

Throughout history, cultures have longed for a savior figure, like the Messiah in Judeo-Christian thought, Greek heroes, the Mahdi in Shia Islam, and characters in modern literature.

The Messiah, central to Judeo-Christianity, delivers from sin and establishes God's kingdom. Greek heroes and the Shia Islam's Mahdi symbolize similar aspirations for justice. This theme extends to cultural myths and literature like King Arthur and Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings".

This motif, found globally, underscores our shared hope for a savior, possibly rooted in biblical revelations. We will explore the Bible's promise of a Messiah, tracing back to Genesis, to illustrate the Messiah's key role in biblical narrative.

### GENESIS 3:15

**"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."**

The Bible starts with a curse and an immediate promise of a Deliverer. This verse is crucial to understanding the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. The Old Testament, seen through this lens, is a saga of humanity's quest for this Deliverer.

The passage reveals a conflict between the serpent, our adversary, and the 'Seed of the Woman,' the promised Deliverer. This "bruising" of the head and heel is prophetic, indicating a future spiritual battle between Satan and the Messiah. It suggests the Messiah might face a struggle, but will ultimately triumph over evil. This prophecy frames the biblical narrative that follows, characterized by spiritual warfare and the anticipation of the victorious Messiah.

### OTHER VIEWPOINTS

This is a conservative Christian interpretation. However, interpretation varies. For instance, Jews for Judaism sees Genesis 3:15 not as messianic, but as a depiction of hostility between humans and serpents. "Her seed" refers to Eve's descendants, and the enmity is seen as antagonism between mankind and serpents, not a prophecy about Jesus and Satan.<sup>1</sup>

Modern Judaism often avoids Messianic interpretations of verses used by Christians to emphasize the virgin birth and Jesus Christ's prophesied victory. If Jews read this without knowing the Christian interpretation, they might see it as a Messianic prophecy.

This view, labeled as "literal interpretation," often uses non-literal interpretations in other parts of Scripture to fit their narrative. True literalism implies taking figurative language at face value. Yet, the Jewish rabbinical interpretation ignores the HEAL BRUISING and HEAD BRUISING metaphor to build a "fear of snakes" theology, diligently avoiding Messianic implications.

Martin Luther's Protestant view interprets the "seed of the woman" as the Word of God in the Church. The Church, guided by the "God of peace," is believed to bruise Satan's head. This interpretation has Messianic overtones, though not explicitly.<sup>2</sup>

The Protestant viewpoint often confuses the Kingdom of God, a future physical entity in Israel expressed through the Jewish people, with the church. This misunderstanding, which merges the church with the kingdom, results in the Messiah being equated with the church.

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Sigal, "Chapter 3: The Seed of the Woman," Jews for Judaism, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.jewsforjudiasm.org/know-your-bible/chapter-3-the-seed-of-the-woman/>.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia contributors. 'Seed of the woman.' Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Last modified date January, 2024. accessed January 25 2024. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seed\\_of\\_the\\_woman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seed_of_the_woman).

## GENESIS 12:3

**"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."**

God's promise to Abram (later Abraham) hints at a messianic role far beyond Abram's capabilities. The global scope of this blessing implies the Messiah will descend from Abram, contributing to the biblical revelation of the expected Deliverer. This belief resonates in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, highlighting the universal messianic expectation rooted in Abrahamic faiths. Despite differing interpretations, these religions anticipate a Deliverer from Abraham's lineage, emphasizing the importance of God's promise in Genesis 12:3.

The Abrahamic faiths interpret the prophecy differently. Christianity and Judaism believe the Deliverer will come from Isaac's lineage, as per Genesis 22:18, while Islamic tradition suggests the Deliverer will come from Ishmael, Abraham's other son.

In the New Testament, Peter in Acts 3:25 (KJV) affirms the Judeo-Christian interpretation, identifying the Jewish people as "heirs of the prophets," and specifically of the prophecy to Abraham, that "in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Peter's message implies that the Messiah, who has now arrived, comes through them.

The Apostle Paul refers to Genesis 12:3 in his letter to the Galatians. In Galatians 3:8 (KJV), he states that God "preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." However, it's crucial to note that Paul is referencing the general messianic gospel, not the saving gospel based on Jesus Christ's completed work, as there are no details of this gospel in the Abrahamic story. Nonetheless, Paul's perspective confirms the prophetic announcement of a Messiah through Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

## GENESIS 49:10

**"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."**

In the context of Genesis 49:10, "Shiloh" is a Messianic prophecy, referring to the coming Messiah. The verse asserts that the scepter, a symbol of rulership, would not depart from Judah until "Shiloh" comes, pointing to a significant figure from the tribe of Judah.

The predominant, if not the only, interpretation from Jewish teachers and rabbis is that this verse is a Messianic prophecy, asserting that the Messiah will emerge from the tribe of Judah. The influential medieval Jewish commentator Rashi wrote on this verse, "[This refers to] the King Messiah, to whom the kingdom belongs (יְהוָה), and so did Onkelos render it: [until the Messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs]."<sup>3</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel proclaims, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezekiel 21:27). This verse from the book of Ezekiel does not use the term "Shiloh" but rather employs the Hebraism expressed in the phrase "until he come whose right it is." This phrase is generally interpreted as a Messianic prophecy, similar to the one in Genesis 49:10. It speaks of a time when the rightful ruler, understood as the Messiah, comes to establish peace and justice in the world.

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<sup>3</sup> "Rashi's Commentary on Genesis 49:10." [Chabad.org](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244/showrashi/true). Accessed January 25, 2024. [https://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/8244/showrashi/true](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8244/showrashi/true)

Furthermore, Galatians 3:19 says that the Law “was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” These words echo the words of Genesis 49:10, recognizing the passage as Messianic.

#### NUMBERS 24:17

**"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."**

Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet, was hired by King Balak of Moab to curse Israel, but God compelled him to bless them instead. Balaam prophesied a star and scepter, symbols of royalty and power, rising from Jacob and Israel, indicating a future king. This distant prophecy is seen as Messianic, pointing to Jesus Christ, the "Star out of Jacob" who rules over Israel.

The prophecy speaks of a future defeat of Israel's enemies, adding to the biblical revelation of the Messiah. Despite Balaam's intention to curse Israel, God used him to prophesy the coming Messiah, showing God's unthwartable plans.

The Persian magi, who proclaimed "We have seen his star" (Matthew 2:2), might have known of this prophecy. As scholars who studied ancient texts, they likely knew the Hebrew Scriptures. Their anticipation of a star-linked king suggests they may have known Balaam's prophecy, demonstrating Old Testament prophecies' far-reaching impacts on responses to Jesus's birth.

#### DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19

**"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."**

The passage in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 initially seems to prophesy a prophet, not a Messiah. It mentions a prophet arising from the Israelites, like Moses, who will voice God's commands. Yet, a deeper look reveals more.

The prophecy predicts not only a prophet but also underlines the distinctive traits that differentiate him from others. It asserts this prophet will be "like unto me," referring to Moses, indicating a significant figure.

God's words that "he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" and "whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" imply that this prophet will have authority and that obeying his words is essential, reinforcing the messianic interpretation of this passage.

In the New Testament, Deuteronomy's passage is identified as a prophecy about Jesus. Peter, in Acts 3:22-23, refers to this prophecy, implying Jesus is the prophesized figure. This suggests Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is a messianic prophecy.

In Acts 7:37 (KJV), Stephen confirms before the Sanhedrin that Jesus is the prophet mentioned in the Deuteronomy prophecy, stating, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear."

Both references from Acts were before Jewish audiences, who knew the Hebrew Scriptures. Peter and Stephen identified Jesus as the prophet from Deuteronomy, an interpretation familiar to their listeners.

Evidence shows that Deuteronomy 18:15-19 was interpreted as a messianic prophecy by first-century Jews, not just a Christian concept. This understanding was common among both Jesus' followers and critics. Hence, when Peter and Stephen claimed Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, their Jewish audience would have understood this interpretation.

John 1:45 (KJV) provides significant evidence that first-century Jews saw Deuteronomy 18:15-19 as a messianic prophecy. In this verse, Philip identifies Jesus of Nazareth as the prophesied figure from Moses, suggesting Deuteronomy was seen as referring to the Messiah.

Common era Judaism generally rejects the Messianic interpretation. This could be due to early Jesus believers proclaiming him as the prophecy's fulfillment, as recorded in the New Testament, which modern Judaism likely avoids.

Isaiah 61:1-2, a recognized messianic prophecy, presents the Messiah as a prophet. The text states, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings..." This prophetic role parallels the depiction of the Messiah in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Jesus' usage of this passage in Luke's Gospel supports its messianic interpretation. After reading it in Nazareth's synagogue, he announces, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21), positioning Himself as this prophecy's fulfillment.

Aside from being a prophet, the Messiah is often seen as a priest and king. These roles reflect His mission: proclaiming God's word as a prophet, mediating between God and Israel as a priest while offering Himself for sins, and ruling over God's kingdom as a king. These intertwined roles offer a complete view of the Messiah's identity and work.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19, while initially seeming to foretell a prophet, actually prophesies the Messiah. Like Moses, this figure mediates between God and His people, delivering commandments and guidance. New Testament references and broader Old Testament messianic expectations confirm this interpretation.

## DANIEL 7:13-14

**"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."**

This passage jumps ahead in our exploration of the Messianic prophecies, offering a significant view of the anticipated Savior. He is depicted as "like the Son of man," arriving with the "clouds of heaven" and having access to the eternal God, the "Ancient of days."

The prophecy imparts His "dominion, glory, and kingdom," indicating His royal authority, honor, and universal rule over all "people, nations, and languages." His "dominion is everlasting, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed," emphasizing the eternal and indestructible nature of His reign.

This prophecy, found in Daniel, could be compared to Genesis 3:15. The former is the opening scene, the latter the closing, yet neither reveals the Coming One's identity.