

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

“this remarkable expression...can be best understood on the assumption that Paul had in mind the Hebrew idiom in which certain words for **sin** (*hattāṭ* [חַטָּאָת], ‘*āšām* [אָשָׂא]) mean not only **sin** but ‘sin-offering.’”<sup>42</sup> Keener also indicates, “Paul may combine the notion of unblemished sacrifices with the scapegoat that came to represent or embody Israel’s sin (Lev 1:3; 16:21-22).”<sup>43</sup> While a bit technical, and while broadly referring to the Greek Septuagint translation of various Tanach passages, Harris appropriately compiles the evidence in favor of the “sin offering” reading for the second usage of *hamartia* in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

“The OT background for this interpretation may be found in Leviticus 4 with its instruction concerning the sin offering; for in Isaiah 53 which speaks of Yahweh’s making his servant’s life a sin offering (*‘āšām*; LXX, ἐὰν δώτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας [*ean dōte peri hamartias*] (v. 10), and affirms that ‘Yahweh laid on him [his servant] the iniquity of us all’ (LXX, καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν [*kai Kurios paredōken auton tais hamartiais hēmōn*]) (v. 6); or in the Day of Atonement drama of Leviticus 16:5-10, 20-22, where the scapegoat is driven into the desert, carrying on its head ‘all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins’ (v. 21).”<sup>44</sup>

Many connections are made between “He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:21, TLV), and statements appearing in Isaiah 53:

“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him...As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it* and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:4-6, 11-12).

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH [Isaiah 53:9]; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:21-24).

## 2 Corinthians 8:9

### “Yeshua Became Poor”

“For you know the grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

The importance of the Corinthians being generous in their provision to Paul’s Jerusalem collection (2 Corinthians 8:1-8), is not just a matter of the First Century Believers standing in solidarity with one another, and supporting one another.<sup>45</sup> Being generous with one’s resources, and performing actions reflective of the example of Yeshua the Messiah, is imperative as it indicates that someone is truly accomplishing the good works incumbent upon the born

---

<sup>42</sup> Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 210.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 187.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, 452.

<sup>45</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

again in Him (Ephesians 2:10). Paul prompts the Corinthians to consider “the grace of our Lord *Yeshua* the Messiah—that even though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9, TLV).

While one could argue that from an economic perspective, *Yeshua* the Messiah might have been poor, this is widely and properly agreed by examiners to not be the primary intention of Paul’s statement. In stating that *Yeshua* was rich, Paul is making reference to the pre-existent glory of *Yeshua*, noted by Him in John 17:5: “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” In stating that *Yeshua* became poor, Paul is making reference to *Yeshua*’s Incarnation, and His emptying of His exalted glory, noted by the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:6-7: “who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (NRSV). As Harris indicates, “Christ himself chose to exchange his royal status as an eternal inhabitant of heaven for a slave’s status as a temporary resident on earth...He surrendered all the insignia of divine majesty and assumed all the frailty and vicissitudes of the human condition.”<sup>46</sup> A parallel can be detected between 2 Corinthians 8:9 and what Paul has said earlier, “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The poverty noted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9, taken on by *Yeshua* the Messiah, while it involved His Incarnation as a human, is also directly involved with His unjust execution at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and the Romans. The poverty of the Messiah involved the Messiah’s betrayal, humiliation, rejection, and suffering (Philippians 2:8), *precisely so that final and permanent atonement for human sin can be provided!* The riches that are provided to those who place their trust in *Yeshua* the Messiah, are not just the incumbent blessings of knowing Him as Lord, but most especially with the provision of reconciliation with the Creator and eternal salvation. Kruse summarizes,

“There was a price to be paid for the blessings we enjoy in Christ. Included in that price was the cost of the incarnation of the pre-existent Son into a fallen world. But, as we know from other passages, the cost of the incarnation, great though it was, was only the beginning. There was also the cost of rejection, ridicule, persecution, betrayal and suffering, all culminating in the agony of Gethsemane and the cross. These things together made up the full price of our salvation (*cf.*, *e.g.* Rom. 3:22b-26; 1 Cor. 5:7; 6:19-20; 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-20).”<sup>47</sup>

Still, while the statements of 2 Corinthians 8:9 are commonly applied by examiners to speak of the Incarnation and death of the Messiah, His “poverty”—but also the resultant atonement He provided—is there anything about economic poverty which may be deduced from Paul’s statement? It should hardly be a surprise, or unreasonable, that some have taken 2 Corinthians 8:9 in the direction of Paul, as a secondary emphasis, on *Yeshua*’s economic disposition. Barnett offers the broad approach, indicating how “whether at his birth in Bethlehem, as the Son of Man with nowhere to lay his head, or, in particular, in his death by crucifixion when God ‘made him sin.’ The poverty of his birth, life, and death is ‘an indissoluble unity.’”<sup>48</sup> Barnett goes on to detail how Paul’s remark in 2 Corinthians 8:9, which focuses on the widescale poverty of *Yeshua*, was a sacrificial manner of life in stark contrast to any of Paul’s opponents in Corinth, who had caused various Corinthians to discount or dismiss him as an apostle:

---

<sup>46</sup> Harris, 579.

<sup>47</sup> Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 155.

<sup>48</sup> Barnett, 408.

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

“[T]his great text on the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ is in line with Paul’s view of ministry as nontriumphalist and ‘slave’ like, which is a major strand running through the entire letter. Christ’s sacrificial other-centeredness, as expressed in this verse, tells the story of Christianity itself, a story that was under assault in Corinth at that time through the self-centeredness of the ‘superlative’ apostles.”<sup>49</sup>

Beyond Yeshua’s self-emptying of His pre-existent glory, and the horrific events involving Yeshua’s execution, a fair reading of the Gospels does reveal that Yeshua the Messiah was not economically rich. On the whole, Yeshua lived in what many would consider to be an economically poor, perhaps borderline destitute, condition. Each of the Corinthians, in being prompted by Paul to consider the poverty of Yeshua, would have to consider their own relative economic security and stability, and they should appropriately respond to the example left by Yeshua. When recognizing the sacrifices of Yeshua, including but not limited to His death, it would certainly behoove a relatively prosperous audience like the Corinthians to be generous in giving to the Jerusalem poor. As Garland concurs,

“The self-emptying of Christ for Christians [meaning, Believers] should lead them to empty their pocketbooks for others, if only in proportion to what they have. Paul followed Christ’s example in his own way of life as one who emptied himself for others, becoming poor, and bearing great hardships to reach others with the gospel. Yet Paul is not asking the Corinthians to give as Christ has given to them, or even to give of their lives to others in the same way as he has as their apostle, nor even to give out of their impoverishment as the Macedonians have. Paul asks them only to give a fair share, a proportion of what they have, and promises that they will receive blessings in return.”<sup>50</sup>

### 2 Corinthians 13:14

#### “The Lord Yeshua, God, the Holy Spirit”

“The grace of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

The closing words of 2 Corinthians, while mainly depicting the spiritual experiences that the Apostle Paul wanted his audience to have, do significantly affect discussions about the nature of God and the plurality of the Godhead.<sup>51</sup> As it is rendered in the TLV, 2 Corinthians 13:14 says, “The grace of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and the love of God and the fellowship of the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* be with you all. Amen.” While many people look for a formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit regarding the plurality of the Godhead—here it is Son, Father, and Holy Spirit which are described. Messianic people who deny the revealed tri-unity of God will tend to focus their attention heavily on a passage like Matthew 28:19 (previously addressed in **Volume I**), but 2 Corinthians 13:14 tends to almost always be glossed over. What does 2 Corinthians 13:14 inform us as Bible readers about the composition of God?

Among Messianic writers, Stern indicates in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, “*Adonai* is never called a ‘Trinity’ in the New Testament. However, the three terms which appear here, along with equivalent terms, are used in various ways in both the New Testament and the *Tanakh* when speaking of God.”<sup>52</sup> Stern, in no uncertain terms, supports the Divinity of Yeshua as a Messianic Jewish Believer, and rightfully notes that the common Christian term “Trinity” is, at best, extra-Biblical. There are ways that the plurality of God can be described, upholding

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>50</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, pp 378-379.

<sup>51</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>52</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 519.