

## MATTHEW 2: IS IT FALSE OR IS IT TRUE?<sup>1</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

The common theme of many claims made by Christian missionaries is that Jesus fulfilled hundreds of prophecies contained in the (Christian) "Old Testament", and various passages from the New Testament are cited as evidence of these alleged fulfillments.

In this essay, an entire chapter from the first book of the New Testament, Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew, is analyzed in order to test the validity of such claims. It is demonstrated that, under scrutiny, the claimed prophetic fulfillments attributed to this chapter do not survive.

### II. MATTHEW 2 IN THE KING JAMES VERSION

The King James Version (KJV) translation of Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew is replicated below, including numbered footnotes, taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and shown in **this color highlighted text**, that identify the verses being claimed as the messianic prophecies in the (Christian) "Old Testament" being fulfilled in this chapter. The statements of the alleged fulfillments are shown below in **this color highlighted text**, and their respective prophetic pronouncements, allegedly drawn from the (Christian) "Old Testament", are shown in **this color highlighted text**:

#### Matthew 2(KJV)

(1) Now when **Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea** in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

(2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

(3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

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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 letter 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 ח 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 שְׁ (אֶשְׁ אִשְׁ) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the **daGESH** (emphasis)

(4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

(5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

(6) <sup>[1]</sup>And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

(7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

(8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

(9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

(10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

(11) And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

(12) And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

(13) And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

(14) When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

(15) And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, <sup>[2]</sup>Out of Egypt have I called <sup>[3]</sup>my son.

(16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

(17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

(18) <sup>[4]</sup>In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

(19) But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

(20) Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

(21) And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

(22) But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

(23) And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

<sup>[1]</sup> v. 6 - Micah 5:2[1 in the Hebrew Bible]

<sup>[2]</sup> v. 15 - Hosea 11:1; Numbers 24:8

<sup>[3]</sup> v. 15 - Exodus 4:22

<sup>[4]</sup> v. 18 - Jeremiah 31:15[14 in the Hebrew Bible]

### III. CAN BOTH MATTHEW 2 AND THE HEBREW BIBLE BE TRUE?

The second chapter in the Gospel of Matthew contains four accounts which, according to their author, were foretold in the Hebrew Bible and fulfilled by Jesus. As a test of their validity, the analysis below compares each of these four claimed

fulfillment accounts with its respective claimed prophetic statement in the Hebrew Bible.

### **A. Claim #1: Bethlehem is the Messiah's birthplace**

According to the opening verse, Jesus was born in Bethlehem:

**Matthew 2:1-2(KJV) – (1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

Upon hearing this proclamation, a very concerned King Herod summoned the chief priests and scribes to the royal court. He wanted to know where this child was born, and he was told the following:

**Matthew 2:5-6(KJV) – (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**

In Matthew 2:6, the author appears to be quoting the verse Micah 5:2 from the (Christian) "Old Testament", which is Micah 5:1 in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>2</sup>

There are two major problems with Matthew 2:5-6 – its historical accuracy with respect to Christian theology, and its contextual accuracy with respect to the Hebrew Bible. First, according to the historical record, Herod reigned for some 33 years, from 37 B.C.E. to 4 B.C.E. This implies that, if the story in Matthew 2 were true, the events described thus far would have had to take place prior to the advent of the Common (Christian) Era. In other words, Jesus would have had to be born not later than 4 B.C.E. to fit into this scenario. Consequently, the chronology of the historical events conflicts with the time of birth of Jesus according to Christian theology.

Second, the claim that Jesus fulfilled the alleged prophecy that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem is based on a misapplication of this passage. Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:6, Micah 5:2 from the KJV, Micah 5:1 from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table II.A-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

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<sup>2</sup> A detailed analysis of this particular claim is presented in another essay, *Micah 5:1 – Bethlehem: The Messiah's Birthplace?* – [http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Micah5\\_1.pdf](http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Micah5_1.pdf)

**Table III.A-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:6 with Micah 5:1[2]**

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV “Old Testament” Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
<b>Matthew 2:6</b>	<b>Micah 5:2</b>	<b>Micah 5:1</b>	מיכה ה, א
<p>¶ And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art <b>not</b> the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.</p>	<p>But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.</p>	<p>And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Efrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel; and his origin is from old, from ancient days.</p>	<p>וְאַתָּה בֵּית-לְחֶם אֶפְרַתָּה צְעִיר לְהֵיטִיב בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה מִמֶּנָּה לִּי יֵצֵא לְהֵיטִיב מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמוֹצְאֵתוֹ מִקְדָּם מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם :</p>

[1] Micah 5:2[1 in the Hebrew Bible]]

The information presented in Table III.A-1 demonstrates that Matthew 2:6 not only "twists" the original text to make it fit the story line, it is an incomplete quote of the verse, where the author left out the most “damaging” portions.

*Is the original verse, Micah 5:1, really a prophecy that מָשִׁיחַ (mashi'ah), the Messiah, will be born in Bethlehem?* Christians and Jews agree that the passage is messianic; it is about King David's ancestry, which will also be the ancestry of מָשִׁיחַ – a direct descendant of King David. However, while Bethlehem is the place from which King David's family hailed and, thus, it is also the place of origin of the ancestors of מָשִׁיחַ, it is not necessarily his birthplace.

The author of the Gospel of Luke also claims that Jesus was born in Bethlehem:

**Luke 2:4-7(KJV) – (4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) (5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. (6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. (7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.**

The author of the Gospel of John records a difference of opinions among people:

**John 7:40-43(KJV) – (40) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. (41) Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? (42) Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? (43) So there was a division among the people because of him.**

The fact that he does not capitalize on the opportunity to demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled Micah's prophecy and state that Jesus was born in Bethlehem could indicate that the author of the Gospel of John did not necessarily concur with the authors of the other two Gospels. He lets stand the opposing assertion, that Jesus was of Galilean origin (see also John 1:46), and this is consistent with all

other references (except for those that relate to his birth) in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, that Jesus was from Nazareth. Curiously, the author of the Gospel of Mark, the earliest of the Four Gospels, is silent on this matter.

In contrast to the few significant attributes of מְשִׁיחַ specified in the Hebrew Bible, being born in Bethlehem, even if it were true, would be inconsequential.

### **Conclusion: Claim #1 becomes Pious Fraud Example #1.**

**Sidebar Note:** Archaeological evidence has recently been reported, in which another, more likely, birthplace of Jesus is discovered.<sup>3</sup> Aviram Oshri, a senior archaeologist with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, has been excavating in the area of an Israeli village, known as **BEIT LEhem haGILIT, Bethlehem of the Galilee**, which is located some four miles west of Nazareth. This Bethlehem is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as being in the territory of the Tribe of Zebulun, which included the lower Galilee (Joshua 19:15). From his findings, Oshri concludes that Jesus was most likely born in Bethlehem of the Galilee, not in Bethlehem of Judea.

The prospect of Jesus having been born in the Galilee rather than in Judea creates serious problems for Christian theology in general, and to the claim of Jesus being from the "House of David" in particular, since Bethlehem of the Galilee was not part of Judea.

A detailed analysis of the archaeological findings at Bethlehem of the Galilee and their possible implications to Christian beliefs appears in another essay.<sup>4</sup>

### **B. Claim #2: The return of Jesus from Egypt is foretold in the Hebrew Bible**

Matthew 2:13-15 describes a dream Joseph had, in which an angel appeared to him and told him to flee with his family to Egypt and stay there until instructed to return. Upon waking, Joseph did as told, and stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod. In the last verse of the passage, the author claims that the return from Egypt by Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, is the fulfillment of an "Old Testament" prophecy:

**Matthew 2:15(KJV) - And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.**

Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:15, Hosea 11:1 from the KJV and from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table III.B-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<sup>3</sup> Aviram Oshri, *Where Was Jesus Born?*, Archaeology, Volume 58, No. 6, Nov/Dec 2005, pp. 42-45.

[The abstract of this article is available at - <http://www.archaeology.org/0511/abstracts/jesus.html>]

<sup>4</sup> *O Little Town of Bethlehem ... (of Galilee)* - <http://thejewishhome.org/counter/BethlehemOfGalilee.pdf>

**Table III.B-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:15 with Hosea 11:1**

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV "Old Testament" Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
<b>Matthew 2:15</b>	<b>Hosea 11:1</b>	<b>Hosea 11:1</b>	הוֹשֵׁעַ יֵאָמֵר
And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, <sup>[2]</sup> Out of Egypt have I called <sup>[3]</sup> my son.	When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.	For, when Israel was young, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son.	כִּי נֶעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְיֶה וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לְבָנִי:

<sup>[2]</sup> Hosea 11:1

<sup>[3]</sup> Exodus 4:22

The phrase "Out of Egypt have I called my son" in Matthew 2:15 points to Hosea 11:1 in order to convey the notion that the flight of baby Jesus to Egypt, to escape Herod's homicidal intentions, was not an arbitrary event. Rather, it was the fulfillment of what Hosea had foretold.

To test the validity of the claim, consider the passage Hosea 11:1-2 (shown in both a Jewish translation and the KJV translation):

**Hosea 11:1-2** – (1) For, when Israel was young, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son. (2) [Yet, as much as] they [the prophets] called to them [Israel], so did they turn away from them; they sacrificed to the Ba'als [לְבַעַלִּים (*la'ba'ALIM*)] and burnt incense to the idols.

**Hosea 11:1-2(KJV)** – (1) When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. (2) As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

It is clear from both renditions that Hosea 11:1 does not describe a child/Messiah fleeing to Egypt and then being summoned back. The prophet relates how God called the fledgling nation of Israel out of Egypt. In the very next verse, Hosea 11:2, the prophet tells how, in spite of pleas by the prophets, those called out of Egypt sinned against God – they worshipped the בַּעַלִּים (*ba'ALIM*), Ba'als, and other idols.<sup>5</sup>

The author of the Gospel of Matthew would have created a serious dilemma had he quoted both verses in their entirety. Hosea 11:1, in context, shows it is not a prophecy, but a restatement of an event in the history of Israel. Hosea 11:2 is a continuation of the recounting of events in the history of Israel. Attributing Hosea 11:1 to Jesus is tantamount to making sinners out of him and his parents, sinners who were guilty of idolatry – one of the three capital sins in Jewish law. The author avoided this situation by simply lifting out of this historical passage just the phrase that suited his purpose, "Out of Egypt have I called my son".

<sup>5</sup> The term בַּעַלִּים is the plural of the noun בַּעַל (*BA'al*), the head god of the Canaanites.

*Did this trick solve the problem?* Not really since, by going back to the source, Chapter 11 in the Book of Hosea, one would realize that this son is Israel – the fledgling Jewish nation, and not Jesus.

Some Christian bibles reference the last phrase in Matthew 2:15, “my son”, to Exodus 4:22 (shown in both a Jewish translation and the KJV translation):

**Exodus 4:22 – And you [Moses] shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the Lord, "My firstborn son is Israel."**

**Exodus 4:22(KJV) – And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:**

This rather curious attempt to “point” to Jesus actually shows explicitly that the “son” is Israel. In fact, God declares that Israel is His firstborn son. *What does this do to the credibility of all those New Testament accounts that proclaim Jesus is the only begotten son of “the Father”?*<sup>6</sup>

**Conclusion: Claim #2 becomes Pious Fraud Example #2.**

### **C. Claim #3: King Herod’s killing of the children is foretold in the Hebrew Bible**

King Herod, apparently angered at being mocked by the wise men and desiring to neutralize the threat posed to his throne by this newborn child of whom they spoke, kills all of Bethlehem’s children of age two years and younger:

**Matthew 2:16-18(KJV) – (16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. (17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, (18) In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**

Of particular interest here is the last verse, Matthew 2:18, which is, according to the author, the alleged fulfillment of a prophesied sadness that would follow the massacre of the children by King Herod.

Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:18, Jeremiah 31:15 from the KJV, Jeremiah 31:14 from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table III.C-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, John 1:18, 3:16,18, Hebrews 11:17, 1John 4:9,

**Table III.C-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:18 with Jeremiah 31:14[15]**

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV “Old Testament” Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
<b>Matthew 2:18</b>	<b>Jeremiah 31:15</b>	<b>Jeremiah 31:14</b>	ירמיה לא, יד
<sup>4</sup> In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.	Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.	So said the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, bitter weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children; she has refused to be comforted upon her children, for they are gone."	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נָהִי בְכִי תִמְרוּרִים רַחֵל מִבְּכָה עַל-בְּנֵיהָ מֵאֲנָה לְהַנְחִים עַל-בְּנֵיהָ כִּי אֵינָם:

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 31:15[14 in the Hebrew Bible]

This verse from the Book of Jeremiah is part of a passage, Jeremiah 31:2-20 [1-19 in some Bibles], that is chanted in every Jewish synagogue as part of the prayer services on the second day of *Rosh haShanah*, the **Jewish New Year**. Perhaps the primary reason this passage found its way into this Jewish liturgy is that its last three verses speak of the efficacy of repentance. Another reason is that the passage contains a prophecy of the national restoration of Israel, which brings to the Jewish people a heartening message of hope to encourage them in their darkest ages. The verse in Jeremiah 31, which immediately follows the one being referenced in Matthew 2:18 as the original prophecy, continues this positive message with which God addresses the grieving Rachel:

**Jeremiah 31:15[16 in Christian Bibles] – So said the Lord, "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your work," the word of the Lord, "and they shall return from the land of the enemy."**

This verse points forward in time to a delightful picture of the joy of a redeemed Israel. Probably more Jewish liturgy and music has been drawn from this chapter in Jeremiah than from any other single chapter in the Hebrew Bible!

The allusion to Rachel's weeping over the disappearance of her children, a metaphoric reference to Israel in exile, has no connection or relevance to the killing of the children by King Herod, as the author suggests in Matthew 2:17-18.

**Conclusion: Claim #3 becomes Pious Fraud Example #3.**

#### **D. Claim #4: The Prophets Foretold of Jesus Being from Nazareth**

While Joseph and his family are in Egypt, an angel appears to him in a dream, informs him that Herod died, and that he, Joseph, is to bring his family back to the Land of Israel. However, since Herod's son, Archelaus, was the ruler in Judea at that time, Joseph decides to go north to the Galilee to settle in the town of Nazareth. The author of the Gospel of Matthew claims this, too, as a fulfillment of a prophecy by the Jewish prophets:

**Matthew 2:23(KJV) - And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.**

A search of the Hebrew Bible for passages containing the substance of what was allegedly "**spoken by the prophets**" will not yield any results – no such verses exist in the Hebrew Bible. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is there any reference to the Messiah as a *Nazarene*, nor is the town of *Nazareth* ever named therein. This prompts the question: *What might have been the author's agenda here?*

Various speculative ideas have been proposed as possible answers to this question. One suggestion is that the author was referring to the description of the Messiah being a נִצֵּר (*NETSER*), **an offshoot**, as used in Isaiah 11:1, a metaphorical allusion to a new flourishing scion from King David's lineage. The problem with this idea is that the proper name נִצֵּר is never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as a possible name of מְשִׁיחַ. Moreover, the author wrote "**which was spoken by the prophets**", i.e., referring to a plurality, not to a single prophet, who may have made such a prophetic statement. Since the term נִצֵּר has its only messianic application, via a metaphor, at Isaiah 11:1, the author's attempt to generalize its significance by claiming multiple applications is unsuccessful.

Another proposal is the notion that the author used a "play on words" with the Hebrew root verb נצר (*NUN-TSADI-RESH*), **[to] guard, [to] watch [over]**. This idea, too, has no support in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew name for **Nazareth** is נִצְרַת (*natsRAT*) [also נִצְרֶת (*natSERet*)], which may have a possible connection with the root verb נצר, primarily due to the geographical location of the town, being situated on an elevated plateau. However, one who hails from Nazareth is called נוֹצְרִי (*notsRI*), a term that has become the Hebrew word for **a Christian**. The common noun derived from the root verb נצר is נוֹצֵר (*notSER*), **a guard, a watchman**, and no such term is ever used in the Hebrew Bible in connection with מְשִׁיחַ.

Yet another idea is that the author is referring to Jesus as **a Nazirite**, an English term that comes from the Hebrew noun נָזִיר (*nazIR*), **one who is consecrated through a vow** (e.g., Numbers 6:2, Judges 13:5). However, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is it stated, alluded to, or implied that מְשִׁיחַ will ever take the vow of a נָזִיר.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there is no linguistic connection between the Hebrew word נָזִיר, **a Nazirite**, which derives from the root verb נזר (*NUN-ZAYIN-RESH*), and the Hebrew word נוֹצְרִי, **a Nazarene**, which derives from the root verb נצר.

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<sup>7</sup> **Nazirite vows** were taken by both men and women for personal reasons, such as giving thanks for a recovery from an illness, or for the birth of a child. The Nazirite vow includes three elements: (1) the hair to remain unshorn during the period of the vow; (2) abstinence from intoxicants; (3) avoidance of contact with a dead body. The minimum period for such a vow was 30 days, but it can extend over several years, and can even be a lifelong dedication. Since the Bible does not encourage such a lifestyle, a נָזִיר had to bring a sin offering after the vow ended, in order to atone for the sin committed against his own person.

The strongest evidence for the author's intended message may be found in the verse Matthew 2:23, since it provides the reason for Jesus being called a **Nazarene** [in Greek Ναζωραῖος (**Nazoraïos**), **from/of Nazareth**]. Jesus is called a Nazarene because he resided in the town of Nazareth [in Greek Ναζαρεθ (**Nazareth**)], which has no relevance to any of the above-noted Hebrew words. Therefore, all those speculations about what the author of the Gospel of Matthew had in mind here, in terms of references to Hebrew words, are non sequiturs.

Consequently, and regardless of the author's intentions, the outcome remains the same, Matthew 2:23 points to a nonexistent prophecy in the Hebrew Bible.

**Conclusion: Claim #4 becomes Pious Fraud Example #4.**

#### IV. SUMMARY

This study of Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew identified and analyzed four claims of allegedly "fulfillments" of prophecies from the (Christian) "Old Testament". The analysis demonstrated that these claims were false – the four accounts were designed to retrofit Jesus into the Hebrew Bible by making it appear as if he had fulfilled these alleged prophecies by the Jewish prophets.

The first chapter in the Gospel of Matthew contains claims that were analyzed in several other essays, where those claims by its author were also shown to be false relative to the Hebrew Bible.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup>

Though not the earliest of the four Gospels by chronology, the Gospel of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament and, as such, it sets the tone for the rest of that portion of the Christian Bible.

**Given the lack of credibility of the first two chapters in the New Testament, how can one accept the rest of the book as valid, let alone as Scripture?**

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<sup>8</sup> *Isaiah 7:14 - Part 1: An Accurate Grammatical Analysis* – [http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714\\_1.pdf](http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> *Isaiah 7:14 - Part 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics* – [http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714\\_2.pdf](http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_2.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Genealogical Scams and Flimflams* – <http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Genealogies.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> *The Right to the Throne or to the "Tomb of the Unknown"* – <http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Throne.pdf>