

Approaching the Nature of Yeshua from the Tanach

Those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being uncreated, as One who is integrated into the Divine Identity, would definitely view various statements appearing in the Apostolic Writings as Yeshua not just participating in the creation of the universe, but participating in the creation of the universe in a way significantly different to that of the figure Wisdom. The statement of Colossians 1:16 declares, “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Those who hold to a high Christology may indeed agree that similar to the figure Wisdom, the Son was *a* means by which the Father created the universe; contrary to the figure Wisdom, the universe being created *by* or *in* Him and *for* Him, begs important factors to be probed about the relationship of the Son in regard to Creation. Hebrews 1:2-3 further testifies of Yeshua, that the Father “appointed [Him] heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.” Would a supernatural yet created agent of God be an entity possessing the natural ability to be “upholding the universe by his word of power” (RSV)?

The further testimony of the Apostolic Scriptures is that Yeshua the Messiah was not just present at the creation of the universe, and that He was *the means* by which the Father created it; there are statements made of Yeshua the Messiah involving the creation and purpose of the universe and humankind, which no supernatural yet created entity can be said to have. The intriguing word of Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth,” when seen in the Hebrew *u'zekor et bor'ekha b'mei b'churotekha* (וְזָכַר אֶת-בּוֹרְאֶיךָ בַּיּוֹמֵי בְּחוּרְתֶיךָ), “Remember also **thy Creators** in days of thy youth” (YLT) or “and-remember! *** **Ones-Creating-you** in-days-of youths-of-you” (Kohlenberger),¹⁴² certainly adds a dimension to be considered which can be commonly overlooked, and need not be left out, when evaluating the nature of the Messiah in relationship to the establishment of the cosmos.¹⁴³

Isaiah 42:8

“The Exclusive Glory and Praise to be Given to the Lord”

“I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.”

When Isaiah 42:8 decrees, “I am HASHEM [YHWH/YHVH, יהוה]; that is My Name; I shall not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven idols” (ATS), the frame of reference to be considered is the supremacy of the God of Israel in contrast to any and all idols of human origin. Motyer is right to specify, “The self-proclamation of the Lord reveals him as a distinct personal identity with his own *name*; he does not exist ‘incognito’ in the world’s gods. His *glory* cannot be shared. They may ape him, achieve a coincidental resemblance, but he is not there.”¹⁴⁴ The glory or *kavod* (כְּבוֹד) of God in view, is the great weight of awesome supremacy and purpose present in the Holy One of Israel, and His intentions for His Creation (Isaiah 42:5-7), which graven idols do not and cannot possess. The inclusion of *tehillah* (תְּהִלָּה) or “praise” not given to others, is useful in specifying how this particular glory is associated with veneration or worship.

Yeshua the Messiah prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5), a glory which surely involves a statement regarding the Messiah’s nature (John 1:1, 14). Yet, it has to be

¹⁴² Kohlenberger, 3:588.

¹⁴³ For a further, useful discussion, consult Chapter 15 of Bowman and Komoszewski, “Meet Your Maker,” pp 185-193.

¹⁴⁴ Motyer, *Isaiah*, 322.

recognized how the glory of the Messiah is something that He shared with His Disciples (John 17:22-24). *Is it fair to conclude that there can be some differentiations or specific applications of the concept of “glory”?*

In Isaiah 42:8 glory is associated with the exclusive praise due to the One God of Creation. In John 17:5 glory is associated with the pre-existent origins and disposition of the Messiah, concurrent with what is seen in Isaiah 42:8. But in John 17:22, the Father’s glory present in the Son and given to the Disciples, is rightly taken to involve the dimensions of His humiliation and death, something to be surely replicated in the Disciples’ experience of ministry service. No one, who holds to either a high Christology or low Christology, would honestly argue that the “glory” shared and given to the Disciples, involved the worship and praise noted by Isaiah 42:8.

Isaiah 44:5-8

“God as the First and the Last, the Only God”

“This one will say, “I am the LORD’s”; and that one will call on the name of Jacob; and another will write on his hand, “Belonging to the LORD,” and will name Israel’s name with honor. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none.””

Isaiah 44:1-8 details some of the significant blessings that the God of Israel has intended for His chosen people, followed in Isaiah 44:9-20 about the futility of idols, particularly how the wood that is carved for idols is the same which is used for a fire to cook food (Isaiah 44:13-16). Isaiah 44:6 is not the only place in the Book of Isaiah, where it is detailed that the LORD God of Israel is to be regarded as “the first and the last” (also: Isaiah 41:1; 48:12-13), but Isaiah 44:6 does make a significant statement of exclusivity: *ani rishon v’ani acharon u’m’bal’adai ein elohim* (אֲנִי רִשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרֹן וּמִבְּלָעֲדַי אֵין אֱלֹהִים), “I am the first and I am the last, and aside from Me there is no God” (ATS). The statement of Isaiah 44:8 continuing, asserts, *hayeish eloah m’bal’adai v’ein tzur balyada’ti* (הַיֵּשׁ אֱלֹהָ מִבְּלָעֲדַי וְאֵין צִוּר בַּל־יָדַעְתִּי), “Is there any god, then, but Me? ‘There is no other rock; I know none” (NJPS).

I.W. Slotki states, in the Soncino volume on Isaiah, “It is a cardinal belief of Judaism that ‘He is One, and there is no second to compare to Him.’”¹⁴⁵ **That Isaiah 44:6, 8 depicts the God of Israel as the Only True God is sure.** Reflecting on the nature of God here, and drawing a connection to Exodus 3, John Goldingay makes the useful conclusion,

“Yahweh is indeed First and Last. The statement recalls that in Exodus 3, where Yahweh tells Moses that the very name ‘Yahweh’ suggests ‘I am who I am’ or ‘I will be what I will be.’ It is not a statement about abstract being, but rather a promise that Yahweh will be there with the people acting in whatever way is needed. And there is no one else who is in a position to make that claim.”¹⁴⁶

Motyer goes even further in his evaluation of Isaiah 44:6 asserting that God alone is “the first and the last,” noting the difference between *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), and later *eloah* (אֱלֹהִי) employed in Isaiah 44:8:

¹⁴⁵ Slotki, *Isaiah*, 213.

¹⁴⁶ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 254.