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JEWISH MYTHOLOGY AND THE ANGEL 'METATRON'

Most people in the churches of God assume that Judaism is based on the teachings of the Old Testament. But in actual practice the Jewish religion has added a vast number of “traditions” to the things that are recorded in the Old Testament, traditions that have no basis whatsoever in any information found in the Bible. These added traditions have created a religion with a set of beliefs which grossly distorts what the Bible actually teaches.

There is in fact a large body of Jewish mythology that was developed by the zugot, the tannaim and the amoraim of Talmudic times. Many of these unbiblical ideas are laid out in the Talmud and in the tosafot, the medieval commentaries on the Talmud compiled by the tosafists, who were also known as rishonim. These ideas are also expounded in the Kabbalah, which specifically deals with the mystical aspects of Rabbinic Judaism, presenting esoteric teachings and interpretations of the Scriptures (see the Zohar, a commentary on the supposed mystical aspects of the Old Testament). In fact, the Kabbalah provided Judaism with an alternate set of “Scriptures” outside of the Old Testament, and over time much of the Kabbalah was accepted into Judaism’s mainstream (i.e. Orthodox) theology.

Most of these Talmudic and Kabbalistic traditions are artificially attached to the Tanakh (the Old Testament) by some very superficial and flawed reasoning about some or other biblical statement. In the Talmud this type of flawed reasoning is frequently introduced by expressions like “**whence do we know**” and “**how do we know**”. I did a search through the Talmud and found the expression “whence do we know” 699 times and the expression “how do we know” an additional 550 times. Most commonly these questions are followed by an appeal to a short biblical reference that is taken out of context and misapplied. Often this approach is also used in an attempt to harmonize contradictions and disagreements between Talmudic statements. One example from the Talmud will suffice to illustrate this point.

This example involves quotations from the **Talmud Mas. Rosh HaShana, sections 10b - 11a**. Here are the quotations:

“It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: **In Tishri** the world was created; in Tishri the Patriarchs were born; in Tishri the Patriarchs died.”

A few sentences later it says:

“R. Joshua says: **In Nisan** the world was created; in Nisan the Patriarchs were born; in Nisan the Patriarchs died.”

Then it states:

“It has been taught: ‘R. Eliezer says: **Whence do we know** that the world was created in **Tishri**? Because it says, And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree. Which is the month in which the earth puts forth grass and the trees are full of fruit? **You must say that this is Tishri**.”

“R. Joshua says: **Whence do we know** that the world was created in **Nisan**? Because it says, And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit. Which is the month in which the earth is full of grass and trees [begin to] produce fruit? **You must say that this is Nisan.**”

To summarize these quotations: The Talmud thus says that the world was created (and the patriarchs were born and also died) in the autumn, and the Talmud ALSO says that the world was created (and the patriarchs were born and also died) in the spring. This type of contradiction is the predominant approach to almost every subject in the Talmud. So when you quote the Talmud you can take your pick to support your own beliefs. In our example here the claims regarding when the patriarchs were born and when they died are totally without any foundation. These claims are based on nothing more than flawed reasoning.

This one example here illustrates the real problem with all Jewish so-called “inside information” about people and events in the Old Testament, information that is not actually recorded in the Bible itself. Many people in God’s Church simply assume that the Jews somehow **orally preserved information** about people and events during Old Testament times (e.g. when people were born and when they died, what happened to them, etc.), and that this information comes from the “oral law” of the Jews.

However, the Jewish “oral law” has not preserved any reliable extra-biblical information about any person or event from Old Testament times. Thus:

The Jews didn’t “orally” preserve the month in which the world was created or the months in which the patriarchs were born and in which months they died. No! All the Jewish sages did is try **to reason out** when these things took place! But reasoning out something from biblical statements is not at all the same as “preserving extra-biblical information”. This is even apart from the fact that the reasoning itself in these situations is overwhelmingly flawed. Expressions like “whence do we know” and “how do we know” are never answered with something like “because this is information our fathers from biblical times passed on to us” (or words to this effect), which would imply a preservation of previously known information.

The Jews in actual fact didn’t orally preserve anything at all from Old Testament times, no scrap of information of any kind that would supplement what is already recorded in the Old Testament. Not one scrap!

Michael L. Rodkinson published a copy of the Babylonian Talmud in 1897, and he then wrote a multi-volume work entitled “**The History of the Talmud**”. Rodkinson was an authority on the Talmud. In the introductory comments on page 5 of volume 1 of his “History” Rodkinson stated:

“The name ‘Talmud’ was applied to what was styled by the long phrase ‘**ORAL LAW**’ (Torah-she b’al-Peh). **THIS WORD DESIGNATED ALL THE COMMENTARIES OF THE SAGES ON THE SCRIPTURES WHICH THE PHARISEES HAD BEGUN TO INTERPRET FIGURATIVELY.**” (my emphasis)

The term “oral law” means nothing more than “**commentaries**” written by Pharisees. And the Pharisees didn’t accept the Scriptures literally; they interpreted them figuratively, a convenient way of getting rid of the literal meaning of the Scriptures. In fact, the Pharisees frequently viewed people who wanted to interpret the Scriptures literally as “enemies”. These commentaries were the start of the Kabbalah, the

mystical aspects and teachings of Judaism, which are now largely accepted as authentic by Orthodox Jews.

[COMMENT: Rabbinic Judaism is based on commentaries on previous commentaries on previous commentaries. To illustrate: the Mishnah is supposedly a commentary on the Tanakh (the Old Testament). The Gemara in turn is a commentary on the Mishnah. Together the Mishnah plus the Gemara make up the Talmud. The medieval Tosafot, written by tosafists and by the rishonim, in turn are commentaries on primarily the Gemara. It is a system of people commenting very little on the Old Testament itself, but primarily on the previous commentaries written by earlier scholars, who in turn were evaluating the views of the scholars before them. The whole religion is based on a system of commentaries, in which the text of the Tanakh itself gets only very superficial attention.]

In the Talmud every single bit of supposed information (about biblical people and events) that is not directly recorded in the Old Testament is based on nothing more than Jewish sages trying to reason out such information. There was a 250-year gap between the last books of the Old Testament (Malachi, Ezra, etc.) and the first of the five zugot (five pairs of Pharisaic sages who laid the foundation for Jewish traditions), who were then followed by five generations of tannaim. **No extra-biblical information survived that 250-year gap.** Every bit of extra-biblical information presented in the Talmud (i.e. in “the oral law”) was **reasoned out or presumptuously asserted** by those sages, and nothing was based on information supposedly handed down from father-to-son, or from one priest or scholar to the next generation. Nothing whatsoever!

“The oral law” is nothing more than a collective commentary produced by several hundred different “sages” spanning a period in excess of 500 years (i.e. starting in the 140's B.C. to around 500 A.D.), all of them members of the sect of the Pharisees. And nothing in that commentary represents any information supposedly preserved from Old Testament times!

When people in God's Church hear about “the oral law” of the Jews, it is easy for us to assume that this must surely be a reference to laws and other information orally passed on from Moses and from God's other servants right down to the time of Ezra. Such an assumption can bestow a considerable amount of credibility on the Jewish “oral law”. After all, if it came from Moses and from other Old Testament servants of God, then it must surely have some merit. Some people may even claim that such information is a part of “the oracles of God” that were preserved by the Jews (see Romans 3:2). But **nothing could be further from the truth.**

THE TRADITIONS REGARDING ISAIAH'S DEATH

The claims made in the Jewish oral law are absolutely absurd! For example, over the years many ministers in the Church of God have stated that **“according to Jewish traditions the prophet Isaiah died by being sawn in half”**. Many commentaries also make this statement. Have you ever heard a reference to this “tradition”? Do you know how absurd that is? Have you assumed that this “tradition” was somehow “orally preserved” by the Jews? The whole idea is utterly preposterous! This tradition is based on nothing more than the following quotation from the Talmud, the oral law.

SAID R. SIMEON B. AZZAI etc. [A tanna] recited: Simeon b. 'Azzai said, **‘I found a roll of genealogical records in Jerusalem** and therein was written "So-and-so is a bastard [having been born] from a forbidden union with a married woman" and therein was also written "The teaching of R. Eliezer b. Jacob is small in quantity but thoroughly sifted". And in it was also written, **"Manasseh slew Isaiah"**.

Raba said: **He brought him to trial and then slew him.** He said to him: Your teacher Moses said, 'For men shall not see Me and live' **and you said**, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up'. Your teacher Moses said, 'For what great nation is there, that hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is whensoever we call upon him', **and you said**, 'Seek ye the Lord when he may be found'. Your teacher Moses said, 'The number of thy days I will fulfil' **but you said**, 'And I will add on to your days fifteen years'. 'I know', **thought Isaiah**, 'that whatever I may tell him he will not accept; and should I reply at all, I would only cause him to be a wilful [homicide]'. **He thereupon pronounced [the Divine] Name and was swallowed up by a cedar. The cedar, however, was brought and sawn asunder. When the saw reached his mouth he died. [And this was his penalty] for having said, 'And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips'.** (quoted without any omissions from the Soncino edition of the Babylonian Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 49b, my emphasis)

This passage from the Babylonian Talmud is quoted in **John Gill's Exposition of the whole Bible** as follows in the ONLINE BIBLE software program:

"says R. Simeon ben Azzai, I found a book of genealogies in Jerusalem, and in it was written that Manasseh slew Isaiah."

And after relating the occasion of it, being some passages in Isaiah Manasseh was displeased with and objected to; and **the prophet** not thinking it worth his while to return an answer, or attempt to reconcile them with other passages, objected, knowing that the king would use him contemptuously; he **is made to say**,

"I will swallow (or put myself into) **a cedar**, they brought the cedar, "and sawed it asunder", and **when it (the saw) came to his mouth, he expired.**"

John Gill also quotes the parallel account in **the Jerusalem Talmud** as follows:

"Manasseh sought to kill **Isaiah**, and he fled from him, and **fled to a cedar**, and **the cedar swallowed him up, all but the fringe of his garment**; they came and told him (Manasseh), he said unto them, go and saw the cedar, "and **they sawed the cedar**", and **blood was seen to come out.**" (Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 28.3)

A Jewish author named **Gedaliah Ibn Yachya**, who lived from 1515 to 1587 in Northern Italy, wrote a Kabbalistic work entitled "**Shalshet HaKabbalah**". In this work Gedaliah presented this account as follows:

"Manasseh sought to slay him, and **Isaiah fled**, and **the Lord remembered him**, and **he was swallowed up in the middle of a tree; but there remained without the tree the fringe of his garment**; and then Manasseh ordered the tree to be cut down, and Isaiah died."

A modern Talmudic scholar named **Louis Ginzberg** (died in New York in 1953) wrote a book entitled "**THE LEGENDS OF THE JEWS**". In this book Ginzberg describes this episode with Isaiah as follows:

"However, he (i.e. Isaiah) fled for safety. When he heard the royal bailiffs in pursuit of him, he

pronounced the Name of God, and a cedar-tree swallowed him up. The king ordered the tree to be sawn in pieces. **When the saw was applied to the portion of the bark under which the mouth of Isaiah lay concealed, he died. His mouth was the only vulnerable part of his body**, because at the time when he was called to his prophetic mission, it had made use of **the contemptuous words "a people of unclean lips,"** regarding Israel."

As we can see, with every telling the details change somewhat. But they all go back to Raba's statement in the Babylonian Talmud. When you consider that all these changes in the details occurred in spite of every writer having access to the same written source material (i.e. the account in the Talmud), just how faithfully would details from Old Testament times have been preserved **without written records**? Would any (theoretically) orally preserved law have fared any better than the preservation of this one little incident supposedly involving the Prophet Isaiah?

Anyway, it is clear that EVERY SINGLE ACCOUNT IS ABSURD! It doesn't matter whether the saw reached "his month", or whether the saw reached "his mouth", or whether the cedar decided to swallow Isaiah, or whether Isaiah himself decided to try to hide in the cedar, or whether the "fringe of his garment" was caught outside the tree (like the Greek mythology about the vulnerable "Achilles heel"), or whether his mouth was the only vulnerable part of his body ... it is all just one gigantic fairy tale! None of the descriptions have any credibility of any kind!

So let's just go back to the original discussion as presented in the Talmud. Here is some general background for this quotation from the Talmud.

One of the most quoted authorities in the Talmud was **Abba ben Joseph bar Hama** (died around 350 A.D.). In the Talmud this amora is always referred to by the honorary title "**Raba**" (also spelled as "**Rava**"). There are hundreds of recorded disputes between Raba and another amora named Abaye (died 339 A.D.), and they are known as the "havayot d'Abaye ve'Rava" (i.e. "Debates of Abaye and Rava"), and in all but six of those debates Raba's opinions are deemed to be better than Abaye's opinions. So Raba (or Rava) is really a big shot in the Talmud, a major player whose opinions are deemed very authoritative.

And this is the man who first came up with this story about Isaiah supposedly "being sawn asunder". Here is how this happened.

A tanna named Simeon ben Azzai (he lived in the 130's A.D.) is quoted to have claimed to have found "a roll of genealogical records". **That "roll" was a lot of baloney!** It was anything but "a genealogical record". That should be very obvious from the reference to Eliezer ben Jacob. There were two men with this name, one in the first century and the other in the second century. The second Eliezer ben Jacob was in fact a contemporary and a colleague of Simeon ben Azzai. So this genealogical record conveniently included **a flattering reference to Simeon ben Azzai's buddy** Eliezer ben Jacob.

The reference to some unidentified man having been "a bastard" is likewise hardly a reliable "genealogical record", since, as we all know, there have been lots of "bastards" in the course of history. But the point is: you just don't have "genealogical records" that include a king from the line of David (King Manasseh lived around 700 - 650 B.C.) and in the same document also refer to some Pharisaic tanna who was a completely insignificant individual, except that he was a buddy of the guy who claimed to have found this record, and who lived at some point after the ministry of Jesus Christ. To be mentioned in the same "genealogical records" those records would have had to faithfully cover about 800 years, going through the Babylonian captivity and through the period between the Old and the New Testament! And Azzai's casual statement is not about a faithful lengthy genealogical record that would have had to bridge the period between the Old and the New Testament. Such a document would have been of monumental importance. And that is not what Simeon ben Azzai was referring to so casually.

This whole supposed “roll of genealogical records” is a fabrication because Eliezer ben Jacob had no link at all to the royal line of David coming through Manasseh. He was just a friend of the finder. But Eliezer would never be mentioned in the same genealogical records as the kings of the line of David. Azzai’s claim was at best grossly exaggerated, and at worst (the more likely case) a totally faked document.

Now perhaps King Manasseh had indeed put the prophet Isaiah to death? But if that was the case, then there is absolutely no evidence for that claim, in spite of many commentaries gullibly repeating this claim! This out of context off-the-cuff comment that “Manasseh slew Isaiah” is clearly just as fabricated as is the comment about “the unidentified bastard”. There is no proof anywhere for this claim. And every assertion in any biblical commentary that “Manasseh killed Isaiah” is based on nothing more than this specific account here in the Talmud. Anyway, for our purposes **it makes no difference whether Manasseh did or did not put Isaiah to death.**

However, based on this statement that “Manasseh slew Isaiah” **Raba then invented this story about Isaiah.** What Raba said was:

King Manasseh (supposedly) brought Isaiah to trial, by accusing Isaiah of repeatedly going against the instructions of Moses. Three times Manasseh supposedly confronts Isaiah with the statement “your teacher Moses said this, but you say something different”. Then Raba brazenly claimed to know the thoughts that supposedly went through Isaiah’s mind when faced with these absurd hypothetical accusations. To know Isaiah’s thoughts would require Raba to have been a clairvoyant. And since Isaiah supposedly knew that Manasseh was going to kill him anyway, then Isaiah pronounced the name “YHVH”, a capital crime in the book of any self-respecting Pharisee. In response to this heinous crime (I speak as a fool, a la 2 Corinthians 11:23) of actually pronouncing God’s name, **Isaiah was then SWALLOWED UP BY A CEDAR TREE!** See what I mean about the Talmud being a book of Jewish mythology, and about presumptuous assertions?!

The various later accounts we have looked at above all try to make the details a little more plausible. But they are also based on nothing more than this same specific account in the Talmud.

Anyway, the cedar tree was then brought to King Manasseh. How do you do that, bring a tree to the king? Did they get the tree to walk to the king? Or did they carry the tree to the king? And how would they have known WHICH CEDAR TREE Isaiah had been “swallowed up by”? Oh yes, I forgot, the fringe of Isaiah’s garment was still sticking out. Right. Seems like God wasn’t able to protect Isaiah after all (a la 2 Corinthians 11:23 again). So that must be how King Manasseh knew in which tree to look for Isaiah. Good thing they were able to recognize the fringe of Isaiah’s garment. Anyway, King Manasseh, one of the most evil kings in Israel’s history (though he later humbled himself in Babylonian captivity and was then allowed to return to Jerusalem), who hardly would have known anything of what Moses had said, then supposedly wanted to ensure that Isaiah wouldn’t get away with his evil crimes of having pronounced God’s name (evil only in the eyes of hypocritical Pharisees) and having supposedly contradicted Moses, and so the king then had the tree “sawn asunder”.

[COMMENT: 2 Kings 22:8 shows that the high priest Hilkiah “found” a copy of the law in the 10th year of Josiah, or about 12 years after the death of Manasseh. But Hilkiah had already been around during the reign of Manasseh’s father Hezekiah (see 2 Kings 18:18). This means that throughout Manasseh’s reign nobody had any access to the books of the law. That’s pretty obvious from the rest of 2 Kings 22. So King Manasseh was totally incapable of quoting any statement from Moses to Isaiah. The whole supposed conversation between King Manasseh and Isaiah was clearly **TOTALLY FABRICATED** by Raba.]

Anyway, supposedly different sections of the trunk represented each month of the year. And so when

they came to Isaiah's mouth (whatever that would have been?), then Isaiah supposedly died. Or was it Isaiah's mouth hidden somewhere under the bark that they were looking for?

Anyway, only then Raba added the real reason why he made up this fanciful story about the tree that had swallowed up Isaiah being sawn into pieces, thereby supposedly sawing Isaiah asunder. Raba was upset with Isaiah for having stated: "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (see Isaiah 6:5). Raba took offense with that statement in Isaiah 6:5 (as did also Louis Ginzberg in his above-quoted book). Can we not see that Raba didn't really like the prophet Isaiah and that therefore Raba ascribed evil to Isaiah? Can we not see that Raba actually implies that Isaiah DESERVED TO DIE for supposedly contradicting Moses? **Raba was the evil guy in this story**, not God's Prophet Isaiah!

It was because Raba took offense at Isaiah's statement in Isaiah 6:5 that Raba concocted this cock-and-bull story about Isaiah being punished (or very poorly protected by God?) by being swallowed up by a cedar tree which was then sawn into pieces, to make sure that Isaiah would die!

This absurd story is the sole source for the often-repeated claim that Isaiah was sawn asunder! And over the years many teachers in God's Church have blissfully perpetuated this absurd myth! Mostly we've been too lazy to verify our facts. We've just looked at some or other commentary that presents this Jewish fable and then swallowed it hook, line and sinker. In Titus 1:14 Paul tells us not to listen to "Jewish fables", and this story about Isaiah is one prime example of a Jewish fable!

I want to make something very plain:

When this arrogant and opinionated Talmudic teacher named Raba pronounced a supposed penalty from God on the Prophet Isaiah, then Raba was in reality finding fault with God Himself! Raba's false accusation against Isaiah was without question inspired by Satan!

To give you a comparison: Even though Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, he nevertheless very contemptuously referred to the Book of James as "an epistle of straw" (see Wikipedia article on "The Epistle of James", etc.). Well, when you carefully read the above quotation from the Talmud, it should be easy to see that Raba felt the same way about the Book of Isaiah. Raba's comments, (they didn't come from Manasseh, Raba himself made them up) in claiming that Isaiah contradicted Moses, are the same as calling the Book of Isaiah "a book of straw". In this regard the Jewish tanna named Raba was no different from the Protestant theologian Martin Luther: both openly expressed their contempt for books of the Bible that they didn't like.

Anyway, do you still think that "Isaiah was sawn asunder"? Next, the fact that Raba could invent a story like this means he has no credibility of any kind for any of his opinions that are recorded anywhere in the Talmud!

The man clearly could not distinguish between myths and reality, between fact and fiction. And he equally clearly did not hesitate to concoct the strangest scenarios in order to support his own highly unbalanced views. And Raba obviously didn't like God's prophet Isaiah. So much for Raba's credibility in the hundreds of his opinions that are recorded in the Talmud. If you are willing to believe that a cedar tree swallowed up the Prophet Isaiah for having pronounced the name "YHVH", you may as well believe in Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf, who also wanted "to swallow up" Little Red Riding Hood.

By now some of you might be thinking about Hebrews 11:37. So let's examine this Scripture.

HEBREWS 11:37 EXAMINED

Here is what this verse says:

They were stoned, **they were sawn asunder**, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Hebrews 11:37)

Doesn't this verse prove that the Talmudic tradition about Isaiah must be true? Let's examine this more closely.

This is the faith chapter. Paul's purpose in this chapter is to show the vital importance of faith, and to illustrate that all of God's servants had faith. In this process Paul lists 16 individuals by name: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel. And then, rather than naming the prophets as well, Paul just states "and the prophets".

Now Paul was clearly presenting an off-the-cuff random list. The first few names are obviously in chronological order. Everybody would intuitively list the names from Abel to Moses in the correct chronological order. But then Paul listed Gideon ahead of Barak, and Samson ahead of Jephthah, and David ahead of Samuel, with no regard for correct chronology, something we might not have expected from a scholar like Paul. Similarly, the fact that Paul listed Rahab but not Joshua and Caleb, shows that this is a very random list, composed on the fly, since Rahab wasn't nearly as much of an example of faith as were Joshua and Caleb. In fact, the inclusion of Rahab in Paul's list here shows that Paul was looking for examples anywhere he could find them; after all, Rahab's primary motivation as revealed in Joshua chapter 2 was fear and terror even more so than faith. So Paul was listing every example that spontaneously came to his mind without regard for detailed circumstances.

Next, Paul then tried to put together a list of some of the greater trials that some of God's servants had endured. And so verses 33-37 are also a very random listing of trials. Notice these verses:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that **they** might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: **They** were stoned, **they** were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: **they** wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Hebrews 11:33-37)

It seems to me that in making this list Paul was not thinking of: "WHO went through which particular trial?", but of "WHAT are some of the trials God's servants have had to endure?" Thus, **I doubt that Paul was thinking of specific individuals** when he wrote:

- who subdued kingdoms
- who wrought righteousness

- who obtained promises
- who stopped the mouths of lions
- who quenched the violence of fire
- who escaped the edge of the sword
- who were made strong out of weakness
- who waxed valiant in fight
- who turned to flight foreign armies
- which women received their dead raised to life again
- who was tortured without accepting deliverance
- who had cruel mockings
- who had scourgings
- who was bound and imprisoned
- who was stoned
- who was sawn asunder
- who was tempted
- who was slain with the sword
- who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins
- who was destitute, afflicted and tormented.

Paul has listed **twenty different things**, all of which required faith and demonstrated faith. Yes, certainly, we can all readily think of specific individuals who fit into some of these twenty “categories” (for lack of a better word). But for a number of these categories we would also really struggle to come up with specific names to fit the bill. For example: WHO IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT YOU KNOW OF was: tortured without accepting deliverance, wandered about in sheepskins, was destitute and afflicted, was scourged, had cruel mockings, etc.?

I believe that in these verses Paul was just compiling a general list of trials without thinking of anyone specific. It also is a very random list, one that Paul himself thought up, and not one that God somehow inspired Paul to record. There is nothing “inspired” about this list. And within this list Paul included the category he called “they were sawn asunder”.

WHY did Paul say this? What did Paul have in mind when he made this statement?

Did Paul actually mean that somebody had at some point in the past been tied down and then two men had taken a large saw, intended for cutting down big trees, and then proceeded to “saw” through the

victim? How would the aggressors have proceeded? Would they have “sawed” through the victim’s chest? Or would they have “sawed” through the man’s back with the victim lying face down? Or would they have “sawed” off the head? Or would they have tied the victim to a tree and then sawed through the man horizontally? Just what would Paul himself have pictured, if anything, when he used this phrase?

Saws (in Old Testament times) are by definition intended for cutting through WOOD or through stone! That’s the purpose of a saw! Now if the intention is to kill the victim, why on earth would any “executioner” possibly resort to using “a saw”, with blood spurting on the executioner and on those standing around with every stroke of the saw? Attempting to use a saw to kill one’s victim is weird! What purpose would **using a saw to kill someone** possibly achieve? The whole idea is extremely weird.

Now the Apostle Paul was very familiar with the Old Testament. He was familiar with the case of the Levite whose wife was raped all night by the men of Gibeah, to the point where she died the next morning, whereupon the Levite then cut his wife’s carcass into 12 pieces, which he sent throughout Israel (see Judges 19). This incident triggered **a civil war against the tribe of Benjamin**. Paul himself was a Benjamite (Romans 11:1) and this incident was surely significant in Paul’s mind.

Notice:

And when he was come into his house, **he took a knife**, and laid hold on his concubine, **and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces**, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. (Judges 19:29)

Now when this Levite (perhaps he was the same Levite as in Judges 18, which would have made him a grandson of Moses, Judges 18:30?) sent the twelve pieces of his wife’s body throughout the whole nation, he did so because he wanted a specific response. I believe that this Levite had faith that the men responsible for murdering his wife would be punished, which is precisely what then happened in the civil war that ensued.

Next, the Hebrew verb “nathach” which is in Judges 19:29 translated as “divided” means **“to cut into pieces”**. Without going into too many details, the Hebrew word for “to saw” also means “to reduce to pieces”. And in Old Testament Hebrew the words for “a saw” and “an axe” also overlap somewhat.

For example, in 1 Chronicles 20:3 the Hebrew noun “megerah” is used twice; once it is translated as “saws” and once it is translated as “axes”. Notice:

And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them **with saws** (Hebrew “megerah”), and with harrows of iron, and **with axes** (Hebrew “megerah”). Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 20:3)

So first of all notice that the distinction between saws and axes wasn’t very specific. Next, since we are looking at this verse, we should be aware of the fact that this verse contains **a major mistranslation**.

The context of 1 Chronicles 20:3 is that David had defeated the Ammonites. And the way this verse is translated it makes David out to be some grotesque monster who had his enemies “cut into pieces” with saws and axes and harrows of iron.

This picture is also absurd!

The key here is quite simple. And it lies with the Hebrew word that is translated as “cut them”. Here are the facts.

There are TWO Hebrew verbs “suwr”, which are spelled identically. Together they are used exactly four times in the OT Hebrew text. By spelling alone you cannot distinguish between these two words. In analogy think of the English word “light”: without any context you cannot know whether the word should mean “THE OPPOSITE OF DARKNESS” or whether it should mean “THE OPPOSITE OF HEAVY”. Two distinct meanings which can only be correctly identified by context.

That’s what the Hebrew verb “suwr” is like. For those who use the Strong’s Numbers, these two Hebrew verbs are #7786 and #7787 in Strong’s Dictionary.

Hebrew “suwr” #7786 is used three times: in Judges 9:22 (“had reigned”), in Hosea 8:4 (“they have made princes”) and in Hosea 12:4 (“he had power”). As can be seen from these three uses, this word means: **to act as a ruler**, to reign, to govern.

Hebrew “suwr” #7787 is used only once in the whole Old Testament, and that is here in 1 Chronicles 20:3. This word means: to cut or saw, **to reduce to pieces**. And so in this verse it is translated as “**he CUT THEM** with saws and with harrows of iron and with axes”, a rather grizzly picture, to say the least.

But can you see what happened here? This is what we should expect when people who don’t have God’s Spirit set about translating the Bible. It always comes back to 1 Corinthians 2:11, that the things of God can only be correctly discerned by people who have God’s Spirit.

The translators should really have understood that in 1 Chronicles 20:3 the Hebrew word “suwr” has the meaning of #7786, and NOT #7787! In other words: the Hebrew word #7787 is NEVER USED IN THE O.T.! Rather, the Hebrew word #7786 is used FOUR times!

And so 1 Chronicles 20:3 in reference to David should correctly be translated as:

And he brought out the people that were in it, **AND RULED OVER THEM** (i.e. **he put them into servitude as laborers**) with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 20:3)

This is also the picture we get from the parallel account in 2 Samuel 12. Notice the relevant verse.

And he brought forth the people that were therein, and **put them** (Hebrew verb “suwm”) under saws (Hebrew “megerah”), and under harrows of iron, and under axes (Hebrew “magzerah”) of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 12:31)

This is the parallel verse to 1 Chronicles 20:3. And here we see a different Hebrew verb used. The verb “suwm” means: **to put, place, make, appoint**. So this parallel verse shows that David did NOT have these Ammonites “sawed and hacked in pieces”, but that he put them under servitude to work in menial tasks as laborers with saws and harrows and axes and in brickkilns. The same meaning is intended in 1 Chronicles 20:3.

Another point to notice here is that this verse uses the word “megerah” for saws, and the word “magzerah” for axes. But the later writer of Chronicles (most likely Ezra) used the word “megerah” to

mean both, saws and axes. So by the time of the Apostle Paul there was hardly a distinction between these two tools, or the processes involved in using them.

I believe that in Hebrews 11:37 Paul was thinking in general terms of people in the Old Testament who had been “cut into pieces” with a sword or an axe, BUT NOT WITH A SAW! At any rate, Hebrews 11:37 most assuredly does NOT say that “ISAIAH was sawn asunder”! This verse says nothing at all about Isaiah!

It is also quite clear that the only tradition regarding “a saw” being used “to kill” someone that the Pharisees have is this one reference to Isaiah! And here the Pharisees do NOT have any tradition about the Prophet Isaiah personally being “sawn asunder”! Every detailed discussion of this supposed incident always goes back to A TREE BEING SAWN ASUNDER, and that Isaiah was supposedly in that tree. And the use of a saw is perfectly logical for cutting down a tree, but it is utterly absurd to attempt to kill someone by sawing them in half with some kind of saw intended for use on lumber or stone.

So when someone tells you that the Prophet Isaiah was “sawed in half”, then you need to understand that you are being told a Jewish fable!

To get back to our subject, here is the point all of us need to grasp:

We need to understand that **every other so-called inside scoop** about what supposedly happened to whom in the Old Testament, if it is not explicitly stated somewhere in the Bible, **is a fabrication** along exactly the same lines as “Isaiah was sawn asunder”! Any time you have to answer a question with the words “**ACCORDING TO JEWISH TRADITION ...**” you have no more credibility than the suggestion that “cedar trees swallow up people who pronounce the name YHVH”.

The whole oral law is nothing more than a very flawed commentary liberally endowed with highly irrational assertions and reasoning, produced by the Pharisees. It is precisely because it is nothing more than a commentary put together by many different people, that we find literally thousands of examples of conflicting opinions expressed within the pages of the Talmud. And the scholars held in the highest esteem are those who have managed to somehow reconcile the greatest number of these conflicting opinions by suggesting valid circumstances for each view.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Before we now look at some specific information, let's keep the following points in mind.

- 1) The Talmud and even more so the Kabbalah are first and foremost **an exposition of Jewish mythology**. This is immediately apparent when we consider references in the Talmud to people supposedly repeatedly going to heaven and coming back again, or to supposed conversations with God, or to certain sages supposedly being given a guided tour of paradise (preceding Dante's “Divine Comedy” by almost a millennium), or to someone being swallowed up by a tree, or to angels being punished with fiery lashes, etc. It's just mythology.
- 2) This Jewish mythology is artificially linked to the Tanakh by endless incomplete and out-of-context quotations from the Tanakh. These mostly inappropriate scriptural references are intended to bestow religious credibility to this mythology. In effect, the various sages who are quoted in the Talmud sought to find scriptural justifications for all their unscriptural customs and traditions.
- 3) Now because the Talmud is also a commentary on the Old Testament, albeit a rather flawed and haphazard one, it is going to show how the Pharisees understood certain Scriptures, and how they sought to explain them. We also need to recognize that almost every claim made in the Talmud is

challenged or contradicted by other statements elsewhere in the Talmud. We should never allow contradictory statements to distract us from recognizing the significance inherent in certain statements, which we with our Church of God understanding of the Bible can prove to be true.

4) So when we focus on specific statements in the Talmud, it is understood that there will be other statements that will oppose the statements we are looking at. This does not mean that we cannot gain certain insights from examining references in the Talmud; it only means that someone else can readily find statements that will contradict the ones we are quoting: see the above statements regarding the patriarchs supposedly having been born in both, Tishri and Nisan.

5) A question that arises for us is: **Did these Jewish sages recognize that the Old Testament actually contains references to Jesus Christ** the second member of the God Family or not? And if they did recognize these references to “a second God Being”, how did they handle this situation? Pharisaic Judaism is very emphatic in its assertion that there is only one God Being. So in their commentary how did these Jewish sages deal with those Scriptures that reveal the second member of the Family of God?

6) At the same time, if we can find in Judaism indications for how the sages dealt with the Scriptures that reveal or infer two God Beings, then we should ALSO EXPECT to find other statements that flatly contradict any stated or implied acknowledgments of two God Beings. That’s the nature of the Talmud, as in “the world was created in the autumn but it was also created in the spring”.

7) So here is the point: If we can find acknowledgments of the truth regarding Jesus Christ’s existence during Old Testament times, then contradictory Talmudic statements cannot negate the veracity of the statements that are true. We should also expect a very biased and highly subjective opposition to any acknowledgments by Jewish scholars regarding two God Beings during Old Testament times, because such acknowledgments threaten the very foundation of Pharisaic Judaism.

8) In the same way that so-called Christianity views us in God’s Church as heretics simply because we unequivocally reject the trinity doctrine, so also should we expect Orthodox Judaism to label any Jew who states or suggests that there are two God Beings as a heretic. Suggesting the existence of two God Beings is to Orthodox Judaism what the rejection of the trinity doctrine is to conventional Christianity. Thus the Apostle Paul initially had people put to death because they accepted a second God Being, Jesus Christ (see Acts 8:1-3); and John Calvin had Miguel Serveto (i.e. Michael Servetus) burned at the stake in Geneva, because Serveto rejected the trinity. The Apostle Paul (before his conversion) and John Calvin exhibited the same vehement hostility towards people who dared to question their falsely accepted views on God’s nature.

The point for us here is that we should not have any prejudiced opinions about Jewish scholars who are labeled as “heretics”. Rather, we need to examine the reasons WHY they are called heretics. Sometimes accepting the truth about God’s nature is enough to have a person classified as a heretic by those in his community, as evidenced above in the examples with the Apostle Paul’s initial conduct and also with John Calvin.

9) The Bible gives us the names for only two angels: Michael and Gabriel. But the Talmud provides supposed names for a number of other angels. Those names were made up by some “sages”, and those additional angelic names are a part of Jewish mythology. In actual fact none of God’s angels have the other names mentioned in Jewish mythology.

10) Now it is in Jewish mythology, as preserved in the Talmud, that we find evidence that certain Jewish sages understood that the Old Testament reveals the existence of two distinct God Beings. Their bias would hardly have allowed them to acknowledge the existence of a second God Being. And so the way

they got around making any such acknowledgments was to ascribe the things Jesus Christ did during Old Testament times to an angel, for whom they conveniently invented a rather revealing name.

Enter the angel they named “Metatron”!

We can find information about Metatron in many different places. Sources you could check for yourself include: The Talmud, Encyclopedia Judaica, The Jewish Encyclopedia, The Legends of the Jews by Louis Ginzberg, Everyman’s Talmud by Abraham Cohen, John Gill’s Expositor Commentary, and numerous websites on the internet. All you need to do is a search on the word “Metatron”.

I am not trying to endorse or to promote any of the above sources for information about Metatron. Especially on the internet you’ll find some sources that are way off target, something you should be able to discern for yourself. I simply wish to point out that there are numerous sources for readily available information on this subject. Yes, some of the information you will find will be unbalanced or in conflict with information you can find in a different work or on a different website. That should not dissuade you from doing some research of your own. And I’ll try to help you “to separate the wheat from the chaff”, to separate comments that are valid and significant from other comments that are biased towards supporting a certain point of view, and which comments don’t deserve any serious consideration.

REFERENCES IN THE TALMUD TO THE ANGEL METATRON

Let’s start with the Talmud. (The bold-faced emphasis in all quotations is mine.)

Talmud - Mas. Chagigah 13b

Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel at the bottom hard by the living creatures.⁹ R. Eleazar said: [It means] a certain angel, who stands on the earth and his head reaches unto the living creatures. In a Baraitha it is taught: **His name is Sandalfon**;¹⁰ he is higher than his fellows by a [distance of] five hundred years’ journey, and he stands behind the Chariot and wreathes crowns¹¹ for his Maker.

Footnote number 10 states: “Sandalfon is described as **brother of Metatron**”.

In this footnote we see that Jewish mythology accepts that **some angels supposedly have brothers**. That type of thinking is patterned along the lines of **Greek mythology**. Keep in mind that this is a quotation and footnote from the Jewish Talmud! So in Talmudic theology there are two very powerful angels named “Sandalfon” and “Metatron” who are supposedly “brothers”.

Here is the next quotation.

Talmud - Mas. Chagigah 15a

Aher mutilated the shoots.¹¹ Of him Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt.¹² What does it refer to? -- **He saw that permission was granted to Metatron**¹³ to sit and write down¹⁴ the merits of Israel. Said he: It is taught as a tradition that on high¹⁵ there is no sitting¹⁶ and no emulation, and no back,¹⁷ and no weariness.¹⁸ **Perhaps**, -- God forbid! -- **there are two divinities!** [Thereupon] they led **Metatron** forth, and punished him with **sixty fiery lashes**,¹⁹ saying to him: Why didst thou not rise before him when thou didst see him? Permission was [then] given to him to strike out the merits of Aher. A Bath Kol²⁰ went forth and said: Return, ye backsliding children²¹ -- except Aher.²² [Thereupon] he said: Since I ²³ have

been driven forth from yonder world,²⁴ let me go forth and enjoy this world. So Aher went forth into evil courses.²⁵

And here are the relevant footnotes 13, 14, 19 and 22.

(13) The name of one of the highest angels. Various derivations of the word have been suggested. Cf. Levy and Jast. s.v. For an illuminating article on the character, activities and identity of **Metatron**, v. J.E. vol. VIII, p. 519.

(14) The sentence may also be rendered thus: '**He saw M. to whom permission was given to be seated** while writing down etc.' (Jast.).

(19) I.e., he was beaten with 'heated disks or rings strung on a lash' (Jast.). **The purpose of the punishment was to show that M. had no more power than others** (Tosaf.).

(22) According to our passage, **Aher was guilty of the heresy of dualism**. L. Ginzberg (J.E. vol. V, pp. 138-139) denies all historic worth to the story given here, which, on account of **its reference to Metatron** -- which he declares to be a specifically Babylonian idea -- and its lack of connection with the introductory words, he declares to be of late origin. Ginzberg prefers the parallel account in J. Hag. II, I, where it is related that when **Elisha (i.e. Aher) saw a scholar he slew him**, that he enticed the young from studying the Torah, and that **he informed against the Jews** when they sought to perform the work they were ordered to do on the Sabbath in a manner not to break the Law, These events undoubtedly refer to **the period of the Hadrianic persecutions**. In the J.T. **two reasons are mentioned for his apostasy**: according to some, he saw one man break the precept of Deut. XXII, 7, without coming to harm, and another observe it and get killed; according to others, he saw the tongue of the great scholar R. Judah Nahtum in the mouth of a dog. The J.T. also gives a different version of the verses discussed by Elisha with R. Meir, and of what R. Meir said on his master's death (v. J.E. vol. VIII, p. 434). [COMMENT: "J.E." = Jewish Encyclopedia, and "J.T." = Jerusalem Talmud]

Here are some comments regarding this quotation and these footnotes.

In the third generation of tannaim there was a scholar named **Elisha ben Abuyah**. He was born before 70 A.D. and he was still alive in the 130's A.D. The views which this scholar suggested were considered to be heresy by his peers. And because he was considered to be a heretic, therefore his real name was no longer used to refer to him. Instead, he was given the name "**Aher**" (or "Acher"), a word that means "**the other one**".

The above quotation refers to this Elisha ben Abuyah having figured out that in heaven **permission was granted to this angel named Metatron TO SIT IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!** Elisha's colleagues had no problem with this part of Elisha's understanding. They actually accepted that Metatron was allowed to sit in heaven. But they were furious with the conclusions that Elisha dared to draw from this understanding.

Elisha reasoned that in heaven only God sits down. In general terms Elisha's colleagues also agreed with this statement, i.e. that angels are normally not allowed to sit in heaven. Elisha then reasoned that since Metatron was allowed to sit in the presence of God, **THEREFORE METATRON MUST ALSO BE A GOD!**

This logical conclusion was totally unacceptable to the Pharisees, and so they pronounced Elisha ben Abuyah to be a heretic, and they changed his name in their written records to "Aher".

To supposedly "prove" that Metatron was NOT a God, even though he was allowed "to sit", the

Pharisees came up with a ludicrous assertion. They claimed that Metatron was then supposedly led out (“led” by whom and “out” from where?) and given “sixty fiery lashes”. This was the best counter-argument they could think of to try to avoid the obvious conclusion that this “Metatron” really had to be a God Being. Shortly we’ll see their explanation for why Metatron was allowed to sit in heaven.

To say that it is kind of weird to believe that a spirit being is given sixty lashes for some transgression, and then promptly allowed to continue with his previous duties, including once again being allowed to sit in heaven, is probably an understatement. But that’s the type of reasoning the whole Talmud is filled with. And “fiery lashes” somehow being painful to angels is also nothing more than mythology.

As an aside, the Talmud also states that the angel Gabriel received “forty fiery strokes”. Here is the quotation.

Talmud - Mas. Yoma 77a

And behold the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn on his side, reported, saying: ‘I have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me’. R. Johanan said: In that hour **Gabriel was led out behind the curtain and received forty fiery strokes**, he being told: If you had not executed the command at all, well, you simply would not have executed it. But since you did execute it, why did you not do as you were commanded?

This quotation is not relevant to our subject here. I mention it merely to show how free and easy the Talmud is in handing out “fiery strokes” to angels that are identified as being God’s servants. This above quotation is also part of Jewish mythology. It is also interesting that in the Talmud it is only God’s righteous angels (i.e. Metatron and Gabriel) who are given fiery lashes; Satan who is mentioned 88 times is never given any lashes. Makes you wonder whose side those Talmudic writers were on, doesn’t it?

Anyway, because the scholar Aher had dared to suggest the existence of two God Beings, therefore he was then falsely accused by his peers of being a traitor of the worst kind, including being a murderer. Those accusations were all false. They were nothing more than an expression of vehement hatred for Aher’s suggestion that there might indeed be two God Beings. In truth Aher was just another Pharisaic tanna like all the other Pharisaic tannaim, except that he had come to understand that there are two God Beings. In every other way Aher was just as deceived as all of his colleagues. It is not as if Aher was somehow a true believer. There is nothing special about Aher except that he was one Jewish religious leader who was willing to acknowledge that there might be two God Beings.

To summarize, **the above Talmud quotation shows the following:**

- 1) Metatron was “one of the highest angels”.
- 2) Unlike any other angel (according to Jewish teachings) Metatron was allowed “to sit in heaven”, probably based on Psalm 110:1, though this is not stated directly.
- 3) From this Elisha ben Abuyah concluded that Metatron must also be a God.
- 4) For this suggestion Elisha was then pronounced to be a heretic.
- 5) Therefore numerous false accusations were then made against Elisha to blacken his name, in order to destroy any credibility for Elisha’s conclusion regarding two Gods. The intent was to show that Elisha

was already an evil person when he came up with this suggestion for two God Beings, because only evil people would reach such a conclusion. (Does this type of character assassination sound familiar?)

6) In an attempt to “disprove” that Metatron was a second God Being, some other amora invented the story that Metatron was subsequently led out and given sixty lashes. That doesn’t seem like the other Pharisees were able to build much of a case against Elisha’s conclusion, when all they could do is invent a story about an angel, and a righteous one at that (just like Gabriel), being given sixty lashes.

7) Note that with this added story the other amoraim did acknowledge that Metatron is allowed “to sit” in heaven. They made no attempt to deny this, but simply said that Metatron received sixty lashes because he should have stood up at a certain point in time.

8) This section’s opening quotation from Ecclesiastes 5:6 “Of him Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt” (or Ecclesiastes 5:5 in the JPS) is one more example of how the Talmud constantly misapplies the Scriptures. The context of Ecclesiastes 5:6 deals with the dangers inherent in making vows. So when Solomon said “suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt” Solomon was saying “don’t make any vows that you may not be able to keep”. But this verse has no application whatsoever to Elisha drawing the conclusion that there might be two distinct God Beings, a conclusion which happens to be the truth. Elisha wasn’t making any vows; he was simply suggesting that “perhaps there are two divinities”. In the Talmud scriptural references are more often than not misapplied, as in this example here.

Let’s move on to the next quotation.

Talmud - Mas. Yevamoth 16b

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: The following verse was uttered by **the Genius of the Universe**:¹⁰ I have been young and now I am old¹¹ For who else could have said it! If the Holy One, blessed be He, be suggested, is there any old age in his case? Then David must have said it? But was he so old? Consequently it must be concluded that **the Genius of the Universe** had said it.

And here is footnote 10.

(10) Or ‘**Prince of the world**’; identified by some writers with **Metatron** ‘whose name is similar to that of his master’; v. Sanh., Sonc. ed. p. 245, nn. 11 and 12 and cf. op. cit. p. 246, n. 6. V. also ‘A.Z., Sonc. ed. p. 10, n. 6.

In this quotation and its explanatory footnote we see that this angel Metatron is also referred to as “the Genius of the Universe” and as “the Prince of the world”. Samuel ben Nahmani (an amora who lived in the 300’s A.D.) is reasoning about David’s statement in Psalm 37:25. The fact that Nahmani couldn’t understand that King David himself made this statement, while it is very revealing as to how flawed the biblical reasoning of these Jewish “sages” really was, is of no consequence to us in this discussion. The point here is that this amora referred to Metatron as “the Genius of the Universe”.

The point to note is that with this expression “the Genius of the Universe” Nahmani did NOT mean God or “YHVH”. So in Nahmani’s thinking there was in addition to God **another Being** who is identified as “the Genius of the Universe”. That is hardly a suitable description for an ordinary angel. The title “the Genius of the Universe” in fact comes very close to calling this individual “the Creator of the Universe”.

Let’s look at the next quotation, which also quotes Nahmani, here called “Nahman”.

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 38b

R. Nahman said: He who is as skilled in refuting the Minim as is R. Idith,⁵² let him do so; but not otherwise. Once a Min said to R. Idith: It is written, And **unto Moses** He said, **Come up to the Lord.**⁵³ But surely it should have stated, Come up unto me! -- **It was Metatron 54 [who said that]**, he replied, **whose name is similar to that of his Master,**⁵⁵ for it is written, **For my name is in him.**⁵⁶ But if so, [he retorted,] we should worship him! The same passage, however, -- replied R. Idith says: Be not rebellious⁵⁷ against him, i.e., exchange Me not for him. But if so,⁵⁸ why is it stated: He will not pardon your transgression?⁵⁹ He answered: **By our troth 60 we would not accept him even as a messenger,**⁶¹ for it is written, And he said unto him, If Thy [personal] presence go not etc.⁶²

And here are footnotes 52 - 62.

(52) [Ms. M.: R. Idi.]

(53) Ex. XXIV, 1.

(54) **Name of an Angel**, probably derived from metator, guide. **In Talmud and Midrash he is regarded notably as the defender of the rights of Israel** (cf. Hag. 16a).

(55) Cf. Rashi on Ex. XXIII, 21. The numerical value of **Metatron** (iuryyn) is equal to that of hsa (**the Almighty**) viz. 314.

(56) Ex. XXIII, 21.

(57) rn, is here taken, in the sense of 'exchange', from run.

(58) That he is not to be worshipped, but God alone.

(59) Ibid. Surely, he has no authority to do so.

(60) Lit., 'we hold the belief.'

(61) Lit., 'Postman' -- of forgiveness.

(62) Ex. XXXIII, 15. [**The Min was a believer in the doctrine of two rulers** and he sought support for this belief from Ex. XXIV, 1. R. Idith met his argument by showing that even **Metatron was accepted by Jews only as guide**, and **in no sense a second god**. For a full discussion of the passage, v. Herford, op. cit. p. 285ff.]

This is a very interesting quotation. The word "Min" (plural "Minim") means "heretic", and in the Talmud it is frequently used to refer to Christian Jews and sometimes to Sadducees. In this passage Nahman is quoting a sage named "R. Idith" who was reputed to be skilled in refuting the arguments of Christian Jews.

In this account the Christian Jew quoted Exodus 24:1 where God said "come up unto the LORD". Here is how the Pharisaic sage answered this statement. The conversation went more or less as follows (paraphrased and amplified):

“In Exodus 24:1 it was METATRON who was speaking to Moses. It is just that Metatron’s name happens to be SIMILAR to the name “YHVH”, because it says “My name is in Him” (see Exodus 23:21). Then the Christian replied: “That’s exactly my point, that this “angel” was in fact “YHVH”, and therefore we should worship Him”. To oppose this reasoning the Jewish sage then quoted “be not rebellious against Him” (this is the JPS equivalent of “provoke him not”) from the same verse. So the Christian then asked the sage: “Then why does it say that ‘He will not pardon your transgression’?” Now notice how the Jewish sage replied to this: “By our troth we would not accept him even as a messenger”, or as the footnote explains: **“WE HOLD THE BELIEF THAT WE WOULD NOT ACCEPT HIM EVEN AS A MESSENGER”**.

The footnote explains that the Jewish Christian (i.e. “the Min”) accepted Jesus Christ as “a second God”. In spite of acknowledging that in Exodus 24:1 the word “YHVH” referred to the individual the Jewish sages called “Metatron”, they were not prepared to acknowledge that this Metatron therefore had to be “a second God”. After committing himself to the One called “LORD” (i.e. YHVH) in Exodus 24:1 being Metatron, the Jewish sage then refused point-blank to admit that this Metatron could be anything other than “a guide”, and certainly not the second God Being, as the Christian was asserting.

This statement in the Talmud is a clear fulfillment of Psalm 118:22.

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. (Psalm 118:22)

There is one other very significant fact that is brought out by this quotation in the Talmud. This is something unitarians will not accept. Are you ready for this?

While this quotation supposedly highlights how clever R Idith was in answering Jewish Christians, it also VERY CLEARLY SHOWS THAT **CHRISTIANS UNDERSTOOD THAT IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES THERE WERE TWO GOD BEINGS!**

So a quotation in the Talmud shows that the early Christians (called “Minim”) understood quite clearly that Jesus Christ was the God who dealt with Moses! Read the whole quotation again. There is no doubt that the Jewish sage was dealing with a Christian who believed that Jesus Christ had dealt with Moses, and this is what R Idith was trying to refute. This is powerful evidence regarding the early Church’s understanding about Jesus Christ’s role in the Old Testament.

Now let’s look at the next Talmud quotation.

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 94a

Of the increase 5 of his government and peace there shall be no end.⁶ R. Tanhum said: Bar Kappara expounded in Sepphoris, Why is every mem in the middle of a word open, whilst this is closed?⁷ -- The Holy One, blessed be He, **wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah**, and Sennacherib as Gog and Magog;⁸ whereupon the Attribute of Justice 9 said before the Holy One, blessed be He: ‘Sovereign of the Universe! **If Thou didst not make David the Messiah**, who uttered so many hymns and psalms before Thee, wilt Thou appoint Hezekiah as such, who did not hymn Thee in spite of all these miracles which Thou wroughtest for him?’ Therefore it [sc. the mem] was closed.¹⁰ Straightway the earth exclaimed: ‘Sovereign of the Universe! Let me utter song before Thee instead of this righteous man [Hezekiah], and make him the Messiah.’ So it broke into song before Him, as it is written, From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.¹¹ Then **the Prince of the Universe**¹² said to

Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! It [the earth] hath fulfilled Thy desire [for songs of praise] on behalf of this righteous man.'¹³ But a heavenly Voice(6) Isa. IX, 6.

Here are the relevant footnotes.

(9) [The attributes of Justice and Mercy are often hypostasized and represented as interceding with the Almighty.]

(10) Shewing that God's original intention was 'closed', i.e., revoked. Other interpretations: **God wished to 'close' i.e., end the troubles of Israel by making Hezekiah the Messiah**; or Hezekiah's mouth was closed, i.e., he sang no psalms to the Almighty.'

(11) Ibid. XXIV, 16.

(12) This is a **special angel set over the world**, distinct from the guardian angels of the separate nations. **He has been identified with Metatron**; Tosaf. Yeb. 16b however rejects this identification.

(13) So translated by Maharsha. The passage might also mean: Fulfil the desire of this righteous man, i.e., appoint him the Messiah.

This quotation starts off with a reference to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:7. Then these sages speculate that God intended to appoint Hezekiah to be the Messiah. Someone then interceded and suggested that God really should make David the Messiah because David had composed so many hymns to God.

THE WHOLE DISCUSSION IS UTTERLY ABSURD! They don't have the vaguest idea of what the real role of the Messiah is all about. They are looking for nothing more than a national hero. Such an enormous lack of understanding means that all of these sages are totally unqualified to correctly explain any part of the Old Testament. Those sages are the last people anyone in God's Church should look to for an understanding of the Scriptures. So much for anyone in God's Church relying on "the Soncino Commentary" of the Old Testament for their understanding of Old Testament Scriptures.

The reason I have quoted this section is because it again refers to "the Prince of the Universe". The footnote again identifies this individual as a "special angel", also identified with Metatron.

Let's look at the next quotation.

Talmud - Mas. Avodah Zarah 3b

What then does God do in the fourth quarter?¹⁷ -- He sits and instructs the school children,¹⁸ as it is said, Whom shall one teach knowledge, and whom shall one make to understand the message? Them that are weaned from the milk.¹⁹ **Who instructed them theretofore?**²⁰ -- If you like, **you may say Metatron**,²¹ or it may be said that **God did this** as well as other things. And what does He do by night? -- If you like you may say, the kind of thing He does by day; or it may be said that He rides a light cherub, and floats in eighteen thousand worlds; for it is said,

And here are footnotes 19 - 21.

(19) Isa. XXVIII, 9.

(20) i.e., prior to the Destruction.

(21) [Metatron: Name of an angel, who is also called ... (Hebrew letters). Metatron is probably derived from Metator, meaning guide, precursor, he being regarded as the angel who went before the Israelites in the wilderness.]

For this passage the footnote explains that Metatron is regarded as “the angel who went before the Israelites in the wilderness”. It should be easy for us to see that here Metatron is identified with the things that Jesus Christ did with Israel at the time of the exodus. See Acts 7:37-38 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

Let's notice one more quotation where Metatron is again identified with “the Angel of the Universe”.

Talmud - Mas. Chullin 60a

R. Hanina b. Papa expounded: May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; let the Lord rejoice in His works!¹⁰ This verse was said by **the Angel of the Universe**.¹¹ For when the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined after its kind¹² upon the trees, the plants applied unto themselves an a fortiori argument, saying: 'If the Holy One, blessed be He, desired a motley growth, why did He enjoin "after its kind" upon the trees? Moreover, is there not here an a fortiori argument? If upon trees which by nature do not grow up in a motley growth the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined "after its kind", how much more so does it apply to us!' Immediately each plant came forth after its kind. Thereupon **the Angel of the Universe** declared: 'May the glory of the Lord endure for ever: let the Lord rejoice in His works!'

And here is footnote 11.

(11) The angel Metatron, v. Tosaf. ad loc.

That covers the references to Metatron in the Talmud. These are the basic references. The Kabbalistic writings and the tosafot contain additional references. But they all come back to these basic quotations we have examined.

We can also look at some additional information from other sources. These other sources will largely evaluate the Talmud quotations we have already looked at above. Let's look at the Encyclopedia Judaica. (Again my emphasis throughout.)

ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA, ARTICLE “METATRON”

Also: Matatron; Sar ha-Panim (angel)

“In *Hagigah* it is said that the *tanna* Elisha b. Avuyah saw Metatron seated and said, “perhaps there are two powers,” as though indicating Metatron himself as a second deity. The Talmud explains that Metatron was given permission to be seated **only because he was the heavenly scribe recording the good deeds of Israel. Apart from this, the Talmud states, **it was proved to Elisha** that Metatron could not be a second deity by the fact that Metatron received 60 blows with fiery rods to demonstrate that Metatron was not a god, but an angel, and could be punished.”**

The Encyclopedia Judaica refers to the quotation we have already seen. They understood that Elisha suggested the existence of “a second deity”. This also shows that the “60 blows” were supposedly given to Metatron, not because Metatron “deserved them”, but purely to prove a point to Elisha. That's

pretty harsh on Metatron, isn't it?

Notice here the justification which the sages provided for the fact that Metatron was allowed to sit in heaven: it was supposedly **because Metatron was a scribe** ... and we all know that scribes obviously have to sit, don't we? So if Metatron is just a scribe, then He doesn't have to be a God after all, does He? Are you impressed with this reasoning? Is Psalm 110:1, the Scriptures that reveals Someone sitting, speaking about "a scribe"?

Let's continue with the quotation.

"The story in tractate *Sanhedrin* also confers on Metatron a supernatural status. He is the angel of the Lord mentioned in Exodus 23:21 of whom it is said "... and hearken unto his voice; be not rebellious against him... for My name is in him." When one of the heretics asked R. Idi why it is written in Exodus 24:1 "And unto Moses He said 'Come up unto the Lord'," instead of "Come up unto Me," the *amora* answered that the verse refers to Metatron "whose name is like that of his Master." When the heretic argued that, if that were so, Metatron should be worshiped as a deity, R. Idi explained that the verse "be not rebellious against him" should be understood to mean "do not exchange Me for him." R. Idi added that Metatron was not to be accepted in this sense even in his capacity as the heavenly messenger. Underlying these disputations is the fear that speculations about Metatron might lead to dangerous ground. The Karaite Kirkisani read in his text of the Talmud an even more extreme version: **"This is Metatron, who is the lesser YHWH. It is quite probable that this version was purposely rejected in the manuscripts."**

"The epithet "**lesser YHWH**" is undoubtedly puzzling, and it is hardly surprising that the Karaites found ample grounds for attacking the Rabbanites over **its frequent appearance in the literature** they had inherited."

In the above two paragraphs Encyclopedia Judaica refers to the "frequent appearance" of the term "**lesser YHWH**" in Jewish literature in reference to Metatron. So identifying Metatron as the "lesser YHWH" is not an isolated reference in Jewish literature. We understand that YHWH (more often seen as YHVH) can refer to both, God the Father and also to Jesus Christ. Since God the Father is greater than Jesus Christ (John 14:28), therefore Jesus Christ could be seen as "the lesser YHWH", lesser when compared to God the Father.

Judaica then points out a different explanation for Metatron.

"The origin of the name Metatron is obscure, and it is doubtful whether an etymological explanation can be given."

That statement is not really correct. And Judaica then continues to highlight three possible etymologies for the name. One option they present is:

"... from the combination of the two Greek words *meta* and *thronos*, such as *metathronios*, in the sense of "one who serves behind the throne." "

Note! This is in fact **the correct and obvious etymology** of the word "Metatron".

The Greek preposition "meta" is used with two cases and thus has TWO meanings. Used with the

genitive case “meta” means: **AMONG, IN THE COMPANY OF**, etc., i.e. it denotes **COMPANIONSHIP**. Used with the accusative case “meta” means: **AFTER**, always in connection with time. **But “meta” does NOT mean “behind”!** The New Testament Greek words that mean “behind” are: “opiso” and “opisthen”.

The English word “throne” comes to us from the Greek word “thronos” via the Latin word “thronus”. This connection is readily apparent.

So to be clear:

The word “Metatron” has nothing at all to do with “SERVING”! Nothing at all! And it also does not in any way mean “BEHIND”! These are meanings that the Jews have attached to the word “Metatron” to avoid the true meaning, which is embarrassing to the Jews!

THE TRUE MEANING OF “METATRON” IS: IN THE COMPANY OF THE THRONE! IT MEANS: COMPANIONSHIP WITH THE THRONE!

The name “Metatron” is in fact an expression of the main thought of Revelation 3:21, where Jesus Christ said:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, **even as I** also overcame, and **am set down with my Father in his throne**. (Revelation 3:21)

Revelation 3:21 literally spells out the true meaning of the name “Metatron”. It is interesting that Jewish mythology devised a name which correctly captures the position Jesus Christ will have in God’s immortal Family. More on this in a moment.

The Wikipedia article on “Elisha ben Abuyah” states that “other scholars have found the concept of Metatron in texts older than 70 CE”. So while the name “Metatron” may or may not predate 70 A.D., the concept of assigning these attributes to a specific individual other than God the Father Himself predate the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. That’s interesting.

There are numerous other sources that will give us basically the same information about Metatron. In preparing this article I collected about 25 pages of specific quotations from various sources. But the remaining information I collected doesn’t really add very much to what we have already seen. So we need not consider it in this discussion.

HOW THE PHARISEES DEALT WITH “THE SECOND GOD” IN THE SCRIPTURES

What we have seen is that the Pharisees who studied the Tanakh could clearly see that there had to be another very powerful individual in addition to the One they recognized as God. The New Testament shows that a number of Pharisees recognized that there are in fact TWO God Beings. The Apostle Paul had been a rising star amongst the Pharisees when God called him. And Paul came to clearly understand that Jesus Christ was the God who dealt with Israel in Old Testament times. But Paul was not the only Pharisee who came into the Church. In Acts 15 we read:

But there rose up **certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed**, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:5)

By Acts 15 a number of other Pharisees had also come into the Church. And while they had some hangups about certain ritualistic issues, they certainly accepted that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that Christ had dealt with ancient Israel. Acts 15:5 tells us that they “believed”. Acts 15 took place about 50 years before Elisha ben Abuyah became a recognized tanna amongst the Pharisees.

Recall that towards the end of His ministry Jesus Christ had confronted the Pharisees with this subject. Christ had shown the Pharisees that there had to be two God Beings. Here is a record of that occasion.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, **How then doth David in spirit call him Lord**, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, **Sit thou on my right hand**, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? (Matthew 22:41-45)

Jesus Christ was here talking to the Pharisees. He focused their attention on Psalm 110:1, pointing out that this verse was a reference to the Messiah. Christ also pointed out to them that the Messiah was told by God the Father to sit at the Father’s right hand (this is where the name “**METATRON**” comes from). The Pharisees must surely have understood that in order for the Messiah to sit at the Father’s “right hand”, the Messiah Himself had to somehow be on the level of God. That was troubling to them.

The ramifications of Jesus Christ’s reasoning about Psalm 110:1 were manifold and far-reaching. The Pharisees realized that in this discussion they were way out of their depth. And so verse 46 says:

And no man was able to answer him a word, **neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.** (Matthew 22:46)

There is one thing we need to understand about the Pharisees at that time. They were hypocrites, yes. But they also tried to find an answer for every question that came their way. That becomes quite clear when we read the Talmud. No matter how ridiculous some question in the Talmud is, **they always try to find an answer.**

Now here in Matthew 22 Jesus Christ had posed a very serious question to the Pharisees, one for which they had no answer. And they were not about to challenge Jesus Christ again. But the question was not forgotten! It was their nature to seek an answer for every question, and when they couldn’t find an answer then sometimes they would just fabricate an answer, like Raba asserting that the Prophet Isaiah had been swallowed up by a cedar tree.

In Matthew 22 **Jesus Christ had sown a seed in the minds of those Pharisees.** I strongly suspect that in the weeks and months and years following this incident, even after Jesus Christ had been crucified, this question was hotly debated amongst the Pharisees, in an effort to find a satisfactory answer. From the point of view of the Pharisees the questions Christ had posed were: **WHO is the second “Lord”** in Psalm 110:1, and **WHY** was He given **permission to sit** at the right hand of God? They needed to find answers to these questions.

The things I will now mention are only my own personal speculations. They are things I cannot prove, though I suspect they are correct. Here is what I believe was the case.

As a direct consequence of this challenge from Jesus Christ regarding a powerful individual being granted the right to sit at the right hand of God’s throne, Jesus Christ as it were rubbing their noses in this Scripture, **THEREFORE** at some point one of the teachers amongst the Pharisees (i.e. a tanna)

devised the name "METATRON". It seems obvious to me that THE INTENTION behind this name Metatron was to cover the needs of Psalm 110:1. The name Metatron perfectly fits this verse.

Since the Pharisees rejected out of hand any possibility that there could be a second God Being, THEREFORE in their thinking this powerful individual at God's right hand had to be "AN ANGEL"!

Now in designating AN ANGEL as the one who sits at the right hand of God's throne, it also got around the matter that this verse is actually speaking about the Messiah! By claiming that there is an angel (i.e. Metatron) who sits at the right hand of God's throne, it meant that this verse did not have to apply to the Messiah, since the Messiah would not be an angel.

To get around people drawing the conclusion that in this case this individual also had to be a God, they invented the story with the "60 lashes". Those "lashes" were presented as proof that Metatron could not possibly be a God. Would you buy that as "proof"?

Now once the Pharisees had established this concept of a powerful angel who sits at the right hand of God's throne, THEN there was the need to justify just why this particular angel was granted such an awesome privilege, to sit at God's right hand. The position of sitting at the right hand of God the Father clearly implies "being second in charge", something the Pharisees also understood. So therefore Metatron became the depositary of all the attributes that apply to Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

Can you see how this in all likelihood developed?

And so we then find in the Jewish traditions the following things about Metatron.

- 1) He is "the Genius of the Universe". This covers the fact that Jesus Christ is the Creator back in Genesis 1.
- 2) He is also "the Prince of the world". This covers the fact that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- 3) Metatron is seen as the One who went before the Israelites in the wilderness. That was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).
- 4) Metatron is allowed to "sit" in heaven because He is the heavenly scribe. John tells us that Jesus Christ is "the Word" (John 1:1). And again Revelation 3:21.
- 5) When the sages said "we would not accept Him even as a messenger" (quoted above), this was a fulfillment of "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1:11).
- 6) When Metatron is given the title "lesser YHVH" this also identifies Jesus Christ, who is the second person entitled to the name YHVH (this name also applies to God the Father).
- 7) When the sages claimed that Metatron was speaking in Exodus 24:1, then this is once again a situation where Jesus Christ was speaking in the Old Testament.

Now these are all things that the Pharisees freely attributed to this angel they named "Metatron". Is it really any wonder that some of the Pharisees would then reason: wait a minute, the individual to whom all these things apply is much greater than an angel; that individual really has to be a God? Thus by Acts 15 a number of Pharisees had reached this (really unavoidable) conclusion, and so they came into the Church of God.

Likewise, is it really any wonder that at least one Pharisaic teacher (i.e. Elisha) when later confronted by all these things then voiced the thought: you know, all of this really points to there having to be TWO Gods?

It seems to me that the Jews invented the angel Metatron to cover all the things in the Old Testament that apply to Jesus Christ. And I suspect that this angel was invented by the Pharisees as a direct response to Jesus Christ's question about Psalm 110:1.

The claim is often made that in the ancient world Judaism was the only monotheistic religion. In one way that is correct, because the Jews always insisted that there is only one God Being. However, usually people overlook the fact that Judaism's monotheistic status was only maintained at the expense of assigning numerous positions and responsibilities, which are really only attributable to a God Being, to various angels. In this regard Judaism's monotheistic status relies heavily, as we have seen, on making use of the angel Metatron; and without Metatron it would be somewhat difficult to maintain that monotheistic status.

Hmmm, you hadn't thought of that before, had you?

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