

God proper in Heaven (Isaiah 6:1), and various angels (Isaiah 6:2-3) specified to be *serafim* (שֶׂרָפִים). All readers of Isaiah 6:1-8 confront the grand holiness, majesty, power, and awesomeness of the Creator. The response of Isaiah to what he encountered—as a mere mortal in view of such supernatural wonders—is hardly surprising: “Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5a, NJPS).

The narrative of Isaiah 6:5b states, *ki et-ha'melekh YHWH tzeva'ot ra'u einay* (כִּי אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה רָאוּ עֵינַי), “and *** the-King Yahweh-of Hosts they-saw eyes-of-me” (Kohlenberger).¹²⁷ The level to which Isaiah saw the (full) glory of God is not the focus of what is recorded; it is instead how one of the seraphim takes a coal from the altar of God’s Heavenly Temple, and touches Isaiah’s lips with it (Isaiah 6:6), an indication that he has been forgiven of his sins (Isaiah 6:7). The question is then posed from the Throne, “Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8a, ATS). Isaiah then responds to the call (Isaiah 6:8b).

Questions about whether *Elohim* or God can be a unity in plurality, are necessarily posed by readers of Isaiah 6:8a: *et-mi eshlach u'mi yeilekh-lanu* (אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח וּמִי יֵלֶךְ־לָנוּ), “Who should I send? Who will go for Us?” (HCSB). The Greek Septuagint sidestepped the issue of the nature of God being present in Isaiah 6:8, via the rendering, “Whom should I send, and who will go to this people?” (NETS).¹²⁸ Jewish examiners of the statement of Isaiah 6:8 take the plural “us” to include both God proper and His Heavenly court of angels (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1-2),¹²⁹ and there are Christian examiners who follow suit.¹³⁰ Unlike Genesis 1:26-28; 3:22-23; 11:7-8 preceding, where it can be legitimately questioned whether the plural “us” is to include God and His Heavenly court of angels—or God/*Elohim* as a unified plurality—it is to be recognized in Isaiah 6:1-8 that the “us” present could be God and His Heavenly court of angels. The scene of Isaiah 6:1-8 unambiguously includes the presence of *serafim*; the previous records of Genesis 1:26-28; 3:22-23; 11:7-8 do not.

Is it at all to be ruled out that “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8, RSV), involves God speaking as a unified plurality? J.A. Motyer interjects his opinion, which incorporates the witness of later Scripture:

“The *us* in *who will go for us?* is a plural of consultation (cf. 1 Ki. 22:19-23). The New Testament, however, relates this passage both to the Lord Jesus (Jn. 12:41) and to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25), finding here that which will accommodate the full revelation of the triune God.”¹³¹

Isaiah 9:6-7

“Titles of the Messiah”

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”

Those who believe in either a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being God, or a low Christology of Yeshua the Messiah as a created entity, are both going to read Isaiah 9:6-7 in a

¹²⁷ Kohlenberger, 4:12.

¹²⁸ Grk. *tina aposteilo kai tis poreusetai pros ton laon touton* (τίνα ἀποστείλω καὶ τίς πορεύεται πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον).

¹²⁹ I.W. Slotki, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Isaiah* (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 30; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Isaiah,” in *Jewish Study Bible*, 796.

¹³⁰ John D.W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Isaiah 1-33*, Vol 24 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), pp 72-73; John N. Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 185; John Goldingay, *New International Biblical Commentary: Isaiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 62.

¹³¹ J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 78.

Approaching the Nature of Yeshua from the Tanach

Messianic context, referring to Yeshua of Nazareth (cf. Luke 1:32-33). How one reckons with the titles of Isaiah 9:6-7, which both should agree are applied to this Messiah King, will force one to consider some significant things about His nature. The Hebrew source text of Isaiah 9:6[5] states, *v'yiqra sh'mo pele yo'etz El gibbor avi'ad sar-shalom* (וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר אָבִי־אֵד סַר-שָׁלוֹם), “and-he-will-call name-of-him Wonder-of One-Counseling God-of Might Father-of Everlasting Prince-of Peace” (Kohlenberger).¹³²

That the Messiah will be a “Wonderful Counselor” (*pele yo'etz*), taken by the NET Bible to be “Extraordinary Strategist,” makes light of His great wisdom and abilities.

The second title the Messiah is to have, asks some immediate questions about His nature, as it is *El gibbor* or “Mighty God.” This is a title used of God proper in Isaiah 10:21: “A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God [*el-El gibbor*, אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר].” In the estimation of John N. Oswalt, “Wherever *’el gibbôr* occurs elsewhere in the Bible there is no doubt that the term refers to God (10:21; cf. also Deut. 10:17¹³³; Jer. 32:18¹³⁴).”¹³⁵

There were, in the Ancient Near East and classical Greco-Roman worlds, likely many kings and aristocrats who identified along the lines of being considered deified as “gods,” even though they were only mortal. When it comes to the Messiah, however, whose origins are certainly something beyond corporeal (Micah 5:2)—and with the spiritual and religious culture of Ancient Israel and Second Temple Judaism being decisively subversive to paganism—would the Messiah’s being titled as *El Gibbor* or “Mighty God” imply His being anything other than God? Isaiah 9:6 could have just said that the Messiah would be *gibbor* (גִּבּוֹר), “strong, mighty” (*BDB*),¹³⁶ akin to “mighty one,” and thusly one simply empowered by God or who had a special relationship with God. But when the title *El gibbor*, actually used of God proper, is a title possessed by the Messiah, then it is something which suggests something more than a supernatural yet created origin of Him; it suggests that the Messiah is, Himself, integrated into the Divine Identity.

The fourth of the four titles, *sar-shalom* or “Prince of Peace,” conveys the nature of the rule that the Messiah will be overseeing. Motyer’s remark on this title is something all should be able to agree with: “The *Prince of Peace* is himself the whole man, the perfectly integrated, rounded personality, at one with God and humankind, but also as a Prince, these are the benefits he administers to his people.”¹³⁷

The third of the four titles of the Messiah is *avi'ad*, a compound noun which can admittedly confuse many who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being God. This term is composed of the noun *av* (אָב), typically meaning “father,” and *'ad* (עַד), often involving “**continuing future, always**” (*CHALOT*).¹³⁸ What can cause many to be perplexed is how Yeshua the Son is actually designated as “the Father” here. While there are later debates to be explored in the Apostolic Writings, as to whether or not the Son is functionally subordinate or eternally subordinate or only subordinate in His human Incarnation to the Father—it is fair to recognize that for Isaiah 9:6, *av* needs to be approached from its larger array of applications, noted by

¹³² Kohlenberger, 4:19.

“and he will be given the name Pele-Yo'etz El Gibbor Avi-'Ad Sar-Shalom [Wonder of a Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace]” (CJB).

¹³³ “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty [*ha'gibbor*, הַגִּבּוֹר], and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe” (Deuteronomy 10:17).

¹³⁴ “who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God [*ha'El ha'gadol ha'gibbor*, הַגִּבּוֹר הַגָּדוֹל הַאֵל]. The LORD of hosts is His name” (Jeremiah 32:18).

¹³⁵ Oswalt, *Isaiah* 1-39, 247.

¹³⁶ *BDB*, 150.

¹³⁷ Motyer, *Isaiah*, 103.

¹³⁸ *CHALOT*, 264.

HALOT to include “**progenitor**, first of a class or profession,” and “chief magistrate of a place.”¹³⁹ This would be akin to Yeshua being “Eternal Father” in the sense of Him being labeled along the lines of how many towns today have had various “city fathers.”

While there is certainly more to be evaluated, from both the Tanach and Apostolic Scriptures, about the nature and origins of the Messiah, the titles “**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**” provide adequate witness to a Divine Messiah. Oswalt asserts, “The titles underscore the ultimate deity of this child-deliverer.”¹⁴⁰ Barry G. Webb also forthrightly concludes, “In the final analysis the language of verse 6 can apply only to one who is God incarnate.”¹⁴¹

Isaiah 37:16; 44:24; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 95:5-7

“God is the Maker”

“O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth” (Isaiah 37:16).

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, ‘I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone’” (Isaiah 44:24).

“You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You” (Nehemiah 9:6).

“The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand...” (Psalm 95:5-7).

The uniform claim of the Tanach or Hebrew Scriptures is that the God of Israel is the One True Creator. Jeremiah 10:16 exclaims, “For the Maker of all is He” (also 51:19). This includes not only the universe at large (Psalm 102:25), but the creation of man and woman in His image (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). Quite contrary to some of the creation myths of the Ancient Near East, it is not as though the universe and humankind came as the result of some sexual union of gods and goddesses, only to create people to be their slaves. The Hebrew Tanach is fairly straightforward in its assertion that the LORD God alone created the universe at large, and man and woman, for His good pleasure and purposes—with all to be highly valued and treasured as originating from Him. Those who hold to either a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being uncreated as God, or a low Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being some created supernatural agent, both rightly recognize that the God of Israel is the One True Creator. Disagreements ensue regarding the relationship of Yeshua to this Creator.

How would those who affirm the God of Israel as the One True Creator, and perhaps Yeshua the Messiah as a supernatural yet created agent of God, widely perceive of Him in relation to the creation of the universe and humankind? Frequently, those who hold to a low Christology perceive or depict Yeshua in terms of the figure of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22-31), a force of God which pre-existed our present universe, but in Second Temple Jewish literature, for sure, was nonetheless itself created (discussed further). Such a force of God, as depicted, was employed by Him to assist in the creation of the world.

¹³⁹ *HALOT*, 1:1.

¹⁴⁰ Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 246.

¹⁴¹ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 69.