

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES

© 2021, 2024 John Kimball McKee

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: nullplus via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8317009786 (paperback)

ASIN B09F1MWGB7 (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog

messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a “fair use” of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Nazarene, Yeshua Called

What specific verse in the Tanach says that Yeshua will be called a “Nazarene”? I could not find any.

adapted from *Confronting Yeshua’s Divinity and Messiahship*

Matthew 2:23 records that Yeshua the Messiah “came and lived in a city called Nazareth. *This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’*” (NASU). The challenge for some Bible readers, is that no specific text was quoted or reference. But this is not unusual to see in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) by any means. Yeshua Himself said in Matthew 26:54, “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say that it must happen this way?*” (NASU). Here, Yeshua spoke of the general sense or meaning of the Tanach—“how could the passages in the *Tanakh* be fulfilled that say it has to happen this way” (CJSB)—not necessarily of a specific verse. In James 4:5 a similar usage is seen: “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?’” (NASU). Here, James appealed to the general sense of Scripture from the Tanach (OT), rather than a specific verse or prophecy.

In Matthew 2:23, the author referenced the “prophets,” indicating that he was appealing to a theological concept evidenced in several places in the Tanach, *not a single prophecy*, as anti-missionaries try to mislead people to believe. What was actually being communicated by the statement, “He will be called a Nazorean” (NRSV), has been a cause of great discussion and some debate among Bible interpreters and commentators.

What was likely being communicated by Matthew was some kind of word play on the terms *nazir*, primarily meaning “(s.one) dedicated, consecrated” (*CHALOT*),¹ by extension “a nazirite,” and the word “Nazarene” (Grk. *Nazōraios*), meaning someone from the city of Nazareth. An adequate description of a nazirite is given in Judges 13:7, where Samson’s mother was told how her son was to live:

“But he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death’” (Judges 13:7, NASU).

The Hebrew *ki-nezir Elohim yihyeh* was rendered two different ways in the Greek Septuagint, both of which would have likely been extant in the First Century. The LXX(a) version has *naziraion Theou* or “nazirite of God,” whereas the LXX(b) version has *hagion Theou*, “holy to God” (LXE). This attests to the fact that being a “holy one” of God and a “nazirite” of God, were considered to be associated or connected, sometime before the First Century. One did not necessarily have to take a “nazirite vow” to be considered a holy person, which there is no record of Yeshua ever doing. In Mark 1:23-24, it is seen how Yeshua being *Nazarēne* (adjective) or “of Nazareth” was connected to His holiness:

“Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Yeshua of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’” (Mark 1:23-24, NASU).

¹ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 232.

Nazarene, Yeshua Called

Matthew, seeing this concept referred to in Mark's Gospel, whose audience was largely Roman and would likely have overlooked any connection between "Nazareth" and "Holy One," seemingly expounded upon this for his Jewish audience, possibly using additional source material. His Jewish audience should have been familiar with the terms *nazir*, and/or the Septuagint renderings of *naziraion Theou* or *hagion Theou*. Matthew's emphasis, more than anything else, was to connect the concept of Yeshua being a Nazarene to His holiness. To this, one can add the expectations of a Nazirite (cf. Numbers 6:1-12), in view of Yeshua's imperative statement at the Last Supper/Seder that He would not eat of the fruit of the vine, until coming in His Kingdom (Mark 14:25; Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:18).

A second, and more commonly proposed view espoused by many Messianics, is that Matthew was making some kind of word play on *netzer*, meaning "**sprout, shoot** (of plant)" (*CHALOT*),² or by extension "branch." It connected to prophecies such as Isaiah 11:1:

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch [*netzer*] from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1, NASU).

This prophecy has been viewed in a Messianic context by the Jewish Sages,³ and was appealed to various times by the Apostles (Romans 15:12; 1 Peter 4:14; Revelation 5:5). One of the challenges with holding *exclusively* to this view, though, is the fact that other Messianic prophecies applying to Yeshua employ the Hebrew term *tzemach* for "branch":

"Behold, *the days are coming*,' declares the LORD, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch [*tzemach*]; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:5, NASU).

"In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch [*tzemach*] of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (Jeremiah 33:15, NASU).

"Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch [*tzemach*]" (Zechariah 3:8, NASU).

"Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch [*tzemach*], for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD" (Zechariah 6:12, NASU).

One can certainly consider the words *netzer* and *tzemach* to be synonyms, as the latter likewise means "**growth, what sprouts, shoot, bud**" (*CHALOT*).⁴ This would account for Matthew's reference to "the prophets," as opposed to a singular prophet (cf. Isaiah 11:1). Matthew, more than anything else, relied on his audience's knowledge of knowing that the terms *nazir*, *naziraion*, and "holy one" were all associated or connected with Yeshua being a "Nazarene." The major point Matthew emphasized was that Yeshua had been separated out as the Father's appointed servant and is the ideal of holiness, and being holy unto God or sanctified is certainly a theme epitomized in the Prophets. One need not go very far to understand this connection and how it merited Yeshua a "Nazarene."

Anti-missionaries are able to lead people astray by getting them to think that *one prophecy=one fulfillment* is what was communicated by the Gospel writers. In some cases, a specific prophetic reference may certainly be made by the Gospel writers. But in other cases, however, a *general understanding* of prophetic texts may also have to be considered. The Gospel writers considered Yeshua of Nazareth to be the epitome of the Hebrew Tanach, and that He embodied in His person the fullness of the qualities of holiness communicated by its Prophets. Note that if Matthew was primarily building his case for Yeshua being a "Nazarene" from Judges 13:7, that the Book of Judges is considered a part of the *Nevi'im* or "the Prophets" in the traditional Jewish order of the Tanach (whereas

² *CHALOT*, 244.

³ One does not have to go far to see this reflected in contemporary Orthodox Jewish opinion, such as in Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *ArtScroll Tanach* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1996), 972.

⁴ *CHALOT*, 307.

Christian tradition places it among the Historical Books). Did Matthew misapply Scripture, or are Jewish anti-missionaries trying to oversimplify things?