

משיח MASHIACH

Apostolic
Writings
Messiah
Hebrew Bible
Second Temple
Judaism



© Photodisc.com

I am presently teaching a class on Matthew (Seminar in Besorot) so I am wading through this first book of the Apostolic Writings. Most Messianic Jews know that Matthew identifies Yeshua as the son of Abraham in the opening line of his *besorah*

(gospel)—“This is the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah, son of David, son of Avraham” (Matt 1:1)—but have you ever noticed that Matthew seems to return to this theme at the end of his narrative?

Matthew begins his *besorah* by identifying Yeshua with Abraham who

commences the story of Israel’s Messiah. Emphasis on Abraham then recurs at the conclusion of the genealogy when Matthew summarizes the genealogical chain that links Yeshua to Abraham, “Thus there were fourteen generations from Avraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the Babylonian Exile, and fourteen generations from the Babylonian Exile to the Messiah” (Matt 1:17).

God’s concern for the Gentiles is another literary theme in Matthew 1. The mention of Gentiles who joined themselves to Israel, such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah, represents a subtext that Abraham and his seed were called to bless the nations (Matt 1:3, 5, 6; cf. 2:1–2; 3:9; 8:11; Gen 12:2–3; 17:5; 18:18; 1 Macc 12:19–21).

Matthew brings to a close his *besorah* in chapters 27–28 by returning to a number of the themes he introduces in the

prologue—Gentiles being blessed (Matt 1:3–6; 28:19), Yeshua son of David (Matt 1:1, 17; 27:11, 29, 37, 42, 46; 28:18), *Immanu El*/God with us (Matt 1:23; 28:20) . . . But what of Yeshua son of Abraham!?

A reasonable case can be made that Matthew portrays Yeshua as the ideal son of Abraham in Matthew 28:19–20. Given Matthew’s interest in how the Torah and Prophets point to Messiah, he would not have missed the connection between God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 (“by you all the families of the earth will be blessed”) and Yeshua’s missional directive in Matthew 28:19—“Therefore, go and make people from all nations (*panta ta ethne*) into *talmidim* (disciples).” Paul made this connection decades earlier when he wrote to the Galatians:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations (*panta ta ethne*) be blessed.” (Gal 3:8)

Matthew also seems to portray the Messiah as Abraham-like (another meaning of “son of”) in Matthew 28:20. As Abraham charged his household after him to keep God’s commandments (Gen 18:19),¹ Yeshua charged his household (his *talmidim*; Matt 12:46–50) to do the same (“teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you”).

In these and other ways (e.g. Yeshua described as a miracle child and “beloved son,” like Isaac),² Matthew appears to depict Yeshua as the quintessential son of Abraham and implementer of the Abrahamic promise. He was the son of David but he was also the son of Abraham.

- 1 Genesis 18:19 follows a paraphrase of the Abrahamic promise, “Avraham is sure to become a great and strong nation, and all the nations (*panta ta ethne* LXX) of the earth will be blessed by him” (Gen 18:18).
- 2 Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 200–219.



David Rudolph, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Bible and Theology at Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, and Chair of the Theology Committee of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.