his mercy to the righteous Zerubbabel, and rewarded him with the privilege of rebuilding the Temple and ruling as Governor of Judah. This did not revoke or cancel the *Curse on Jeconiah*.

## V. SUMMARY

The need to "harmonize" these problematic accounts has motivated Christian missionaries to fashion many and varied scenarios that aim to prove the fallibility of the Jewish messianic vision and the necessity of having it replaced.

In this essay, the main arguments offered by Christian missionaries have been refuted and, in the process, the robustness of the Jewish messianic vision against these relentless attempts to undermine and invalidate it was demonstrated. The analysis also showed how the Christian messianic paradigm is based on two hopelessly irreconcilable genealogies in the New Testament, both of which are also inconsistent with the corresponding genealogy recorded in the Hebrew Bible.

The Christian messianic paradigm is not only riddled with many insurmountable issues, it is contradictory to the Hebrew Bible, a similitude of which, the Christian "Old Testament", is part of the Christian Bible. In other words, the Christian Bible consists of two "testaments" that contradict each other, a problem from which Christian missionaries cannot escape.

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