

# משיח MASHIACH

Apostolic  
Writings  
Messiah  
Hebrew Bible  
Second Temple  
Judaism

“Born a Jew . . . raised a Jew . . . still a Jew”—this is what the Messianic Jewish community declares about the resurrected Yeshua, the root of Jesse, the king of Israel. It is also what Yeshua declares about himself at the end of the Apostolic Writings: “I am [present tense] the Root and the Offspring of David” (Rev 22:16).



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Yeshua’s identity as the “son of David” is central to the gospel message. As Paul put it, “Remember Yeshua the Messiah, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel” (2 Tim 2:8). Note the order—“raised from the dead, descended from David.” Paul seems to imply here that the resurrected Yeshua remains a descendant of David. In describing his gospel to the congregation in Rome, Paul similarly emphasizes that Messiah is “descended from David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). He reminds the Gentile believers that the Messiah is an Israelite “according to the flesh” (Rom 9:5; cf. 15:12).

Viewing Yeshua as a risen Jew has implications for our understanding of Jewish and Gentile identity in Messiah. The debate over

how to describe Yeshua’s divine-human nature (in the fifth–seventh centuries) required a vocabulary rich in nuances to explain how the Messiah’s humanity coexisted with his divinity without diminishment of either nature. This vocabulary can also be utilized to explain how new creation identity and Jewish identity<sup>1</sup> (as well as new creation identity and Gentile identity) coexist in union, without one diminishing the other.

Pseudo-Cyril described the relationship between the Messiah’s divinity and humanity as two natures “enveloping one another” in asymmetrical fashion “without forming a hybrid.” This asymmetrical “mutual containment” of the two natures in each other *does not level down the Messiah’s humanity but rather has the effect of drawing out its fullness*. John of Damascus referred to this relationship as *perichoresis* (*De Fide* 3.17) and describes it as the glowing of iron penetrated by fire. This asymmetrical relationship is reflected in the fact that “iron becomes fiery, yet fire does not become iron” (John of Damascus, *Contra Jacobitas* 52.41-43).

When we view the risen Jewish Messiah in this way, an analogy may be drawn with respect to Messianic Jewish and Messianic Gentile identity: As Messiah’s divine nature brings out the fullness of his human/Jewish/son of David nature, so too the new creation nature (in Messiah) naturally brings out the fullness of our Jewish nature as Messianic Jews.<sup>2</sup> We experience a kind of co-enveloping of Messiah with our Jewish nature. The result is the essence of “Messianic Jewish” identity. Borrowing John of Damascus’s illustration, we can think of the new creation nature as a fire that causes our Jewishness (in the case of Jews) and our Gentleness (in the case of Gentiles) to glow all the brighter.

1 Or “nature” (Gal 2:15).

2 Cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26-27.