

## *Letter to a Skeptic (Part II)*

*The following letters, a continuation of their "interesting argument," were written by a Jewish man who questioned the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) and a CPM worker, Winn Crenshaw.*

By Winn Crenshaw, The Chosen People Magazine, November 1991.

Shalom Aleichem [Peace to You]:

Thank you for replying. I must admit I was surprised to hear from you. You presented an interesting argument.

I have a question (if you will take the time to answer it!). Is there any mention in Talmud that would in any way indicate that Yeshua Ben Yosef is the "Messiah?" Aside from using King James "Old Testament" quotations, what does Tenach indicate about "Messiah?"

Also, my friend, are you yourself Jewish? It is so much easier for a "goy" [Gentile] to proselytize a Jew (and become adamant in their approach to the Jewish people!). If you are Jewish yourself and have a knowledge of our culture, prophecies, and religious traditions, we can correspond further, but if you are Gentile and believe the way you do, then what further is there for us to discuss? It all becomes then "Christian vs. Jew." An age old argument that extends backward to the beginning of time when our people were massacred and persecuted all in "his Holy name." If you are Jewish and wish to pursue this matter further, I await your correspondence. If you are on the other hand a Gentile "Missionary" then either pass this on to someone who can better relate to me or deposit this correspondence in "the round file."

Shalom!

Ben [not his real name]



Chosen People Ministries (Canada)

(416) 250-0177

### Winn's Response

Shalom,

I am sure you think that I either didn't care or was afraid to write back. However, on July 8 I left DC on business for Chosen People Ministries that included, among other things, teaching in Gentile churches about the tragedy and horror of anti-Semitism. I drove through Atlanta and would have liked to have met you, but I have no idea where your town is.

After arriving in DC on August 15, I left again on the 18th to be a camp counselor for 11- and 12-year-old boys at our camp, Simchat Yeladim, in Pennsylvania. After taking a few days off to get "reacquainted" with my wife, I thought I would spend a few minutes giving you a few more things to think about concerning Yeshua.

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### From the Talmud

You asked if the Talmud had anything to say on the subject. Here are a couple of interesting passages for you to consider.

*Sanhedrin 97:a* (compare it with *Daniel 9:24-27* in the Tenach) says that the age of man will be 6,000 years: 2,000 of chaos; 2,000 of the Law; and 2,000 of Messiah. If this is true, then Messiah should have come about 2,000 years ago, for we know the Law was given approximately 4,000 years ago.

The Daniel passage indicates a couple of interesting things. (a) The Anointed One (Mashiach) will be "cut off" 483 years (60 weeks) after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus on 3/14/445 BCE (Gregorian). If one calculates 483 Jewish years (360 days per year), one discovers that the length of time is 173,880 days, which would be 4/13/32 CE, the exact day Yeshua arrived in Jerusalem for His last Pesach. He was greeted by many who believed He was Mashiach with the words "Baruch

haba bashem Adonai” [Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord]. However, most of the Jewish leaders rejected Him and determined to do away with Him, thus “cutting him off.” (b) The Daniel passage goes on to say that this “cutting off” of the Anointed One would be before the destruction of the second Temple (Zerubbabel/Herod), which we all know occurred in 70 CE.

Both of these points made by Daniel seem to fit well with the Sanhedrin chronology of the time of Messiah’s coming.

### **Mysterious Happenings**

A second passage in the Talmud that deserves your consideration would be *Yoma 37:1,b*. It mentions some interesting things that began happening on Yom Kippur approximately 40 years before the destruction of the Temple.

For the first time ever (a) the lot for the *azazel* [scape goat] came up in the right hand of the High Priest rather than the left; (b) the red strap tied to the door of the Temple stopped turning white as the *azazel* was thrown over the cliff; (c) the western most light on the Menorah

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in the Temple stopped lighting as the *azazel* was thrown over the cliff; and (d) the doors to the Temple mysteriously opened.

The interpretation of these events by the rabbis at the time was that they were a sign of coming judgment upon the nation by God. However, could there be another explanation? For also approximately 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, Yeshua died. As we discussed last time, I believe He died to be the *kippurah* sacrifice for the sins of the Jewish people. If He was, in fact, a sin sacrifice (atonement), could it not be that by changing the things mentioned above, God was showing the Jewish people that they missed the significance of Yeshua’s death?

### **The Ultimate Sacrifice**

Here’s another thought along those lines: Look at the similarities between the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the miracle of Hanukkah. Both instances involved a pagan world leader attempting to destroy the Jewish people and Temple sacrifices. In 165 BCE God went to a great deal of effort to save the Temple and the sacrifice. However, approximately 230 years later, He let the Temple and the sacrifices be destroyed forever. What was the difference? Could it be that the Temple and its sacrificial system were no longer needed because the ultimate sacrifice had been made in the death of Yeshua? (Remember Isaiah 53 from the last letter?) I think it had, especially when one tries to reconcile Leviticus 17:11, which states that blood is given for atonement. With the High Holy Days coming up, where is the blood today? *Teshuvah* [repentance], *tefillah* [prayer], and *tzedakah* [righteousness] provide no blood for atonement. The rabbis at Yavneh made a statement about atonement, but that doesn’t change the Tenach. It still demanded blood. Yeshua’s death provided that blood once and for all!

My friend, the truth of the matter is that there is no *one* Biblical or Talmudic passage that, taken alone, definitively points to the Messiahship of Yeshua. However, just like in a court of law, the preponderance of the evidence convinces me beyond a reasonable doubt.

To get to your question about my heritage. No, I was not raised in a Jewish home. However, that in reality has nothing to do with the real issue here. For you see, if Yeshua isn’t the Jewish Messiah described in the Tenach, He isn’t the Messiah for anyone, Jew or Gentile. The Gentiles were never anticipating a “Messiah.” He was only revealed in the Tenach. The question isn’t one of heritage.

The real question is: *Is Yeshua the Messiah or not?* If He is the Jewish Messiah prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures, every person must decide for him or herself what to do with Him. If Jewish people let tradition or the rabbis decide for them, they have given up their own right to decide. I suggest that you continue to research the person of Yeshua and be willing to submit to the truth once you find it.