

The “Messianic” Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 1 |
| <i>Impetus Of The Study</i> | 2 |
| <i>Problems Of The Study</i> | 3 |
| <i>Organization Of The Study</i> | 6 |
| <i>Resources Of The Study</i> | 6 |
| Chapter Two: The Life of Cyrus | 8 |
| <i>Sources Concerning Cyrus</i> | 8 |
| <i>Early Life & Personality</i> | 14 |
| <i>Religious Leanings</i> | 24 |
| <i>Political & Military Prestige</i> | 27 |
| Chapter Three: The Semantic Range of מָשִׁיחַ & Cyrus' Anointing | 45 |
| <i>Isaianic Authorship</i> | 45 |
| <i>The Uses of מָשִׁיחַ in the Bible</i> | 53 |
| <i>Differing Views Concerning the Nature of Cyrus' Anointing</i> | 77 |
| <i>Textual Criticism</i> | 91 |
| <i>The Writer's View Concerning the Nature of Cyrus' Anointing</i> | 94 |
| Chapter Four: Purposes & Theological Implications | 99 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 99 |
| <i>Purposes</i> | 99 |
| <i>Theological Implications</i> | 106 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusion | 114 |
| Selected Bibliography | 128 |

Illustrations

Figures

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Ancient Middle East Map..... | 34 |
| 2 | The Great Isaiah Scroll: Isaiah 45:1 | 93 |

Tables

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | Ezra 1:2-4 & Ezra 6:2-5 Parallel | 38 |
| 2 | Psalms 105:15 & 1 Chronicles 16:22 Hebrew Parallel..... | 75 |
| 3 | מְשִׁיחַ Translations and Occurrences | 117 |
| 4 | מְשִׁיחַ in Scripture | 118 |
| 5 | Psalms 105:15 & 1 Chronicles 16:22 Parallel | 121 |
| 6 | Enthronement Psalms & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel..... | 122 |
| 7 | Cyrus Cylinder & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel | 124 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

“Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus...” The prophecy concerning King Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1, which utilizes messianic language to describe the pagan Medo-Persian King, has confounded theologians, historians, and laypeople alike. In Scripture, King Cyrus is the only non-Israelite to ever be designated this way.¹ The question of how Cyrus can be designated as “Messiah” or “Anointed” despite his pagan roots and the implications of the title continue to be formulated and tested. An example of this would be the idea that the name “Cyrus” was added at a later date or that the “anointing” merely denoted kingship and nothing more.² This thesis clarifies the intended meaning of the messianic language ascribed to Cyrus in Isaiah. Explaining who Cyrus was before and after his arrival in Scripture along with an examination of the term מָשִׁיחַ will aid in the process of understanding why he is called “anointed.” This is not to say that Cyrus

¹ Asher Eder, “King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 23 (Jul-Sep 1995): 188.

² Lisbeth S. Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95, no. 4 (October 2002): 373.

converts to YHVHism,³ but it displays how YHVH⁴ can use any person, no matter who he/she is, to fulfill His⁵ purposes.⁶

Impetus of the Study

An interest in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Empires is the reason for this study. Originally choosing a thesis topic considering the kings of Neo-Babylonia but then having to abandon it because of rampant conjecture, this writer noted the reference to King Cyrus as anointed while reading an Old Testament textbook concerning Isaiah. Some scholars ascribe the term as a measure of his kingship, or that he was merely a temporary vessel for God's purpose in a non-covenantal way.⁷ Others believe that a contemporary of Cyrus added his name in order to support the idea that the Davidic monarchy continues with King Cyrus and the subsequent Achaemenid rulers.⁸ The

³ “The Yahwist Religion and Judaism,” Libre Texts, September 17, 2019, [https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/History/World_History/Book%3A_Western_Civilization_A_Concise_History_I_\(Brooks\)/04%3A_The_Bronze_Age_and_the_Iron_Age/4.08%3A_The_Yahwist_Religion_and_Judaism](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/History/World_History/Book%3A_Western_Civilization_A_Concise_History_I_(Brooks)/04%3A_The_Bronze_Age_and_the_Iron_Age/4.08%3A_The_Yahwist_Religion_and_Judaism). “YHVHism” is defined as the monotheistic religion of the Jews which set them apart from the polytheistic and henotheistic cultures around them. It maintained that YHVH had a special relationship with the Hebrew people and they were set apart by Him. This is a form of early Judaism.

⁴ For the purpose of this thesis, the tetragrammaton will be represented as “YHVH” instead of “YHWH,” due to the fact that the Hebrew letter ך is better represented as a “v” sound than the “w.”

⁵ Pronouns referring to YHVH will be capitalized in this thesis.

⁶ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

⁷ Moshe Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (July-September 2012): 161.

⁸ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

interpretations are diverse and all warrant consideration; however, the writer presupposes that Cyrus was prophesied to be YHVH's anointed because through him, YHVH would deliver the Jews from Babylonian captivity and destroy Babylon once and for all. YHVH used Cyrus as a vessel for His will in a similar way that He used Nebuchadnezzar II—one as a temporary savior of His people and the other as an enactor of judgment. Yet, Cyrus' anointing denotes a covenantal agreement between him and YHVH. His anointing possesses many implications, and this thesis addresses each one.

Problems of the Study

The study of how Cyrus is YHVH's anointed, corroborated by other scriptural evidence and Cyrus' personal history, is significant for various reasons. The first is to bring clarification to Cyrus' position as the anointed one of YHVH. As aforementioned, scholars have offered many proposals as to why he is designated as anointed. A study of Scripture displays Cyrus is YHVH's shepherd, meant to fulfill the divine will by freeing the Jews from exile and rebuilding the temple. Further examination of the *Tanakh*⁹ supports this assertion, with the narratives of Ezra 1:1-4, 6:2-5, and 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 confirming Cyrus' decrees and orders to allow the exiles to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Isaiah 48:14-15 names Cyrus as loved and specifically chosen by YHVH, even though he does not know Him. Isaiah 41, 43, 44, 45, and 46 all mention Cyrus in the capacity of executor of YHVH's will. Some scholars even identify him as

⁹ "The Tanakh," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed July 21, 2021, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-tanakh>. The *Tanakh* consists of the Hebrew/Aramaic Scriptures (known to Christians as the "Old Testament") and derives its name from the three sections within: *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim*.

the Messiah mentioned in Daniel 9:25.¹⁰ The point is, the identity of Cyrus and his anointing is not confusing when measured against the whole of Scripture. He cannot be the ultimate Messiah because the ultimate Anointed One manifested Himself in the form of Jesus. Not all the prophecies concerning the true Messiah line up with Cyrus' life, therefore he does not take the place of the Davidic line. Although Cyrus is not the Anointed One in the way that Jesus is, he is anointed in the sense that YHVH's Spirit of wisdom and understanding is upon him.¹¹

Moreover, this study is necessary because scholars opt for an editing of the text to remove all references to the name מְרִיָּשׁ, due to the assumption that it was added by a later writer, not Isaiah.¹² Another viewpoint, held by Lisbeth Fried, is that this is not true prophecy, but was penned after Cyrus had accomplished all of these things in order to authenticate his place as the new Davidic monarch.¹³ However, this thesis provides evidence that the Hebrew text, in general, has not been edited. Furthermore, the prophecy would fail to remain in the genre of prophecy if someone had made additions at a later date. However, one could argue that even without being deliberately named, the "anointed" is proven to be Cyrus by his fulfillment of setting Babylonian exiles free and rebuilding the temple. Even without the explicit name, it could be inferred to be the Medo-Persian king.

¹⁰ Meir Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah': A New Investigation Into an Old Problem.," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42, no. 4 (June 2018): 410.

¹¹ Eder, "King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord," 188.

¹² Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah," 373.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 374.

The most important theological implication for this study is to display how YHVH can utilize any vessel to enact His plans. Just as He did with Nebuchadnezzar II Balaam, or Shalmaneser V, YHVH uses Cyrus to fulfill His will. It did not matter that he was a pagan, a worshiper of the chief Babylonian god, Marduk, and the polytheistic Indo-Aryan systems of the Medo-Persians.¹⁴ Yet, the primary issue people have is that YHVH calls Cyrus His anointed and commissions him to build the second temple. For example, James K. Mead details that the messianic terminology given to Cyrus should cause the reader a degree of hesitation and offense. Two-thousand years of Christian history has proven that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one of God—not a polytheistic idolater. Moreover, Mead proposes that the Jews in exile would have been surprised to see this as well, relating the Hebrew term מְשִׁיחַ instead to their coming king from the house of David.¹⁵ The fact that Cyrus was used differently than other pagans had been, called “YHVH’s Anointed One,” is what causes some confusion with interpreters and readers. The point is that the title is not necessarily about Cyrus, but about YHVH, the Most High King, and how He is able to appoint anyone He desires to His purpose. Paganism does not hold Him back because He is “God of gods and Lord of kings (Daniel 2:47).”¹⁶

¹⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Cosmological and Protological Language of Deutero-Isaiah,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (July 2011): 503, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43727709>.

¹⁵ James K. Mead, “Commentary on Isaiah 45:1-7,” Working Preacher, October 19, 2008, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/reviced-common-lectionary/ordinary-29/commentary-on-isaiah-451-7-3>.

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version*.

Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the thesis itself, along with the reason for writing and the purpose in writing. It also addresses the organization and resources utilized. Chapter two centers on Cyrus' personal life, religious leanings, as well as his political and military accomplishments. It gives the necessary evidence to portray the true essence of Cyrus' character in secular and biblical history before and after his conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C.¹⁷ Chapter three focuses on Cyrus and the messianic language assigned to him in Isaiah 45:1, along with a survey of other messianic language in the *Tanakh* and the Bible passages that corroborate Cyrus' anointed calling. This section conveys a brief overview of the authorship of Isaiah, interpretation differences, and why the text should not be and has not been edited. Chapter four reflects on the theological purposes and implications of the messianic terminology. Chapter five reviews the findings of this research and strives to present accurate and informed conclusions.

Resources of the Study

A variety of reference materials are utilized for this study, including commentaries, journal articles, books, scholarly websites, and Bible translations. The main commentators consulted for the study are C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, both Old Testament scholars. C.F. Keil, specifically, was also a specialist in Eastern languages. Edward Young is another important commentator utilized for this research, an Old

¹⁷ John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, rev. and expanded, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 70.

Testament scholar from Westminster Theological Seminary. Within the academic scope of sources, this study uses Dr. Meir Ben-Shahar, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a Jewish history specialist. Dr. Lisbeth Fried, a scholar of the Ancient Near East, is also consulted. Articles from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Iran Chamber Society are included. Hebrew and Greek translations of selected passages are utilized. Robert Alter, a professor of Hebrew and comparative literature, and his translation/commentary of selected passages are employed.

Chapter 2

Cyrus in History

Sources Concerning Cyrus

The life of Cyrus is a significant factor in examining his character in history and aligning it with the title attributed to him in Isaiah 45:1. There are four accounts of the early life of Cyrus: *The Histories* by Herodotus, *Cyropaedia* by Xenophon, *Persica* by Ctesias, and a near-copy of *Persica* by Nicolaus Damascenus.¹⁸ Each account of Cyrus, however, contains unverifiable material, which is why there is such debate concerning Cyrus' life.

The Histories by Herodotus was written during the second half of the 5th century BC.¹⁹ His account is preferred, mainly because of the transparency with which Herodotus gives his information.²⁰ He states that his version of Cyrus' story is based on recountings given by specific Persians, those being the ones who seek to tell the truth rather than exalt. He does not pretend his story is the only one, though, as he informs his readers that he knows of three other versions.²¹ Additionally, Herodotus' account is preferable over the others because he is a known and respected historian, called the "Father of History"

¹⁸ Stephen Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great: Conqueror, Liberator, Anointed One* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company, 2020), 2-6.

¹⁹ Cynthia B. Patterson, "Herodotus," Oxford Reference, accessed June 5, 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195170726.001.0001/acref-9780195170726-e-584>.

²⁰ Faustina Mora, "Herodotus," Archaeologies of the Greek Past, accessed May 25, 2021, https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/greekpast/4694.html.

²¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, ENG: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.

by Cicero.²² Herodotus' account details Cyrus' life with a focus on his military pursuits in light of the Grecian empire. His history also describes significant Persian policies and customs. Many versions of Cyrus' early life which came into popular circulation after Herodotus—by Dinon, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Justin—can be traced back to Herodotus' and Ctesias' versions.²³ Herodotus' version seems to be the one that lines up the closest to other Babylonian sources.²⁴ However, Herodotus still lacks certain details or incorrectly gives names and places. For example, he gives the Greek translations of the foreign names rather than transliterating them or leaving them in their original form.²⁵ In addition, he leaves out most of the wars of Cyrus unless they have some sort of Greek-involvement (barring the one with Babylon and the one with the Massagetae). The lack of certain events could be due to the need for brevity in such a large work, since Cyrus' life only comprises a very short section of *The Histories*. Herodotus was Greek and wrote

²² J. A. S. Evans, "Father of History or Father of Lies; The Reputation of Herodotus," *The Classical Journal* 64, no. 1 (Oct., 1968): 11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3296527>.

²³ M. A. Dandamayev, "Cyrus iii. Cyrus II the Great," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last modified November 10, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/cyrus-iii>.

²⁴ Ibid. The Sippar Cylinder of the third regnal year (553 BC) of Nabonidus tells that Marduk caused "Kuraš, king of the country Anšan" to rise against the Medes "with a small army he defeated decisively the large troops of the Ummanmanda [the Medes]. He captured Ištumegu [Astyages], king of Ummanmanda and brought him in chains to his land." The Babylonian Chronicle reports that Astyages came against Cyrus, "King of Anšan, for conquest The troops of Ištumegu revolted against him and he was taken prisoner. They [delivered him] to Kuraš [. . .]. Kuraš (advanced) against the capital Agamtanu [Ecbatana]." Then Kuraš transferred the spoils of war from Ecbatana to Anšan

²⁵ For example, he gives the name Ἀστυάγης (Astyages), rather than the traditional form *Ršti-vaiga*.

according to the context he was in at the time, which could also explain why details unrelated to the Greeks are left out.

Cyropaedia, by all accounts, is named a “fictionalized” biography of Cyrus.²⁶ It was penned in the first half of the 4th century BC.²⁷ Many categorize it as a critique of the imperial enterprise of the empires around him.²⁸ Xenophon believed that it was possible for men to rule all creatures, except for other humans. Yet, he states that his mind was changed when learning about Cyrus the Persian and his successful rule of thousands of people and many empires.²⁹ *Cyropaedia* is a biography of Cyrus’ life, mixed with portions concerning Persian policy and Cyrus’ education. Xenophon often treats his work as though it is fact, although it is not. In the beginning section of *Cyropaedia*, he says, “So on the grounds that this man was worthy of wonder we examined who he was by birth, what his nature was, and with what education he was brought up, such that he so excelled in ruling human beings. Whatever we have learned, therefore, and think we have perceived about him, we shall try to relate.”³⁰ It appears as though Xenophon strives to relay facts about the Persian king; however, where the narrative does not fit the purpose

²⁶ Christopher Whidden, “The Account of Persia and Cyrus’ Persian Education in Xenophon’s ‘Cyropaedia,’” *The Review of Politics* 69, no. 4 (Fall, 2007), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20452928>, 539.

²⁷ Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “Cyropaedia,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last modified November 10, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/cyropaedia-gr>.

²⁸ Whidden, “The Account of Persia,” 540.

²⁹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus*, trans. Henry G. Dakyns (370; repr., Project Gutenberg, 2009), under “Book I,” <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2085/2085-h/2085-h.htm>.

³⁰ Whidden, “The Account of Persia,” 541.

of his writing, he supplements the material. There are multiple historical inaccuracies in *Cyropaedia*, such as the early death of Median King Astyages and his throne passing to a son called Cyaxares II. However, it is known that Astyages did not have a son, and Cyaxares is actually the name of his father. Xenophon creates characters from nothing and places them into the story (such as with Chrysantas and Cyaxares II).³¹ Additionally, he specifically lists Cyrus as worshiping the Greek pantheon of gods, but uses Mithra, the main Mesopotamian god, when describing the worship of other Persians. Although Cyrus' precise religious affiliation is unknown, it can be deduced that he would not have worshipped the Greek pantheon.³² The Cyrus Cylinder details his veneration of Marduk, a Babylonian god.³³ He was a polytheist, so it is likely he also followed Mithra and other traditional Persian gods. The worship of the Greek pantheon was either added to appeal to Xenophon's Greek readers or because he equated the Mesopotamian pantheon with the Greek one. Either way, the attribution of Cyrus as a worshiper of Zeus is false.³⁴ Xenophon also mistook the chronology of events and often gave the wrong names for locations.³⁵ Although he disguises *Cyropaedia* as an account concerning Cyrus the Great, Cyrus' childhood in the book is more likely a retelling of King Agesilaus II's boyhood.

³¹ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

³³ James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 283.

³⁴ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

King Agesilaus II was a Spartan and a friend of Xenophon.³⁶ Although not every fact in *Cyropaedia* is foreign to Cyrus' life, it is obvious that the main objective is not to relay a truthful account of Cyrus. Xenophon merely uses the great Persian king as his mouthpiece in order to add legitimacy to his words and thoughts.³⁷

The third and fourth reports are those of Ctesias and Nicolaus of Damascenus in *Persica*. Ctesias' version was written during the 4th century AD.³⁸ Ctesias completely moves from known history and claims that Cyrus was not a member of the Achaemenid tribe, nor was he the grandson of Median King Astyages. He was lowborn in the Mardi tribe, instead. Cyrus was the cupbearer to Astyages, and when the latter sent him to stop a rebellion by the Cadusians, the former did the opposite and seized the Median throne for himself. Ctesias' version contradicts Herodotus and Xenophon; it also contradicts the cuneiform inscriptions about Cyrus. His account can be seen as part of the Median effort to discredit Cyrus.³⁹ It may be vaguely based on fact and sometimes supplements the gaps concerning battles or historical figures in Cyrus life.⁴⁰ However, as a whole, it cannot be deemed the true history. Nicolaus of Damascenus' account is almost identical to Ctesias', with the exception of additional elements concerning the characters of the report

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "Ctesias," Oxford Classical Dictionary, last modified April 26, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-1944?product=orecl>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 5.

and their actions.⁴¹ He wrote his version in the first century BC.⁴² Nicolaus' version moreover parallels the legend of Sargon of Akkad,⁴³ displaying how he could have pulled his details from a different legend in order to describe Cyrus.⁴⁴ Therefore, his record was not fully based on the truth of Cyrus' life and is mainly unreliable.

A variety of other ancient sources either mention Cyrus in passing or describe events that occurred later in his life, such as the Nabonidus Cylinders, the Nabonidus Chronicle,⁴⁵ the Verse Account of Nabonidus,⁴⁶ the Cyrus Cylinder, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, 2 Chronicles, Arrian's *Anabasis*, Berossus' *Babyloniaca*, Josephus' *Antiquities*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Eusebius' *Chronicon*.⁴⁷ Most of these reports are positive, or

⁴¹ "Cyrus iii. Cyrus II the Great."

⁴² Mark Toher, "On the Use of Nicolaus' Historical Fragments," *Classical Antiquity* 8, no. 1 (Apr.1989): 161, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25010900>.

⁴³ Kristin B. Rattini, "Meet the World's First Emperor," National Geographic, June 18, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/king-sargon-akkad?loggedin=true>. Sargon of Akkad, by legend, is thought to have established the first empire in Mesopotamia around 2330 BC.

⁴⁴ Robert Drews, "Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 388, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/544775>.

⁴⁵ "Tablet: The Nabonidus Chronicle," The British Museum, accessed August 15, 2021, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_Sp-II-964. The Nabonidus Chronicle is a chronicle penned in cuneiform on a clay tablet that describes the events during Nabonidus' reign.

⁴⁶ "Tablet: The Verse Account of Nabonidus," The British Museum, accessed August 15, 2021, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1880-1112-181. The Verse Account of Nabonidus is a cuneiform tablet, created around 539 BC to repudiate Nabonidus and praise Cyrus.

⁴⁷ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 7-9.

neutral, in relation to Cyrus in history. Berossus' *Babyloniaca* is the only somewhat negative account, painting Cyrus' siege of Babylon as overtly hostile.⁴⁸

Early Life & Personality

An overview of Cyrus' personal life and character is necessary to establish the historicity of the person named in Isaiah 45:1, as well as the temperament of YHVH's anointed.⁴⁹ "Cyrus" is how English Bible translations attribute the name of the king; however, this is merely the Latin version utilized in the Vulgate, either a translation from the Septuagint Κύρος or from the Hebrew כּוּרֻשׁ. Whichever it stems from, they all originate in some way from the Persian *K'ur'u(š)*.⁵⁰ Ctesias and Plutarch claim that Cyrus' name means "sun" or "like the sun"; however, this conclusion has become questionable over time. His name is similar to the Persian term for sun, which is *chur*.⁵¹ Yet, Cyrus' name is *Kuru* or *Khuru* when written on monuments, manuscripts, or cylinders and cannot be connected to *chur*. The inscription found in the Murghab Valley

⁴⁸ M. A. Dandamayev, "Babylonia," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Last modified August 19, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/babylonia-i>.

⁴⁹ The historicity of Cyrus is necessary, as many people do not know who he actually is. When explaining the topic to other Christians, the writer found that many did not know who he was. It is significant to establish that he was a real person, used by YHVH in a real way. The account is not fictionalized, nor is his behavior out of the ordinary for his temperament. YHVH's use of him and his personality go hand-in-hand.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Volume I* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), s.v. "Cyrus," e-SwordX.

⁵¹ Franz Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 7:442. The Old Persian transliteration is *uwara*.

near Cyrus' tomb reads, "I am Kuru the king of the Achaemenides."⁵² This inscription is found elsewhere, which establishes its authenticity. The name listed *Kuru* is identical to that of the river *Kur* which supposedly runs through the Persis cave in Pasargadae, the capital of Cyrus' empire. According to Strabo, a Graeco-Roman geographer, this is the site where Cyrus defeated Astyages.⁵³ Strabo proposed that Cyrus' real name was "Agradates," which he then changed to "Cyrus" because of the river and its significance to the Median defeat.⁵⁴ However, this conclusion cannot be fully verified, as the name "Agradates" is not found in any relevant texts concerning Cyrus before his Median victory. The more likely reason is that the Pasargadae tribe dwelt in this area, a tribe that contained the Achaemenidae clan, to which Cyrus and his Persian family belonged.⁵⁵ His father likely named him *Kuru* after the river *Kur* that runs through their homeland. To the Persians, rivers are objects of veneration, therefore it is not strange that Cambyses would name his son after one.⁵⁶ However, there continues to be debate about his name's meaning. Karl Hoffman proposes that *Kúru-* is from the Old Indian verb which means "to

⁵² Ibid., 442. The cuneiform transliteration is: *adam. k'ur'us.khâsaya thiya.hakhâmanisiya.*

⁵³ "Pasargadae," Livius, last modified August 13, 2020, <https://www.livius.org/articles/place/pasargadae/>.

⁵⁴ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 442.

⁵⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 58.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 63. "Because rivers are objects of particular reverence for [the Persians], they do not urinate or spit into them, nor do they wash their hands there or allow anyone else to either."

humiliate,” making Cyrus’ name signify “humiliator of the enemy in verbal contest.”⁵⁷ Others doubt the Persian origin of the name entirely and propose that Cyrus was actually an Elamite.⁵⁸ This would make the meaning “he who bestows care.”⁵⁹ Out of the different interpretations, the writer prefers the one which relates *Kuru* to the river *Kur*, as it is the most likely and supported with the location of Cyrus’ clan within the larger tribe of Pasargadae.

Yet, some scholars question the idea that Cyrus was actually from the Achaemenid tribe. Matt Waters proposes that the Achaemenid tribe was a “construct of Darius” in order to legitimize his claim to the Persian throne. Waters states that the term “Achaemenid” does not occur in any of Cyrus’ inscriptions, except for those at Pasargadae which Darius commissioned and placed there.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is known that the Achaemenid tribe was not merely a construct of Darius, but an actual dynasty that began with Achaemenes, father of Teispes, who was a descendant of Cyrus II.⁶¹ Although Cyrus does not deliberately label himself as part of the Achaemenid tribe, he does list that

⁵⁷ Rüdiger Schmitt, “Cyrus I. The Name,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last modified November 10, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/cyrus-i-name>.

⁵⁸ D. T. Potts, “Cyrus the Great and the Kingdom of Anshan,” in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, vol. 1, *The Idea of Iran* (New York, NY: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005).

⁵⁹ Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 171, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Ancient_Persia/_xGAgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1.

⁶⁰ Matt Waters, “Cyrus and the Achaemenids,” *Iran* 42 (2004): 91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4300665>.

⁶¹ “Achaemenid Dynasty,” The British Museum, accessed May 27, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/x108702>. Cyrus the Great, the Cyrus discussed in this paper, was Cyrus II.

his descendant was Teispes in the Cyrus Cylinder discovered in Babylon.⁶² Additionally, Herodotus states that “the Pasargadae are the noblest of these peoples and include the clan of Achaemenidae, which provides Persia with its kings.”⁶³ Although Persia was under Median rule during the time of Cyrus II, the Persians still had their own rulers, indicated by the Cyrus Cylinder that calls his father Cambyses the “great king, king of Anshan” and the sentiment “a family (which) always (exercised) kingship.”⁶⁴ Since Cyrus’ descendants are historically the kings of Anshan, along with Herodotus’ account that the kings come from the Achaemenid clan, it can be inferred that Cyrus was an Achaemenid by birth. This was not a fabricated idea by Darius to legitimize his rule.⁶⁵

This thesis relies upon the account of Cyrus’ boyhood and early reign from Herodotus’ *Histories*. Herodotus claims that there are three other versions of the story,⁶⁶ and that “this, or something like this” is what occurred.⁶⁷ According to Herodotus, Astyages was on the throne when Cyrus was born.⁶⁸ The dating of Cyrus’ birth ranges from 600-580 BC, depending on the source one reads. Astyages’ ascension is usually

⁶² Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 283. “...son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, of a family (which) always (exercised) kingship...”

⁶³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 58.

⁶⁴ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 283.

⁶⁵ Darius did not need to “legitimize” his rule anyhow. He was an Achaemenid as well, descended from Teispes through Ariaramnes, Cyrus I’s brother.

⁶⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 45.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

chronicled to be between 584 BC and the 560s BC. However, because Astyages was on the throne when Cyrus was born, the most logical dating for Astyages ascension is around 584 BC,⁶⁹ and Cyrus' birth date is likely near 580 BC.⁷⁰ The story is that Astyages had a troubling vision concerning his daughter Mandane, which spurred him to marry her to a noble Persian, Cambyses, rather than a Median lord. She soon became pregnant and he had another vision about her and her child. The interpreters explained that the vision meant Mandane's child would rise up against Astyages and take the throne. Therefore, he conspired to have the child killed once it was born.⁷¹ Once Cyrus was born, Astyages commissioned Hapargus, a trusted relative, to dispose of the child. Hapargus did not want to kill Cyrus for a number of reasons; however, fearing Astyages, he passed the task onto a servant of his, Mithradates.⁷² Mithradates was going to follow the command, because of Astyages' promise of death if it was not done, but his wife, Spako, had a stillbirth around the same time. She begged her husband not to kill the baby, but to allow her to keep him. To sustain the ruse, they placed their stillbirth on the mountainside and pretended he was the Medo-Persian heir. Astyages was none the wiser to the trick. However, Cyrus was discovered at ten years old. The young boys were playing "kingdom" and elected Cyrus—though he did not go by that name at the time—

⁶⁹ Rüdiger Schmitt, "Astyages," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last modified August 17, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/astyages-the-last-median-king>.

⁷⁰ "Cyrus the Great," Iran Chamber Society, accessed May 27, 2021, <https://www.iranchamber.com/history/cyrus/cyrus.php>.

⁷¹ Herodotus, *Histories*, 48.

⁷² The Greek version of his name is "Mithradates" (Μιτραδάτης) but the Old Median is closer to "Mithradates" after the god "Mithra."

as their king. When one of the boys refused to follow his commands, he issued a severe punishment.⁷³ The punished boy was the son of a Median noble, who complained to Astyages about the injustice. Cyrus was brought before Astyages with his adopted father, Mithradates, and Astyages soon realized it was not the son of a herdsman, but his grandson.⁷⁴ He consulted the Magi concerning the boy and the previous vision he had about him. When the Magi learned he had been a “king” over the boys of the village, they surmised that the threat had passed, and he would not rise against Astyages later. Pleased with this answer, he sent Cyrus to live in Persia with his parents.⁷⁵ Although he was home, he spoke often and fondly of Spako, the herdsman’s wife. Her name, Spako, is derived from the Persian term *spaka*, which means “female dog.” Cambyses and Mandane, desiring the Persians to think of their son’s survival as miraculous, spread the legend (from Spako’s name) that after his exposure in the wilderness, Cyrus was raised by a female dog.⁷⁶ According to Herodotus, Cyrus grew up to be the “bravest and best-liked man of his generation.”⁷⁷

Although he is called the “best-liked man of his generation,” Cyrus was a pagan ruler and cannot necessarily be labeled as “good”;⁷⁸ however, his temperament matches

⁷³ Herodotus, *Histories*, 51-52.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ He cannot be called “good” because of Jesus’ statement in two of the four Gospels (Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19), ““Why do you call me good? No one is good

the calling YHVH makes to him in Isaiah 45. YHVH used Cyrus as a vessel for His will in a similar way that He used Nebuchadnezzar II—one as a temporary “savior” of His people and the other as an enactor of judgment. Extrabiblical sources display the temperaments of these men and how each were suited well for the role YHVH gave them. It is known that Nebuchadnezzar II was fairly brutal to those around him, even though he was a typically fair ruler. He is painted as an easily-angered sadist in the Babylonian Talmud,⁷⁹ which describes how he would cast lots every day in order to decide which imprisoned king he would sodomize. The Midrash Vayikra Rabbah (18:2) describes Nebuchadnezzar’s slow and violent murder of King Hiram of Tyre. According to the Midrash, King Hiram was married to Nebuchadnezzar’s mother, and he brutally raped his own mother in front of the king as he lay dying.⁸⁰ This is uncertain, however, since Nebuchadnezzar II’s father, Nabopolassar, did not die until 605 BC.⁸¹ It would be odd that Nebuchadnezzar’s mother would be married to a different king while his father was still alive. Although it is uncertain if King Hiram was in fact married to his mother, there is less doubt about the nature of the way he murdered Hiram. Although he was enacted by YHVH to bring judgment to Judah, the siege displays his temperament as well. He

except God alone.” If Jesus cannot be called “good,” then a pagan king certainly cannot be attributed this way.

⁷⁹ “Vayikra Rabbah,” Sefaria, accessed June 5, 2021, https://www.sefaria.org/Vayikra_Rabbah?lang=bi & “Sanhedrin,” Sefaria, accessed June 5, 2021, <https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin?lang=bi>. The following sources, one from the Midrash and the other from the Babylonian Talmud, were compiled between 500-700 AD.

⁸⁰ Avrohom Bergstein, “Nebuchadnezzar,” *Chabad.org*, accessed May 21, 2021, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4451665/jewish/Nebuchadnezzar.htm.

⁸¹ Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts*, 69.

had been relatively patient with the kings of Judah in the years leading up to the siege, but once he sacked Jerusalem, he set everything ablaze. He captured Zedekiah, killed his sons in front of him, then blinded him (2 Kings 25:1-10). Sanhedrin 92b explains that within the exiled people from Judah were “Jewish youths whose beauty was so striking that they overshadowed the sun.”⁸² In order that the Chaldean women would not fall in love with them, Nebuchadnezzar had them killed and trampled so their beauty could no longer be seen.⁸³ Another account is that of Nebuchadnezzar when he returned from his seven years in the wilderness. While he was absent, his son, Amel-Marduk ruled in his stead. When he came back to find Amel-Marduk on the throne, his rage was incited and he threw his son into prison. He remained imprisoned until Nebuchadnezzar died. Once his father had died, the advisors begged Amel-Marduk to take the throne. He was still so afraid of his father that he would only do so if he could view the dead body. Nebuchadnezzar was exhumed, and his body repeatedly stabbed to prove his death. Only then would Amel-Marduk ascend to the kingship.⁸⁴ Biblically, his rashness and rage are viewed in his order to kill all wise men when his sorcerers cannot interpret his dream (Daniel 2:12). He also throws Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the furnace when they refuse to bow down to him (Daniel 3:19-23). Nebuchadnezzar may not stand out as much different from other Ancient Near Eastern kings, but the point is that his temperament fits YHVH’s role for him—a sadistic conqueror.

⁸² Bergstein, “Nebuchadnezzar.”

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “The Death of Nebuchadnezzar (Part 20),” The United Synagogue, November 19, 2015, <https://www.theus.org.uk/article/death-nebuchadnezzar-part-20>.

On the contrary, Cyrus' temperament is quite benevolent and suited for his role as YHVH's anointed and temporary savior. He proves himself to be unlike other Ancient Near Eastern kings. For example, where Nebuchadnezzar enacts barbarous acts and sodomy on conquered kings, Cyrus shows mercy. With the former Median king Astyages, Cyrus notices the wisdom his grandfather possesses and keeps him at his court.⁸⁵ After King Croesus of Lydia is conquered, Cyrus also made him an advisor.⁸⁶ Rather than torturing these men, he sees their value and shows them clemency. No matter what either king had done to Cyrus, it was forgiven. Another example is that of King Nabonidus after the siege of Babylon.⁸⁷ Cyrus marches to Borsippa to forcibly capture the Babylonian king, but when Nabonidus gives himself up without a fight, Cyrus grants him a habitation in Carmania and allows him to live out his days there.⁸⁸ His rage was not easily incited, and even if it was, he could be placated with a wise explanation from his advisors.⁸⁹ Beyond his clemency with other rulers, Cyrus was known to be a person of

⁸⁵ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 105.

⁸⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 69-70.

⁸⁷ G. F. Grassi, "Nabonidus, King of Babylon," *Middle East - Topics and Arguments* 3 (December 2014): 126. Nabonidus was King of the Neo-Babylonian empire from 556 BC-539 BC. It is speculated that he was an illegitimate ruler, and therefore, appointed Belshazzar as a type of vassal king over Babylon. Daniel 5:2 calls Nebuchadnezzar II the "father" or "predecessor" of Belshazzar alone, displaying how he was possibly a legitimate heir to the Neo-Babylonian line. Therefore, Nabonidus "adopted" him as his own son to bring validity to his own claim over the entirety of the empire.

⁸⁸ John D. Davis and Henry Snyder Gehman, *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, Revised and Rewritten. (New York City, NY: Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1944), 124.

⁸⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 69.

honor. How he conducted himself as a king created a legacy that endured long after his death. Alexander the Great, having supposedly read *Cyropaedia* by Xenophon, visited the tomb of Cyrus the Great to pay homage to him. When he found that it had been disturbed, he had it restored and the perpetrator executed because of his great respect for the deceased Medo-Persian king.⁹⁰ Cyrus was a sharp contrast from previous rulers, due to his justice, benevolence, and sympathy for the oppressed, not to mention his aptitude for military strategy and politics.⁹¹ F. B. Meyer states that “Cyrus is one of the noblest figures in ancient history. His character became a model for the Greek youth in strength, simplicity, humanity, purity, and self-restraint.”⁹² The model Greek youth was formed after Cyrus’ likeness and actions, taught to be strong, pure, slow to anger, and so on. *Persae*, a Greek tragedy by Aeschylus has Darius’ ghost describing Cyrus as “not hateful to God, because he was well-disposed.”⁹³ In Isaiah 45:1, Delitzsch describes the Spirit of YHVH speaking of Cyrus in the same way. It does not imply that heathens’ lives are *splendida vita* to YHVH, but that YHVH has personally taken Cyrus in and is allowing him to accomplish great things by the power and support of the deity.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero Alexander and Caesar*, vol. 7, *Loeb Classical Library 99* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Alexander*/10.html.

⁹¹ Eder, “King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord,” 190.

⁹² F. B. Meyer, *F. B. Meyer Bible Commentary: Isaiah* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1979), under “Isaiah 45,” e-Sword X.

⁹³ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 443. The original Greek text is: Θεὸς γὰρ οὐκ ἤχθησεν ὡς εὐφρων ἔφθ.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 443. A fact that is supported by the prophecy of Isaiah 45:1, which calls Cyrus YHVH’s “anointed.”

Religious Leanings

The exact religious leanings of Cyrus are uncertain. It can be assumed that he was a henotheist or polytheist. The Cyrus Cylinder states, “May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nebo for a long life for me and may they recommend me (to him).”⁹⁵ There are hints of both types of worship, as he acknowledges the existence of the other gods and seeks favor from them, yet it all leads back to Marduk in the following lines of the Cylinder. *The World of the Old Testament* calls him a religious polytheist because of the policy he made which allowed the exiles from the surrounding countries to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples.⁹⁶ Yet, the only definitive evidence of Cyrus’ religious leanings is the Cyrus Cylinder, which points to Marduk worship. However, Marduk was a Babylonian god, not a Persian or Median one. Darius I’s line worshiped Ahuramazda, the chief god of Zoroastrianism.⁹⁷ Zoroastrianism actually originated in what is now Iran and rose to popularity during the Medo-Persian empire, likely with Darius I.⁹⁸ Cyrus’ uncle, Vishtaspa, was a disciple of Zarathustra, another term for Zoroaster. It is likely that he knew Ahuramazda through his family.⁹⁹ Yet, Cyrus is never seen praising Ahuramazda, only Marduk. Francois Vallat

⁹⁵ Ibid., 284. “Bel” is another name for “Marduk,” and he is often called “Bel Marduk.”

⁹⁶ J. I. Packer, ed., *The World of the Old Testament* (Alton, HANTS: Window Books, 1982), 186.

⁹⁷ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 153.

⁹⁸ George Foot Moore, “Zoroastrianism,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 5, no. 2 (Apr., 1912): 181, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1507426>.

⁹⁹ Eder, “King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord,” 189.

proposes that Cyrus was taught the worship of Mithra in Media, as Astyages and his court worshipped Mithra. Cyrus' adopted father, Mithradates, was even named after this god. Vallat infers that Cyrus equated Mithra with Marduk.¹⁰⁰ However, there is no evidence to support this assertion.

In the Cyrus Cylinder, Marduk leaves Babylon and “scanned and looked (through) all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (i.e., Marduk) (in the annual procession).”¹⁰¹ Following his choice of Cyrus, he walks alongside him and guides him “like a real friend.”¹⁰² If Cyrus equated Marduk and Mithra, he would have already been familiar with Marduk if he had worshiped Mithra in the earlier parts of his life. Additionally, Mithra remained the foremost deity of the northwest, Iranian highlands even as Zoroastrianism was rising to popularity. After the fall of Babylon, Mithra worship encountered Marduk worship and Chaldean astrology. The two religions and their priests (Magi and Chaldei) coexisted in the capital for a time.¹⁰³ The religions were different, and although the gods may have shared some similarities, there was still a definitive separation between them. The way Cyrus came to worship the chief Babylonian god is unknown, however, it can be inferred that he continued Marduk worship for the rest of his life.

¹⁰⁰ Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 153.

¹⁰¹ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 283.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ John Arendzen, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), 10: under “Mithraism,” <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10402a.htm>.

There is no definitive evidence Cyrus converted to YHVHism, even though YHVH used him as His anointed. Although Cyrus calls Him, “The LORD, the God of heaven” in 2 Chronicles 36:22, this does not necessarily indicate monotheistic conversion. Marduk is often called “the lord of heaven and earth,”¹⁰⁴ so the calling of YHVH as “the God of heaven” could just be a cultural practice. Even if Cyrus was replacing Marduk with YHVH as the lord of heaven, it still does not support the idea that he ceased his worship of Nebo and other gods. Furthermore, in the next verse, Cyrus says, “Whoever there is among you of all *His* people, may the LORD *his God* be with him.”¹⁰⁵ Cyrus does not include YHVH as his own God, but speaks of “His people” and “the LORD his God.” While “His people” could simply mean YHVH’s chosen nation, Israel, the language of the latter statement indicates that Cyrus does not consider YHVH to be his sole, personal deity. Robert Alter translates Ezra 1:3, in a section parallel to 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, as “...He is the God Who is in Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁶ This wording is on par with the conclusion that Cyrus has polytheistic tendencies, since he is assuming there are different deities for different locations.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, while YHVH may be the God of Jerusalem, in Cyrus’ eyes, He may not be the God of all places.

¹⁰⁴ “Mythic Monday: Marduk of Babylon,” World Book, July 24, 2017, <https://www.worldbook.com/behind-the-headlines/Mythic-Monday-Marduk-of-Babylon>.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 3, *The Writings* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 994. Emphasis added by writer.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 807.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Political & Military Accomplishments

Cyrus the Great conquered most, if not all, of the ancient near eastern world. His official reign began in 550 BC, though he was a vassal for the Medes in Western Persia before then. The Medians considered the Persians an inferior race, which is strange since they are very closely related to one another.¹⁰⁸ From Cyrus' statements to the Persians when organizing the uprising, it is inferred that the Medes also imposed forced labor upon the Persians.¹⁰⁹ Herodotus mentions that the Persians hated Median rule for quite some time, which made it easy to convince them to rebel.¹¹⁰ Therefore, tired of the oppressive Median yoke, Cyrus overthrew his grandfather and established the Medo-Persian empire.¹¹¹ During the entirety of his Persia-centered reign, he overtook Lydia, Media, Mesopotamia, Ionia, Syria, and Palestine.¹¹² He continued to move into other territories; however, he already possessed the largest empire the world had ever seen. The Medo-Persian empire under Cyrus differed greatly from that of his predecessors, the Assyrians and Babylonians. While these former powers focused on mass deportations of the peoples in their conquered lands and a rule of fear, Cyrus was more tolerant. He

¹⁰⁸ Herodotus, *Histories*, 49.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 59. "If you choose not to take my advice, your life will consist of countless chores..."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Eder, "King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord," 189.

¹¹² Roger Porter, "How the Role of Cyrus in Second Isaiah Relates to Israel's Developing Understanding of God," *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 13, no. 48 (11/18/2012): 3, <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/PorterR02.pdf>.

allowed the exiles to return to their lands, rebuild their temples, and return their gods.¹¹³ This policy brought favor to his reign from his conquered lands and peoples. His Cylinder, which describes this policy, is actually considered the first charter of human rights.¹¹⁴ Overall, he was painted less as a conqueror, and more as a liberator.¹¹⁵

Although all battles in the establishment of his empire were important, the most crucial siege was that of Babylon. Since Nebuchadnezzar II had reinforced and rebuilt Babylon's defenses and gates, the city had become an impenetrable force.¹¹⁶ Therefore, for a little less than sixty-five years, it was unable to be breached. Babylon sits on a plain with the city in the shape of a square. The entire circumference is 480 stades, or approximately 300,000 feet. Babylon was surrounded by a moat and a defensive wall that was around 88 feet thick and 350 feet high.¹¹⁷ This exterior wall held 100 solid bronze gates.¹¹⁸ Inside the defensive wall was another, thinner wall, with an additional rampart surrounding the palace.¹¹⁹ The Euphrates ran through the city and separated it into two

¹¹³ W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Introduction* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 70.

¹¹⁴ "Cyrus the Great," Iran Chamber Society.

¹¹⁵ Davies and Finkelstein, *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 70.

¹¹⁶ Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, New Updated Edition, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 282.

¹¹⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 78.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 79. Isaiah 45:2 references these gates when it says that YHVH will go before Cyrus and "will break in pieces the doors of bronze."

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

districts. Where it flowed in, there were river gates.¹²⁰ Overall, Babylon seemed to be impregnable.

While Cyrus was strategizing a way into the city, its inhabitants and royalty were celebrating. The reason for the great feast of Daniel 5 is not expounded; however, it was likely a festival to one of their deities.¹²¹ The Verse Account of Nabonidus indicates that they were “perform[ing] the festival of the New Year.”¹²² Morale in the city was low, due to Nabonidus’ revoking of Marduk worship in favor of veneration of the moon god, Sîn.¹²³ The Cyrus Cylinder explains that the reason Marduk went in search of another ruler was because Nabonidus revoked the *akitu* new year festival, a festival which proclaimed Marduk as the supreme god.¹²⁴ The spirit was also low because of the forced labor Nabonidus imposed upon the people.¹²⁵ The main reason for the siege of Babylon was not merely to consolidate Cyrus’ empire. He believed he had been called out by

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Albert Barnes and James Murphy, *Barnes' Notes On the Old & New Testaments: Isaiah* (London, ENG: Blackie & Son, 1851), 2: under “Isaiah 45:1,” e-Sword X.

¹²² Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 281. Nabonidus or Belshazzar may have reinstated *akitu* due to the unhappiness of the people and priests.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Blenkinsopp, “The Cosmological and Protological Language of Deutero-Isaiah,” 507. Although Nabonidus had revoked *akitu*, he may have reinstated it to curry favor with the priests and inhabitants of Babylon, since The Verse Account of Nabonidus implies that the New Year Festival was being celebrated when Babylon fell.

¹²⁵ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 282. “He [tormented] its [inhabitant]s with corvée work (lit.: a yoke) without relief, he ruined them all.”

Marduk, the supreme Babylonian god, to liberate the city and reinstall Marduk worship.¹²⁶

Despite the lack of knowledge concerning Cyrus' religious devotion before Marduk, the Cyrus Cylinder is definitive that Cyrus took Babylon because of his worship of the Babylonian god. The Bible, on the other hand, espouses that Cyrus took Babylon because he was YHVH's anointed, chosen to save His people from captivity. The writer prefers the biblical account, since Isaiah 45 was penned 160 years before Cyrus took Babylon.¹²⁷ The Cyrus Cylinder was created after 539 BC,¹²⁸ and the details concerning Marduk's actions are a fictional retelling of what occurred in order to paint Cyrus in a positive, and legendary, light. The Verse Account of Nabonidus also tells of Cyrus taking the city in a peaceful manner, shaping him out to be a liberator rather than a decimator. Herodotus recounts that Cyrus' first attempt to take Babylon was unsuccessful. Although he defeated them in battle, they receded back behind the city walls. They had been stockpiling food in preparation for Cyrus' siege, and were therefore, unbothered by his attempts.¹²⁹ An unspecified amount of time passed before Cyrus put a different plan into action. He stationed his men on either side of the city, where the Euphrates flowed through, and had them wait until the river was shallow. What he did was similar to what he had done at the river Gyndes—dug canals to divert the Euphrates river into a nearby

¹²⁶ Ibid., 283.

¹²⁷ "Isaiah: Bible Timeline," Bible Hub, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/timeline/isaiah/1.htm>.

¹²⁸ "Cylinder," The British Museum, accessed May 29, 2021, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1880-0617-1941.

¹²⁹ Herodotus, *Histories*, 83.

lake.¹³⁰ When the water became more passable, Cyrus' armies entered the city on both sides. The river gates were providentially open, and the Babylonians were unaware of the Medo-Persian forces coming in. If they had known, they would have either killed them as soon as they entered the city, or they would have locked the river gates. The city was so large that those residing at the center of it were totally oblivious to their fellow people being taken at the city's inner perimeter.¹³¹ As told in The Nabonidus Chronicle and Daniel 5, there was a celebration occurring at the time of the capture. Daniel 5:2 says that Belshazzar, "drank wine in front of the thousand." Paired with the section from the next verse, 5:2, "when he tasted the wine," the effect the wine is having on Belshazzar is more evident. He drank excessively in front of the thousand, which set an example to his lords who likely followed suit.¹³² This, no doubt, made it easier for Gobryas, also known by Gubaru and Ugbaru, Cyrus' general, to take the city while the lords and royalty were inebriated. There was also very loud music and dancing, which may have aided the Medo-Persian armies with sneaking into the fortress.¹³³ Cyrus' forces easily made it into the castle and executed King Belshazzar. Nabonidus fled to Borsippa, a Babylonian city around 11 miles southwest of Babylon.¹³⁴ When Cyrus confronted him there, he

¹³⁰ Ibid. At the river Gyndes, Cyrus digs canals to weaken the river as "punishment" for his sacred white horse drowning in its waters.

¹³¹ Ibid., 84.

¹³² Barnes and Murphy, *Barnes' Notes*, under "Daniel 5:1."

¹³³ Gleason L. Archer Jr., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, vol. 7, *Daniel and the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), under "Daniel 5:1," e-Sword X.

¹³⁴ Osama S. M. Amin, "Visiting the Ancient City of Borsippa," *History et cetera*, November 11, 2014, <https://etc.worldhistory.org/travel/visiting-ancient-city-borsippa/>.

surprisingly surrendered and was allowed to live out his days in Carmania.¹³⁵ On the third day of the eighth month, *Arahshamnu*,¹³⁶ Cyrus entered Babylon and “green twigs” were spread in front of him. A state of peace, *šulmu*, was instated and Gobryas, Cyrus’ general turned governor, placed sub-governors in Babylon.¹³⁷

From the months of *Kislimu* (ninth month) to *Addaru* (twelfth month),¹³⁸ the gods from Akkad were returned to their original dwelling places, since they had been removed by Nabonidus.¹³⁹ Not only were the gods from Akkad returned, but so were those “...as far as Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna and the towns of Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der, as well as the region of the Gutians.”¹⁴⁰ The Cyrus Cylinder states that he returned to those “sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris” their sanctuaries, gods, and the inhabitants.¹⁴¹ The Bible, in Ezra 1:1-6, informs that not only were those on the “other side of the Tigris” allowed to return, but so were the Jews. Ezra 1:7-11 describes Cyrus’ restoring to the Jews the Temple vessels Nebuchadnezzar II had removed from Jerusalem during the siege of 586 BC. Historian Stephen Dando-Collins argues that there is no evidence the Jews were allowed to go back to Jerusalem, since the Cyrus Cylinder

¹³⁵ Davis and Gehman, *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, 124.

¹³⁶ Arno Poebel, “The Names and the Order of the Old Persian and Elamite Months During the Achaemenian Period,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 55, no. 2 (Apr., 1938): 139, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3088091>.

¹³⁷ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 282.

¹³⁸ Poebel, “The Names and the Order,” 139.

¹³⁹ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 282.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

specifically references the towns on the “other side of the Tigris.”¹⁴² He goes on to explain that Cyrus allowed the “black-headed” people, his kinsmen, to return their gods because their religions were related to Marduk worship. YHVH was a completely foreign entity. The only way the Jews could have convinced Cyrus to allow them to go back was to assure him that YHVH was a manifestation of Marduk and that they were building a temple to him.¹⁴³ Dando-Collins argues that it is more likely that Cyrus was distracted by grief after the death of his true love and first wife, Cassandane. This distraction allowed for the Jews to begin the work without permission.¹⁴⁴ He further discredits the proclamation told of in Ezra 1 with Ezra 6:2, “And in Ecbatana, the citadel that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written: ‘A record...’” Dando-Collins advocates that the proclamation of Cyrus would not be written on a papyrus scroll, but would instead be stamped into a clay tablet in cuneiform.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the accounts given in the Bible are unreliable and only written in order to authenticate the Jews’ disobedience as divine permission.

There are many findings of Dando-Collins that the writer takes issue with. The first is that the Cyrus Cylinder did not authorize people on the same side of the Tigris as Babylon to return their gods and peoples. The cylinder was created, and discovered, in Babylon, in Babylonian cuneiform. It was written and placed within the foundations of

¹⁴² Dando-Collins, *Cyrus the Great*, 155.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 156.

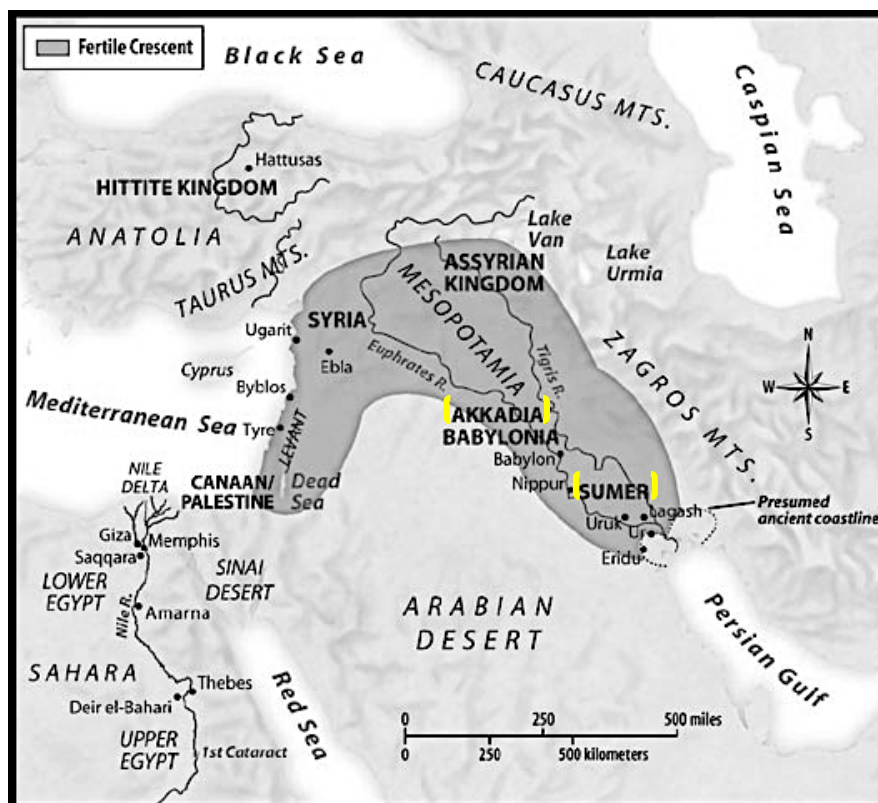
¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

the city ramparts.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, Cyrus was writing from the west side of the Tigris, not the east where Persia lies. However, this does not discount Jerusalem from the decree. Earlier in the Cylinder, it says that “all the kings of the entire world from the Upper to the Lower Sea...all the kings of the West land...brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet in Babylon...I resettled upon the command of Marduk...all the gods of Sumer and Akkad...”¹⁴⁷ Although the Cylinder does say Cyrus repatriated the people on the other side of the river, these statements before and after that sentence broaden the perspective of the people bowing down to Cyrus. It could not have only been the people east of the Tigris who were allowed to return because the Cylinder itself attests that Cyrus allowed the return of the gods from Sumer and Akkad—two places that lie west of the Tigris.

¹⁴⁶ “Cylinder.”

¹⁴⁷ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 284.



148

Additionally, because of Cyrus' likely poly/henotheistic tendencies, it would have been normal for him to desire favor from a multitude of gods. It would not have mattered that YHVH was a foreign god. As long as he could gain goodwill in the eyes of a deity that may bring him success, it was likely all the same to him.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the idea that the Jews convinced Cyrus that YHVH was a manifestation of Marduk in order to build their temple is unsupported. Ezra 1:2 has Cyrus speaking, “The LORD, the God of heaven, who has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, has appointed me to build a house for Him at Jerusalem in Judah.” It is obvious that Cyrus knew it was YHVH, not

¹⁴⁸ Cora Agatucci, “Ancient Middle East,” Maps 2: History - Ancient Period, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum213/Maps/Maps2HistoryAncient.htm>.

¹⁴⁹ R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible*, Condensed Edition (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2017), 622.

Marduk, that he was building a temple for—the personal, holy tetragrammaton is used. This first line of the edict matches the cuneiform edicts of other Persian kings, as they typically started with the idea that their power was owed to Ahuramazda, the Zoroastrian deity, creator of heaven and earth.¹⁵⁰ In this particular edict, the Medo-Persian king intentionally calls the “God of heaven” by the Judaic moniker, YHVH. He then speaks of YHVH’s desire for the pagan king to build Him a temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, it can be seen that Cyrus purposely involved himself with the plans of YHVH and endeavored to complete them.¹⁵¹ It is safe to say that the Jews would not equate their holy, one true God YHVH with a pagan deity, either. Idolatry is what caused them to lose Jerusalem and their temple; they would not use syncretism or idolatry to dishonestly regain their lands and rebuild YHVH’s holy place. Nor would Cyrus’ grief hinder him from realizing what the Jews were doing. How would they have retrieved their holy vessels without his permission? How could they have the means to rebuild without Cyrus’ help? Historically, it is established that Cyrus helped build the temple through funds from the public treasury. Ezra 1:4 describes how he commanded the people from the towns where the Jews had been living to contribute silver, gold, goods, and beasts alongside the freewill offerings.¹⁵² They would not have possessed the resources to reconstruct their holy place

¹⁵⁰ C. F. Keil, *Commentary On the Old Testament*, vol. 4, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 14.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Edwin Yamauchi, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, *1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), under “Ezra 1:4,” e-Sword X.

if Cyrus had not aided them, and the letter to the treasury in Ezra 6 explicitly states that he did so.

Lastly, Dando-Collins seeks to discredit the biblical decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-6 because Ezra 6:2 lists Cyrus' decree on a מגילה (*māgillāh*, or “scroll”) rather than a cuneiform clay tablet. First, the writer will address the term “clay tablet.” In Ezra 6:3-5, the Aramaic version of the decree begins with דְּכִרְוֹנָה (*dikrōnāh*). This term, meaning “Memorandum,” is the heading of the record, which was penned on a new piece of writing material.¹⁵³ The Memoranda found in the day book of the Persian Arsenal from 484 BC served to commence administrative action. A document of this type was also preserved in the Aramaic papyri found at Elephantine. An Elamite cuneiform text was discovered at Persepolis from the Persian treasury that belongs to the same document grouping. These Memoranda could be penned on any material—not just clay tablets.¹⁵⁴ Cyrus' Memorandum is included in this document grouping as well. It contains the administrative command of allotting public treasury funds for the Jerusalem temple. It also follows the style of other דְּכִרְוֹנָה, as it begins with this term and is penned in the third person, with the last sentence speaking only to the treasurer.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, there must be a discussion of the term “cuneiform” in reference to Cyrus' edict. Although cuneiform would have been the script best-known to King Cyrus, the *lingua franca* of this time was

¹⁵³ Elias J. Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65, no. 3 (Sep., 1946): 250, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3262665>.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Imperial Aramaic (from 612 BC to 200 BC).¹⁵⁶ It had been the *lingua franca* since the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian empire. It is not unlikely that Cyrus already knew it for diplomatic purposes. Besides, royal letters were always penned in Aramaic.¹⁵⁷ When Darius II found the scroll in Ezra 6, it is recorded in the Bible as Aramaic. Yet, the first time the decree is recorded, it is in Hebrew in Ezra 1:1-6. A simple reading of these two decrees displays that they are not verbatim:

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”
Ezra 1:2-4

“A record. In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God.” Ezra 6:2-5

¹⁵⁶ Chul-hyun Bae, “Aramaic as a Lingua Franca During the Persian Empire (538-333 B.C.E.),” *Journal of Universal Language* 5, no. 1 (March 2004): 7-8, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237571316_Aramaic_as_a_Lingua_Franca_During_the_Persian_Empire_538-333_BCE.

¹⁵⁷ Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1,” 252.

The fact that they are not verbatim proves that there is no reason to believe these are the same document. Dando-Collins' whole argument concerning the clay tablet versus the *הַגְּזָרִים* is hinged on the idea that two writings are the same, since he attempts to use Ezra 6:2 (*הַגְּזָרִים*) to discredit the authenticity of the decree in Ezra 1. As seen above, the Ezra 6:2-5 scroll does not contain the same material as Ezra 1:2-4. In Ezra 5:17, the letter to King Darius II tells him to search “the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, as to whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem (*New American Standard Bible*).” Darius conducts the search, yet it is not found in the Babylonian treasury, but in Ecbatana, Media. It was likely moved to Ecbatana during the reign of Pseudo-Smerdis—a king who desired to decimate the edicts of his predecessors—in order to preserve it.¹⁵⁸ This letter to the royal treasury had never been read to the public, unlike the decree of Ezra 1.¹⁵⁹ The Ezra 1:1-6 account is in Hebrew because the oral decrees were given in the local language.¹⁶⁰ At this time, the main language of the Jews was Hebrew.¹⁶¹ Therefore, it makes sense that the public announcement is recorded in Hebrew in Ezra 1. It was likely published in other languages as well and read aloud to other people groups.¹⁶² Both accounts are authentic, but are

¹⁵⁸ Herbert E. Ryle, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Ezra and Nehemiah* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1901), under “Ezra 6:2,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ezra/6-2.htm>.

¹⁵⁹ Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1,” 253.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹⁶¹ “Hebrew Language Day: The Revival of the Language of the Bible,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 19, 2017, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/IsraelExperience/History/Pages/Hebrew-Language-Day-The-revival-of-the-language-of-the-Bible.aspx>.

¹⁶² Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1,” 253.

suiting for different purposes. Neither is in cuneiform, as Dando-Collins claims they should be, because it was not the *lingua franca*, nor was it the language of the Jews.

The Jews had been waiting for this decree, for this Cyrus, because of the prophecy naming him in Isaiah 45:1 as קִי־שֵׁנָה . The prophecy of Isaiah 44:21-28 also names Cyrus as YHVH's רֹעִי (*Ro'iy*, or “shepherd”). This prophecy in particular speaks about the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:26, 28), with verse 28 implying that Cyrus is “saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’” In *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus proposes that this prophecy was read by Cyrus. In response, he commended the power of YHVH and was overtaken by a committed diligence to fulfill what had been penned about him.¹⁶³ This prophecy was what caused him to allow the Jews to go back, rather than the policy of tolerance and repatriation that he heralded. The decree given in Josephus’ account reads, “Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets; and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.”¹⁶⁴ Although some parts of this decree match with Scripture, some do not. The section about being foretold by the prophets is not in the original Hebrew; it appears to have been added to support the claim that Cyrus read about himself in the Isaiah scroll. Although this theory possesses a certain allure, there is no biblical evidence to support it. It is uncertain if Cyrus could read Hebrew. If he could not, he may have had a translator interpret it for him. Even so, how

¹⁶³ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, 287. In Book 11 chapter 1 of *Antiquities*.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

would he have obtained access to the scroll? The argumentation is thin. The aim of this proposal may be to account for how Cyrus calls YHVH by name, “the God of heaven,” and then ascribes all he has to the Israelite deity in Ezra 1:2. Yet, Ezra 1:1 establishes that he says and knows this by YHVH stirring up his spirit. There does not have to be a precursor for the decree; the only necessary cause is that YHVH called to him, nothing else.

After Cyrus’ decree of allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild, he is not mentioned in Scripture again. However, Herodotus continues the overview of Cyrus’ life, as do the other aforementioned sources. One large facet of Cyrus’ military prestige was his personal guard of “Immortals.” These men were attributed as “Immortals” because the guard always stayed at 10,000. As soon as one man fell, there was another to take his place. The forces were never depleted, which gave the impression that they could not be killed.¹⁶⁵ Herodotus mentions them after Cyrus, but Iranian tradition establishes that they were formed under Cyrus the Great. A female commander, Pantea Arteshbod, and her husband, General Aryasb, were the first to organize these troops, likely after the Battle of Opis in 539 BC (the battle before Cyrus took Babylon). The Immortals continued to fight for Persian kings throughout the entirety of the Achaemenid empire.¹⁶⁶ Although Alexander the Great defeated them and King Darius III in battle in 331 BC, he retained the Immortal guard throughout his reign. Once he passed on, his empire was broken into four pieces, and it is uncertain if any of these men continued the tradition.

¹⁶⁵ Joshua J. Mark, “Persian Immortals,” *World History Encyclopedia*, November 26, 2019, https://www.worldhistory.org/Persian_Immortals/.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Yet, after the Seleucid and Parthian empires, the Sassanians rose up and created the Sassanian Immortals, which Herodotus speaks of in *Histories*.¹⁶⁷ When they were defeated in the Muslim Arab conquest, the Immortals army was disbanded for the time being. However, in the 20th century, the Immortals were brought back by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last ruler of Iran. He reinstated the group in order to link himself to the successful Achaemenid and Sassanian Empires. It was dispersed yet again after the Iranian Revolution of 1979.¹⁶⁸ Cyrus was known to be an excellent military strategist and it is shown in his large conquest of the Ancient East and his ideas being carried forward through history.

However, Cyrus was only a man. Although he possessed a calmer disposition than most kings of the time, he was still drunk on arrogance after his many conquests. It appears that his temperament underwent slight adjustments after being used by YHVH—he became more arrogant and more convinced he could not lose. Post-Babylon, Cyrus wanted to bring the Massagetae under his rule, a very sizeable and warmongering tribe.¹⁶⁹ Although the Massagetae had the upper hand with their location on a wide plain, Cyrus still sought to fight them.¹⁷⁰ His main reasons were: 1) the divine nature of his birth, and 2) his continued victories, which caused him to believe that any race his troops fought were unable to escape and win.¹⁷¹ In short, he thought himself miraculous and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Herodotus, *Histories*, 88.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 90.

undefeatable. At the time of Cyrus' desire for this tribe, a woman was their ruler. He attempted to trick her into handing over her kingdom through a marriage proposal, which she promptly refused. When his ploy did not work, he went to war with the Massagetae. Queen Tomyris, ruler of the Massagetae, then offered peace with Cyrus. However, she knew he would not accept a peace offering and gave him options: either he could withdraw his troops and she would meet him on his land, or she would withdraw her troops and he could meet her on her land. All of his advisors told him to withdraw, since fighting on his own land would give him the advantage.¹⁷² One advisor, former King Croesus of Lydia, pressed for the latter plan. He gave a few different reasonings for his view, but finished his argument with, "it would be intolerably demeaning for Cyrus the son of Cambyses to withdraw and give ground to a woman."¹⁷³ Cyrus followed the advice of Croesus and crossed into the Massagetae land. Tomyris pulled her troops back, as promised. After crossing into their land, Cyrus had a dream concerning Hystaspes' oldest son, Darius. Wings grew from his shoulders and he held one over Asia.¹⁷⁴ The other cast a shadow upon Europe. According to the Behistun Inscription, Darius was also an Achaemenid descended from Teispes. His great-grandfather was Ariaramnes, who was another son of Teispes (like the first Cyrus).¹⁷⁵ Although his claim was not as strong as Cyrus', it was still enough to legitimize him as a ruler. Cyrus took this dream as a sign

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Joshua J. Mark, "Behistun Inscription," *World History Encyclopedia*, November 28, 2019, https://www.worldhistory.org/Behistun_Inscription/.

that the gods were warning him of Darius' plan to overthrow him. Herodotus, on the other hand, interprets the dream as a warning of his coming death. In the following days, many Massagetae were killed, but Cyrus unsurprisingly took even more as his prisoners.¹⁷⁶ One of those prisoners was Prince Spargapises of the Massagetae. When Queen Tomyris heard of this, she gave Cyrus the chance to withdraw if he gave her son back. If not, she swore "by the sun who is the lord of the Massagetae, that for all [his] insatiability [she would] quench [his] thirst for blood."¹⁷⁷ Of course, he paid the threat no mind. The majority of the Massagetae and Prince Spargapises were taken (or killed) at a feast Cyrus orchestrated for them. Once Spargapises saw the predicament he was in, he begged for release. In a foreseeable move, Cyrus had him released from his chains. Once he was free, the prince committed suicide. When word of his death reached his mother, she waged intense war upon the Achaemenid forces. The Massagetae eventually gained the upper hand, and the Persian army was decimated.¹⁷⁸ Cyrus was killed in this battle in 530 BC.¹⁷⁹ In the end, his arrogance and unquenchable lust for more power got the better of him. After the battle, Queen Tomyris had a wineskin filled with human blood. When she came upon Cyrus' body, she placed his head inside the wineskin and quenched his thirst for blood, as she had sworn.¹⁸⁰ The throne passed on to his son, Cambyses II, and

¹⁷⁶ Herodotus, *Histories*, 92.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Davies and Finkelstein, *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 70.

¹⁸⁰ Herodotus, *Histories*, 93.

the Achaemenid empire continued. Although, like the Neo-Babylonian empire after Nebuchadnezzar II, the Achaemenid empire was never as strong as it was beneath its first king.

Chapter 3

The Semantic Range of מָשִׁיחַ & Cyrus' Anointing

Isaianic Authorship

Before the discussion of the term מָשִׁיחַ in Scripture and its meaning to Cyrus, the preferred view of Isaianic authorship must be established. It is significant to discuss since authorship leads to different interpretations of the text and whether it is prophetic. The most common thread of scholarship is that Isaiah, the prophet of the 8th century BC,

contributed to the book.¹⁸¹ The differences emerge when examining how much he wrote and when the rest was penned, especially after Isaiah 39. The timeline of the book skips approximately 150 years in chapters 40-55; however, Isaiah speaks about these events as though they have already occurred. Isaiah 56-66 has another timeline acceleration to when the second temple is under construction.¹⁸² Traditional commentators and scholars will attribute this to the fact that Isaiah is a prophet and YHVH is foretelling future events through him. However, other scholars categorize the book into 3 distinct timelines. In this proposal, the same person could not have lived through and written about all three time periods, which does not account for biblical prophecy. Other than the varying timelines, there are also stylistic variants within the 66 chapters. The first 39 chapters are primarily written in prose, while the next 27 are poetic. However, the shift is not due to difference of authors, but the fact that the first 39 chapters contain a blend of narrative and prophecy. The last 27 are solely prophetic.¹⁸³ Nearly all prophecy is penned as poetry, which explains the style change within the book.¹⁸⁴ Besides, it is not as though it is stark narrative, then only prophecy; prophecy exists in the first section along with the narrative prose. Therefore, the shift into the poetic from a mix of prose and poetry does not support different authorship. It displays a variation and intermingling of styles beneath the same

¹⁸¹ John N. Oswalt, "Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?," Zondervan Academic, December 06, 2018, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-isaiah>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ John Piper, "God Filled Your Bible with Poems," Desiring God, August 16, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-filled-your-bible-with-poems>.

author. The language and purpose of each larger section of Isaiah are also varied, which brings scholars to believe there is more than one author. For example, the language of Deutero-Isaiah in chapters 40-48 is heavily focused on the creation and the superiority of YHVH over everything, not just Israel.¹⁸⁵ Due to the abundance of this type of terminology, the second section of Isaiah is penned to show YHVH as supreme over all. The most natural thematic division of Isaiah falls at chapters 1-39 (concerning judgment) and chapters 40-66 (concerning comfort).¹⁸⁶ These themes are in opposition to one another, therefore the language would certainly be different when speaking about them. Although each section varies in its purpose, it is not an indication there are multiple authors. One author can write on an entire scope of topics, such as with Paul in the New Testament and his varied purposes in writing. In the case of Isaiah, he is known to be one of the greatest Old Testament prophets whose doctrines and concepts envelop a broad spectrum of subject matter.¹⁸⁷ Just like Paul, or any author, he is not confined to a specific topic. The language is also affected by the genre of the sections, as terms in poetry may have a wider semantic range than those in prose. If plenary-verbal and dictation theories are taken into account, it can be said that YHVH Himself wrote the words. Since He is God, He has access to any type of terminology, as He is the Creator of it all. He is not limited to a range of words Isaiah may have previously utilized.

¹⁸⁵ Blenkinsopp, "The Cosmological and Protological," 495-6.

¹⁸⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 204.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

There are three main viewpoints when it comes to Isaianic authorship: a singular author, three authors, multiple authors. The first, and most traditional, view is that Isaiah penned all 66 chapters. The book itself only names Isaiah ben Amoz as the author, and its title is “Isaiah.” The oldest copy of Isaiah was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls from around 125 BC. It is a singular scroll from end to end, with no divisions or signs from a copyist that there is a break between chapters 39 to 40 or 55 to 56.¹⁸⁸ The lack of division indicates that the scribes saw Isaiah as one unit. The New Testament authors and early Church writers both credit their quotations from these chapters to Isaiah alone. Jesus Himself¹⁸⁹ quotes Isaiah 29:13 in Mark 7:6-7, citing the prophet by name. In later instances when Jesus casts out demons and heals sicknesses (Matthew 8:16) or when He orders the people not to make Him known (Matthew 12:16), it is stated that He does so “to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah” in Isaiah 42:1-4 and Isaiah 53:4.¹⁹⁰ Many other New Testament authors refer to Isaiah as the one responsible for penning the book: Matthew 3:3 (Isaiah 11:3), Luke 3:4 (Isaiah 40:3), John 12:38-41 (Isaiah 53:1, 6:10), Romans 10:16, 20 (Isaiah 53:1, 65:1).¹⁹¹ However, it is obvious that Jesus, the

¹⁸⁸ Oswalt, “Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?” The end of chapter 39 of the scroll and the beginning of chapter 40 are in one, continuous column.

¹⁸⁹ Jesus’ pronouns are capitalized.

¹⁹⁰ Harold Wilmington, “Old Testament Passages Quoted by Jesus Christ,” *The Second Person File* (2017): 71, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=second_person.

¹⁹¹ David Sanford, “Why Is Isaiah the Most Quoted Prophet in the Bible?,” Christianity.com, February 10, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/why-is-isaiah-the-most-quoted-prophet-in-the-bible.html>; Harold Willmington, “What You Need to Know About the Book of Isaiah,” *What You Need to Know About...* (2009): under “Paper 52,” <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/58821268.pdf>.

living God, saw Isaiah as the sole author of the book. He is one person of YHVH, and therefore, was involved in the inspiration process. If anyone knows who wrote it, it is Him. The referral to Isaiah by other authors of Scripture attests to the Jewish tradition of the unity of the book. Despite these facts, scholars still take issue that Isaiah is not mentioned again after chapter 39.¹⁹² However, this is likely due to the prophetic nature of the last 27 chapters. Isaiah is not the focal point, the prophecy is. It is understandable why he would no longer be mentioned by name. Moreover, John Oswalt proposes that Isaiah was the perfect prophet to send the message to Judah, since he lived through the exile of the northern kingdom, Israel. Oswalt believes that Isaiah was able to sympathize with the Judeans, espousing that although the exile may seem as though YHVH has failed, He remains the God that rescued Jerusalem from Sennacherib. He is still able to save them from Babylonian captivity.¹⁹³

The view that appears to be most popular among liberal scholars like Lisbeth Fried, Joseph Blenkinsopp, and Roger Porter, is that of the three different authors: Proto-Isaiah (1-39), Deutero-Isaiah (40-55), and Trito-Isaiah (56-66).¹⁹⁴ The compositional history of Isaiah begins in the late 8th century BC with Isaiah ben Amoz. It is then redacted in the 7th century BC in the Josianic or Assyrian periods.¹⁹⁵ Deutero-Isaiah is

¹⁹² Oswalt, "Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?"

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. The chapter allocation to specific authors varies.

¹⁹⁵ Sweeney, "Swords into Plowshares," 101.

typically viewed as someone who wrote between 550-539 BC.¹⁹⁶ He is often called the “prophet of the exile” and is known for focusing on YHVH as the Lord of history who was quite active in the political scene of the exilic period.¹⁹⁷ The “second voice” of Isaiah that begins in chapter 40 speaks comforting words to the people, language that is uncommon to Proto-Isaiah.¹⁹⁸ The dating of his work toward the end of the exile serves to display why he was speaking words of comfort and anticipating the return to Jerusalem.¹⁹⁹ Proponents that see Deutero-Isaiah as nonprophetic state that the author likely knew Cyrus was coming and was aware of his policies of benevolence and tolerance.²⁰⁰ Paul Hanson notes that Deutero-Isaiah writes as other prophets do, to “interpret the events that were unfolding in the world in relation to the universal moral purposes of the one true God.”²⁰¹ Although he is called a “prophet” by many of these liberal scholars, most do not believe this is actual prophecy. Rather, it was penned after the events to make sense of them in light of YHVH and His purposes. Even if they do believe it is prophetic, their preferred background of the text is the 6th century BC, when Cyrus is on the rise, rather than the 8th century BC, before he is born.²⁰² After Deutero-

¹⁹⁶ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 375. There is variation, however. Baltzer believes the Isaiah 45 oracle was written during the time of Nehemiah, the 5th century BC.

¹⁹⁷ Porter, “How the Role of Cyrus in Second Isaiah,” 1.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 251.

²⁰¹ Porter, “How the Role of Cyrus in Second Isaiah,” 5.

²⁰² There is a focus on Deutero-Isaiah because the Isaianic mentions of Cyrus are within the section attributed to him.

Isaiah's late, 6th century BC composition, the book is edited, likely by Trito-Isaiah.²⁰³

Trito-Isaiah is attributed to the early Persian period in chapters 56-66. Scholars like Fried believe that he penned the Servant Songs along with chapters 47, 54, and 55.²⁰⁴ Isaiah 45, however, is always viewed as the work of an author who wrote either before or after the Babylonian conquest between the years of 550-539 BC.²⁰⁵ Trito-Isaiah also went through redaction during the time of Ezra/Nehemiah in the 5th and 4th centuries BC.²⁰⁶

The last perspective advocates for several "Isaias." This viewpoint teaches that Isaiah wrote a very small section of the book, possibly as little as seven chapters (6-12). The following information in the book is penned by multiple disciples over the next 400 years, expanding on the chapters of the ones before them. This theory proposes that you have hundreds of Isaias, negating the neatly divided timeline. Parts of chapters 1-39 were penned during the exile and parts of chapters 40-55 were written before the exile.²⁰⁷ It is the least popular viewpoint among scholars and is said to be bred out of skepticism for the Bible's inspiration.²⁰⁸

The preferred view of authorship is the traditional perspective, that one prophet, Isaiah ben Amoz, penned the entirety of the book. The variety of style, language, genre,

²⁰³ Sweeney, "Swords into Plowshares," 101; Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 375.

²⁰⁴ Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 375.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Rather than a prophet who wrote 160 years before the events occurred.

²⁰⁶ Sweeney, "Swords into Plowshares," 101.

²⁰⁷ Oswalt, "Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?"

²⁰⁸ "What Is the Deutero-Isaiah Theory?"

and themes in the 66 chapters does not support the perspective that more than one author contributed to the text. The differing terminology, style, and genre match the individual themes of each section. Even so, there are specific terms utilized throughout the entirety of the book, such as *Qodesh Yisrael*, the Holy One of Israel) which speak to the unity of the text.²⁰⁹ Although Cyrus is not described in exact detail, enough particulars are given to cause some scholars to believe that a contemporary of the Medo-Persian king wrote the oracle in chapter 45. However, a contemporary would have likely given much more detail than is written in Isaiah 44:28-45:8. The prophecy considers him as “the Cyrus of prediction” rather than “the Cyrus of history,” meaning he is the fulfillment of prophecies spoken much earlier.²¹⁰ Therefore, Cyrus is both prophesied of and viewed as proof that a prophecy is being completed in him (Isaiah 44:24-28, 45:21).²¹¹ This technique is often exercised in prophetic literature, whereby the prophet projects himself into the future. Isaiah ben Amoz is known to do this, as seen in Isaiah 24-27.²¹² Oftentimes, scholars will attempt to call the Isaiah 45 oracle prophecy, yet still date it around his advent in the 6th century BC rather than the 8th century BC. The later dating is likely due to skepticism concerning the true nature of the predictions. It accounts for the prophecy as part of normal forecasting of events rather than special

²⁰⁹ Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 204. Conservatives use 40 other phrases employed in both sections as evidence for the unity of the book.

²¹⁰ George L. Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1954), 136.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

revelation.²¹³ However, Oswalt supposes that due to the shape of the current text of Isaiah in compendium with the lack of any other named author than Isaiah ben Amoz, the projections of the text were made long before they came true.²¹⁴ One of the central arguments in Isaiah is that idols and false gods are unable to know the future as YHVH does (41:21-24, 26-29, 43:8-13, 44:6-9, 24-26, 45:20-21, 46:9-11, 48:3-5, 14-16). Four of the Cyrus references (41:2, 25, 44:28, 46:11) are connected to YHVH as prophetic. Whoever is responsible for the final form of Isaiah desires for the readers to know that the distinct Cyrus predictions were spoken so far in advance that they could not be given during a general prediction of forthcoming events.²¹⁵ Their verification is proof that YHVH is the only God, the prophetic God.²¹⁶ Oswalt says this logic is inescapable, and that “one must either accept the evidence as given and adopt the conclusion, or else admit that the evidence has been tampered with and deny the conclusion. One cannot accept the conclusion while denying the evidence.”²¹⁷ Therefore, YHVH is a prophetic God who speaks of Cyrus almost 200 years before his advent through the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz. He can do so because He is unlike the manmade idols. There is none like YHVH (Isaiah 44:6-8).

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 192.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 196.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 192.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

The Uses of מָשִׁיחַ in the Bible

The Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ (*Mashiach*) is written in different forms 39 times in the Hebrew portions of the Old Testament.²¹⁸ *CHALOT* defines it from the verb מָשַׁח, which means “to spread a liquid over, to anoint (objects), to anoint a person.”²¹⁹ The primary term that it is translated into English as is “anointed,” usually in reference to a consecrated person. More specifically, it references the Messiah.²²⁰ Out of the 39 uses, four allude to priests, eight refer to Jesus, 28 represent Israeli or Judean kings, two indicate the patriarchs, and one portrays the Medo-Persian King Cyrus.²²¹

The first usage of מָשִׁיחַ seen in Scripture is that of the priests in Leviticus 4. C. F. Keil asserts that the term “anointed” in the context of the priests solely refers to the high priest. Only the high or great priest is called “anointed” because of the fullness of the anointing by which he was appointed to his position (Leviticus 8:12).²²² Some scholars,

²¹⁸ James Strong, *Strong’s Concordance* (Austin, TX: WORDsearch, 2007), under “4899. mashiach,” <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4899.htm>. See Table 3: מָשִׁיחַ Translations and Occurrences.

²¹⁹ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), s.v. “מָשַׁח.”

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, s.v. “מָשִׁיחַ.”

²²¹ See Table 4: מָשִׁיחַ in Scripture. This count amounts to 43, rather than 39, because 1 Samuel 2:10, Psalm 2:2, Psalm 132:10, and Psalm 132:17 reference a human king and the coming Messiah, Jesus, and are listed twice in the chart. The entities referred to by מָשִׁיחַ are listed according to their position in the English Bible. The first mention of מָשִׁיחַ is in Leviticus, with the priests, onto the Messiah in 1 Samuel, then the kings in 1 Samuel, the patriarchs in the Psalms, then Cyrus in Isaiah.

²²² C. F. Keil, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (1885; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 1:523.

like Martin Noth, propose that before the exile of Judah, ordinary priests were not anointed when they took office.²²³ In his journal article from the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Daniel Fleming protests this hypothesis and sets out to prove that pre-exilic anointing was commonplace. The first portion of his argument focuses on practices of other Ancient Near Eastern cultures and religions and how they utilized anointing within their practice. With cuneiform inscriptions, documents, and legends, he attempts to make the case that anointing was normal in the worldly context of ancient Israel.²²⁴

While historiography of non-biblical writings is significant for study, the religious practices of Mesopotamian peoples do not necessarily have any bearing on the orthopraxy of pre-exilic YHVHism. From its initial development, YHVHism was completely different from the religions around it. For example, the Jews were monotheistic, while the majority of the societies nearby were poly or henotheistic. None of the other cultures possessed one, singular God as YHVHism did. Their worship and practice were different as well. The Jews did not need to utilize handmade statues or images to worship YHVH (Exodus 20:4), and their purity requirements were more rigorous than those of the other cultures in order to set them apart as holy amongst all the people. One example is found in Leviticus 19:28 with the prohibition of self-harm and tattooing, which was popular in worship and mourning in Babylonian, Armenian, Scythian, Arabian, and Persian cultures.²²⁵ Another is the prohibition of sacrificing their

²²³ Daniel Fleming, "The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 401, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3266438>.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 402-8.

²²⁵ C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 603.

children to Molech, as the Ammonites did (Leviticus 18:21). Therefore, although some aspects of the cultures may be similar, it cannot be supposed that the followers of YHVH would have the same religious practices as the poly and henotheists of the surrounding societies. In searching for the answer to this question about the anointing of the priests in pre-exilic YHVHism, it is unnecessary to look outside of the *Tanakh*. Exodus 29:7 describes only Aaron, the high priest, being anointed. In the passages that employ *וַיִּשָּׁח*, the references are solely to the high priest, which is plausible following the aforementioned verse. Although the term “anointed priest” is used to distinguish the high priest from the ordinary priests, this does not mean the other priests were not physically anointed. It is unwise to form an assertion based on a singular verse. Therefore, although Exodus 29:7 only mentions Aaron, verses like Exodus 30:30 and Leviticus 8:30 detail the physical unction of Aaron *and* his sons, not just Aaron the high priest. It is likely that the unction of the high priest was more significant than that of the other priests.²²⁶ The high priest’s anointing is both physical and spiritual. The physical places him in his office as high priest, while the spiritual is representative of the anointing of the true High Priest, the Messiah, Jesus

Of the six references to the coming Messiah, there is conjecture concerning who is being referenced in each one—the Messiah or a human king? First Samuel 2:10 is the first passage in the Old Testament that refers to “His Anointed” or “His Messiah.”²²⁷

²²⁶ J. S. Exell, *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary On the Old Testament: Exodus* (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1892), under “Exodus 30:30,” e-SwordX.

²²⁷ H. D. Spence, *A Bible Commentary for English Readers: I Samuel*, ed. C. J. Ellicott (London, ENG: Cassell and Company, 1905), 2: under “1 Samuel 2:10,”

Christian expositors have interpreted the verse as regarding Christ, while Jewish commentators regard it as prophetic of the forthcoming Messianic king. The Messianic king to come was partly fulfilled in David and Solomon, yet the Jews see those reigns as vague glimpses of the perfect Messianic King that has yet to appear.²²⁸ Although the high priest of Leviticus is called by מְשִׁיחַ , it is not used in conjunction with the 3rd masculine singular pronominal suffix as it is here (מְשִׁיחוֹ), denoting that the Messiah comes from the subject of the verse, הַיְהוָה . This term is often translated as “His Anointed,” but can be rendered as the title “His Messiah.” As aforementioned, it is the first time in Scripture that מְשִׁיחַ is used in this way, which appeals to the idea that Hannah’s prophecy was looking to the days of Jesus.²²⁹ First Samuel 2:35 also refers to the ultimate Messiah, Jesus. The next reference, Psalm 2:2, is a dual reference. It is mentioning a Davidic king of the time in light of the Messianic prophecy and the future King who will complete the mission of the Davidic monarchy.²³⁰ This particular verse is quoted in Acts 4:26, indicating that the early Church saw its fulfillment in the conspiracy against Jesus by Herod and Pilate. Likewise, Psalm 89:51 can be interpreted in two ways. The first is in the sense of the kings of Judah, with the following term “footsteps” meaning their actions

https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_samuel/2-10.htm. LXX renders the terms Χριστου αυτου .

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Joseph Benson, *Joseph Benson’s Commentary On the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1, *Genesis-2 Samuel*, (New York: T. Carlton & J. Porter, 1857), under “1 Samuel 2:10,” https://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/1_samuel/2.htm/

²³⁰ Franz Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary On the Old Testament*, vol. 5, *Psalms* (repr. 1969; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 54.

and subsequent sorrowful outcomes. The second is in the sense of the Messiah, whose coming was anticipated by the Jews. The pagans around them knew of their anticipation of this Messiah and reproached them for their expectation and hope.²³¹ Psalm 132:17 employs the verb קָרַח ('*Ašmîah*, or, simply, “sprout”) which suggests a reference to prophecies concerning the ultimate Messiah, where it is used as a title for Him. קָרַח (*Qeren*, or “horn”) is a symbol for “king” in Daniel, so the words may be intended to point to a Messianic king.²³² However, it also addresses David personally, indicated by the cross-references in 1 Kings 11:36 and 15:4.²³³ The Messiah of Daniel 9:25 is the most uncertain and some scholars like S. R. Driver even identify him as Cyrus.²³⁴ Yet, the status of being both “an anointed one” (denoting priesthood) and a “prince” (denoting kingship) implies a theocratic king. The only person to fulfill the requirements for both is Jesus, the Messiah.²³⁵ In the following verse, 26, it is known that the Messiah described is Jesus because the “cutting off” of the anointed one refers to Jesus’ first advent, where he was subjected to a violent death on the cross. His death “cut him off” and left Him with

²³¹ Joseph Benson, *Joseph Benson’s Commentary On the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 2, *Kings-Proverbs* (New York: T. Carlton & J. Porter, 1854), under “Psalm 89:51,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/psalms/89.htm>.

²³² A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Psalms* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1906), under “Psalm 132:17,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/psalms/132.htm>.

²³³ David Guzik, “Psalm 132 – Remembering the Promise to David and Beyond,” *Enduring Word*, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-132/>.

²³⁴ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 203.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 203-4.

nothing as He died and the Jews claimed, “We have no king but Cæsar.”²³⁶ The final reference to the Messiah is in Habakkuk 3:13. Due to the parallelism of this verse, it may seem as though Habakkuk is referring to the nation of Israel as the anointed that YHVH went out for.²³⁷ However, YHVH’s anointed is not the chosen, holy nation. Israel is never named the anointed one because of its commissioning to be “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). The reference in Habakkuk is to the divinely commissioned king of Israel. Yet, this does not suppose a specific king, but the Davidic monarch overall, which culminates in the Messiah, Jesus. The reign and authority of David’s line continue forever through Him.²³⁸

מָשִׁיחַ is used most frequently when referencing kings of Israel and Judah.²³⁹

Because of this, some scholars, such as James H. Charlesworth and John Collins, disagree that this term signifies a “divinely appointed, and anointed, supernatural man:

²³⁶ Ibid., 206-7.

²³⁷ “You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. *Selah*.” The parallelism of this verse is seen in the repeated thought of the first clause—“You went out for the salvation of your people”—in slightly different terms in the second—“for the salvation of your anointed.” The *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* supports the idea that this parallelism means “your people” and “your anointed” represent the same entity. However, these two terms are not used in apposition, despite being part of a parallel structure.

²³⁸ C. F. Keil, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary On the Old Testament*, vol. 10, *Minor Prophets* (repr. 1878; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 424-5.

²³⁹ The initial indirect mention is in 1 Samuel 2:10 and the direct reference is in 1 Samuel 12:3. The Messiah Jesus is listed before the kings because although His initial mention is in 1 Samuel 2:10 as well, the second comes in 1 Samuel 2:35, closer than 12:3. Moreover, Jesus takes precedence over the kings of Israel and Judah.

the Messiah” during the monarchic period (united and divided kingdom); it does not take on this meaning until Postbiblical Hebrew. Originally, it only means “a person anointed with oil who holds a high office.”²⁴⁰ John Collins asserts that during the monarchic period, מָשִׁיחַ was merely a term which described all kings of Israel and Judah. He believes that if Scripture does not explicitly describe them by this term, it does not mean they were not anointed. In Collins’ view, the title is synonymous with a king’s enthronement.²⁴¹ However, Meir Ben Shahr argues that not all the kings of Israel and Judah were anointed. Anointing was reserved for special kings.²⁴² The pre-exilic books of Scripture speak of seven anointed kings: Saul, David, Absalom, Solomon, Jehu, Joash, and Jehoahaz. The *Tosefta*²⁴³ lists four of these names—Solomon, Jehu, Joash, Jehoahaz—and their contenders for the throne—Adonijah, Joram, Athaliah, Jehoiakim. Solomon, Jehu, Joash, and Jehoahaz were physically anointed because they had contenders for the throne. The anointing legitimized them as the official monarchs. Although David and Saul are omitted in the *Tosefta* passage, the last sentence in *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 4.11 explains, “A king requires anointing, [but] a son of a king does not require anointing.”²⁴⁴ The first king requires anointing but his sons do not, inferring that

²⁴⁰ Meir Ben-Shahar, “‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah,’” 394.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 395.

²⁴³ Alieza Salzburg, “Mishnah and Tosefta,” My Jewish Learning, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mishnah-tosefta/>. The *Tosefta* (literally, “addition”) is a text that provides further explanation for unclear portions of the *Mishnah*.

²⁴⁴ Meir Ben-Shahar, “‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah,’” 395.

Saul and David, first kings in their lines, had to be anointed.²⁴⁵ The manner of anointing with which Ben Shazar speaks of seems to be a physical anointing, as only Saul, David, and Solomon are attributed with the title מָשִׁיחַ. The other four are anointed in 2 Samuel 19:10 (Absalom), 2 Kings 9:2-3 (Jehu), 2 Kings 11:12 (Joash), and 2 Kings 23:30 (Jehoahaz), but the term for “anointed” is the verb form מָשַׁח, not the noun. Therefore, it can be assumed that because someone is physically anointed, it does not mean they are YHVH’s anointed.²⁴⁶ Being YHVH’s anointed, attributed by the title מָשִׁיחַ, means that the Spirit of YHVH rests upon that person—the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of YHVH (Isaiah 11:2).²⁴⁷ During the monarchic period, there was a difference between the action of “anointment” and being an anointed one.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 17:15 says, “You may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose.” However, it can be argued that YHVH chooses anyone who rules, as He is the orchestrator of history. Anointing is unmentioned in this verse; however, Dr. Wilson states that even though anointing is not specifically mentioned, the first to fill the kingly role was specified by God, and he was anointed (1 Sam 10:1ff). Saul was anointed physically, yes, and that was likely a normal practice for initiating new kings into office. However, the difference is in the terminology of מָשַׁח versus מָשִׁיחַ. Only Saul, David, and Solomon are referred to by מָשִׁיחַ, the title of YHVH’s anointed, the one charged with a specific task.

²⁴⁷ Although Isaiah 11 is a prophecy about Jesus, it can be supposed that smaller measures of these qualities are present in the characters of all the מָשִׁיחַ. People like David and Cyrus typify the Messiah, Jesus. They embody the forthcoming Messiah through the Spirit of YHVH coming upon them in a large measure so that they could be prepared for the heavenly assignment. Since they are “types of Christs,” they possess imperfect manifestations of the perfect qualities of Jesus seen in Isaiah 11:2. It is important to note that this passage was not written to apply to all anointed ones, but only one in particular. Through an examination of other ones called מָשִׁיחַ, it can be seen that the characteristics in the verse apply in some measure to them as well.

The noun version, מָשִׁיחַ, denotes a ruler who enacts the divine will of YHVH.²⁴⁸ Although all seven of these kings were physically anointed to the kingly office, only three were called YHVH's anointed. The other four kings did not possess this title, even though they had been covered with oil. Their lack of this title is seen in their reigns and the disobedience and disregard for YHVH with which they ruled.²⁴⁹ Out of pride, Absalom attempted to seize the throne from his father, David, and then pursued him to kill him (2 Samuel 15-18:8). The Spirit of YHVH was not on him because he was ruled by his passions and desires for power. Furthermore, despite Jehu's obedience in slaughtering all of Ahab's descendants and the priests of Baal, he followed in Jeroboam's footsteps, worshiping the golden calves (2 Kings 10:29). He did not follow the law of the YHVH with all of his being and continued the idol worship which led Israel astray (2 Kings 10:31). Because of this, YHVH sent King Hazael of Aram to conquer parts of Israel (2 Kings 10:32-33). Jehu never fully submitted to YHVH and His laws; he never possessed the full spirit described in Isaiah 11:2. Moreover, although Joash "did what was right in the eyes of YHVH all his days" (2 Kings 12:2), the high places were not destroyed. The rest of 2 Kings 12:2 states that Joash only did what was right "because Jehoiada the priest instructed him." Second Chronicles 24:17-22 clarifies the account of Joash's reign,

²⁴⁸ Meir Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 411. With the separation of "anointed one" from "anointment," the change from "anointed" into "messiah" is introduced.

²⁴⁹ A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: 1 Samuel*, (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1896), under "1 Samuel 15:23," https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/1_samuel/15.htm. 1 Samuel 15:23, "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry." This indicates that rebelling against the will of YHVH is just as bad as utilizing divination, which, in turn, is on par with apostasy. Stubborn opposition against YHVH is equivalent with idolatry, because it turns the human will into a god.

expounding that after Jehoiada's death, he gave in to the petitions of the princes of Judah which would restore their idol worship. When the son of Jehoiada, Zechariah, attempts to rebuke him for his apostasy, Joash has him stoned. It appears that Joash only followed YHVH when he had someone influencing him to do so. Once that influence was gone, he turned to evil, which shows the lack of his position as YHVH's anointed. Lastly, 2 Kings 23:32 informs that Jehoahaz "did what was evil in the sight of YHVH." Because of his wickedness, Pharaoh Neco captured him and held him in Egypt until he died (2 Kings 23:33-34). Jehoahaz was evil from the start, implying that the Spirit of YHVH never rested upon him.²⁵⁰

Being YHVH's anointed means that the Spirit of YHVH is placed upon that person—the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of YHVH (Isaiah 11:2).²⁵¹ However, it also establishes a covenant between YHVH and the anointed, which includes shared commitments. God protects and helps the anointed while the anointed fulfills His commands.²⁵² YHVH has a specific purpose for the anointed to accomplish. Saul is the first human king to be explicitly deigned as מָשִׁיחַ in 1 Samuel 12:3.²⁵³ His purpose was to deliver YHVH's people from the Philistines (1 Samuel 9:15-16).²⁵⁴ In 1 Samuel 13-14, the Philistines are destroyed by Saul and his son Jonathan.

²⁵⁰ At least not in the same way it did with the ones attributed by מָשִׁיחַ.

²⁵¹ Eder, "King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord," 188.

²⁵² Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 401.

²⁵³ Kirkpatrick, *1 Samuel*, under "1 Samuel 12:3," https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/1_samuel/12.htm.

²⁵⁴ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 400.

Therefore, Saul accomplishes the purpose for which he was anointed. This purpose, though, is extended in 1 Samuel 15:1-3, when Samuel tells Saul,

‘YHVH sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of YHVH. Thus says YHVH of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’

Saul is to continue in his commission as YHVH’s anointed and destroy the Amalekites and all evidence of them. Yet, Saul does not do this and YHVH rejects him (1 Samuel 15:23). Edward Young details that the noun form of מָשִׁיחַ is one of the stronger forms of the term. It represents that anointing has taken place and that the unction is permanent. Young believes that the “anointed one” continues in this status for the remainder of his life.²⁵⁵ However, Young’s conclusion that the anointing is permanent for all who are attributed as an “anointed one” is uncertain. Although some of the ones named as so do possess the indefinite anointing—like David—figures like Saul, Solomon, or Cyrus fall on the side of transient anointing.²⁵⁶ In the case of King Saul, 2 Samuel 7:15 shows the brevity of his position, “...but my steadfast love will not depart from [Solomon], as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.” David was not sinless by any means, yet he never descended into a despot, as Saul did in his treatment of David and the priests at Nob. David never behaved godlessly, either, as Saul did.²⁵⁷ Saul had performed

²⁵⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 195.

²⁵⁶ Either because of apostasy or because of the completion of the mission for which YHVH called them.

²⁵⁷ H. D. Spence, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary: 2 Samuel* (New York, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), under “2 Samuel 7:15,” https://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/2_samuel/7.htm.

unrighteous deeds before this, such as the unlawful sacrifice (1 Samuel 13:8-23) and his rash vow (1 Samuel 14:24-46). These wrongdoings did not disqualify him from being YHVH's anointed, as the anointed are still human and prone to stumble. However, when Saul deliberately disobeyed a direct command from YHVH, which was part of his mission as an anointed one, he was rejected as king. Samuel, in 1 Samuel 15:23, says, "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry." This indicates that rebelling against the will of YHVH is just as bad as utilizing divination, which in turn, is on par with apostasy. Stubborn opposition against YHVH is equivalent to idolatry because it turns the human will into a god.²⁵⁸ Therefore, Saul had apostatized YHVH by his disobedience and the spiritual anointing left him. Although he remained king, it can be supposed that the physical anointing was taken off him as well, since YHVH rejected him as king and went in search of another.²⁵⁹ In the chart, Saul is implied or referred to as anointed 11 different times.²⁶⁰ Nine of those usages are connected to the forbidding of harming YHVH's anointed (Psalm 105:15). In most of these references, David's men are encouraging him to kill Saul while he has the chance, most likely of the perspective that since Saul disobeyed YHVH, he was no longer under divine protection.²⁶¹ Yet, David's profuse dismissal of these petitions displays how he

²⁵⁸ Kirkpatrick, *1 Samuel*, under "1 Samuel 15:23," https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/1_samuel/15.htm.

²⁵⁹ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah,'" 401.

²⁶⁰ See Table 4: מָשִׁיחַ in Scripture.

²⁶¹ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah,'" 401.

believed that Saul's anointing remained intact.²⁶² In 1 Samuel 26:9-11, David refuses to harm him because his life remains in YHVH's hands. Saul will either die by smiting, a natural death, or by death in war; however, violent acts may not be taken upon him with indemnity.²⁶³ For David to act against Saul, even though he had apostatized and fallen out of the favor of YHVH, was to interrupt the divine prerogative.²⁶⁴ This action by David moreso speaks to the character of David than the status of Saul's anointing. The anointing was revoked with his disobedience.²⁶⁵ Yet, David was disciplined. He kept himself and his men from interrupting YHVH's plan. The first time he spared Saul, in chapter 24, may have been to cease the fight between the men. The second time he spared Saul, it was less likely he possessed this thought. Rather, he did not murder Saul because of his duty to YHVH. David shirked what would allow him to gain his freedom and the kingdom, for what was holy.²⁶⁶ Even when someone takes credit for Saul's death after he kills himself (1 Samuel 31:4), David has that person executed (2 Samuel 1:6-16). Although Saul was named as YHVH's anointed, that anointing was taken away by his willful disobedience, allowing for another vessel of YHVH's will, David, to rise.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Kirkpatrick, *1 Samuel*, under "1 Samuel 26:10," https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/1_samuel/26.htm

²⁶⁴ Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 3: under "1 Samuel 26:11," e-SwordX.

²⁶⁵ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 402.

²⁶⁶ Youngblood, *1 & 2 Samuel*, under "1 Samuel 26:11."

Before David is chosen as YHVH's anointed, the term is used by Samuel when trying to determine which of Jesse's sons will be king instead of Saul. In 1 Samuel 16:6, Samuel assumes that Eliab would be the one because of his exterior appearance. In the following verse, YHVH speaks to him, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For YHVH sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but YHVH looks on the heart." The measure of YHVH's anointed is not because of physical brilliance but is based on the interior state of a person. After this, David is explicitly called YHVH's anointed six times, but is also referenced implicitly in other passages.²⁶⁷ The purpose for which David was spiritually anointed was not only as a replacement for Saul but also to save Israel from the Philistines and all their enemies (2 Samuel 3:18). Second Samuel 19:21 is the first to specifically attribute David in this way after Shimei curses him. The rebuttal of Abishai contains the title for David and points to the typical punishment for anathematization. To curse YHVH's anointed is like cursing YHVH Himself since David was a representative of YHVH.²⁶⁸ Understandably, Abishai was confused as to why Shimei was not being held accountable for his rash words. The next reference is 2 Samuel 22:51 which displays YHVH showing mercy not only to his anointed David but to David's seed thereafter. This extends past the confines of Israel and to the Gentiles. With David's rule over the nations, the knowledge and worship of YHVH who grants victory were disseminated. The king mentioned here is not specifically David, but David and his seed—David's line which is fulfilled in Jesus.

²⁶⁷ See Table 4: מָשִׁיחַ in Scripture.

²⁶⁸ Youngblood, *1 & 2 Samuel*, under "2 Samuel 19:21," https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/2_samuel/19.htm.

Through Jesus, salvation is offered to all people.²⁶⁹ In the following verse, 2 Samuel 23:1, David is on the cusp of death. He is called “the anointed of the God of Jacob” in the introductory material of his final words. The title attributed to him at the end of his life shows that he remained YHVH’s anointed despite the mistakes he made in his life. David was a man after YHVH’s own heart and he always had been (1 Samuel 13:14). Although he strayed, he came back each time and sought to walk closely with YHVH. His anointing remained because of the genuineness and seriousness with which he regarded YHVH and man.²⁷⁰ The Spirit of YHVH also remained because of His covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Due to David’s earnest and sincere attitude, YHVH created a covenant with the rest of David’s seed which is eternally fulfilled in Jesus. Second Samuel 7:14b-15 records, “When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.” Even though the seed of David—immediately fulfilled in Solomon—would sin, he would not be cast off like Saul was.

David is also referenced multiple times in the Psalms. Psalm 18:51 [H] speaks of David, noting “his king” in the first clause of the verse and “his anointed, to David” in the second. Yet, the addition of the last portion “and his seed forever” continues the meaning beyond David, down his line, and lends the meaning to the promise of the

²⁶⁹ C. F. Keil, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel* (1880; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001) 2:693.

²⁷⁰ Spence, *2 Samuel*, under “2 Samuel 7:15,”

coming Messiah.²⁷¹ Although Psalm 20:7 [H] does not mention David by name as the anointed YHVH is saving, it can be inferred from verse 1 [H] where the title, “A Psalm of David” is given, as well as verse 8 [H]. Verse 8 [H] speaks of those who trust in chariots and horses, while the people of Israel trust in YHVH. The Law of Israel forbade the nation from possessing a standing army. The king was also prohibited from keeping a multitude of horses (Deuteronomy 17:16). These laws were followed during the time of the Judges and David. When Solomon came to power, he broke the Law and acquired a multitude of horses and chariots (1 Kings 10:26-29). Therefore, the Psalm is dated to David, when this Law was still practiced.²⁷² Furthermore, in Psalm 28:8, it can easily be confused that the reference of the anointed is not to David, but the nation of Israel. David does think of the people of Israel, who he is the head of as king, then himself. For this reason, YHVH who is the refuge of David is also the refuge of Israel as a whole.²⁷³ As previously noted in the Habakkuk 3:13 reference, C. F. Keil makes the point that YHVH’s anointed is not the chosen, holy nation. Israel is never named the anointed one because of its commissioning to be “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). The nation is not the “anointed one” in Psalm 28:8, but David is.²⁷⁴ Psalm 84:9 is a reference to David during the time of Absalom’s rebellion. It is likely penned by someone with David who is

²⁷¹ H. D. Spence, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms* (New York, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 1: under “Psalm 18:50,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/psalms/18.htm>.

²⁷² Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 185.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁷⁴ Keil, *Minor Prophets*, 424-5.

far away from the Temple and unable to be in YHVH's presence. When David wins, the psalmist will be able to return to the sanctuary. But first, YHVH must look upon him and hear the prayer of the psalmist.²⁷⁵ Moreover, Psalm 132:17 references both David and his seed which culminates in Jesus. The "lamp" prepared for YHVH's anointed signifies the Davidic succession as promised in 1 Kings 11:36 and 15:4. At the same time, YHVH prepared a light for the final Anointed One, the Messiah.²⁷⁶

The only other specific king called מָשִׁיחַ is Solomon in his dedicatory prayer of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 6:42 and Psalm 132:10. In 2 Chronicles, he asks that YHVH not turn him away, but remember the love He possessed for David. Solomon's anointing comes through the covenant YHVH made with David concerning his seed (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The commission for Solomon in his anointing is to erect a temple for YHVH (2 Samuel 7:13, 1 Kings 5:5, 1 Chronicles 28:10). Even after Solomon finishes the Temple, he is still blessed by YHVH, though he is not specifically named as His anointed again. Therefore, like with Cyrus, once the task is complete, the anointing is removed. Psalm 132:10 is a dual reference. Commentators like Franz Delitzsch (*Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*) and Alexander Maclaren (*The Expositor's Bible: Psalms*) note that the Chronicler believes that Solomon is assumed, as he fits the best in conjunction with the context of the verse.²⁷⁷ The second meaning is to David and his successors overall. Despite the explicit and implicit references, Solomon is another

²⁷⁵ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 565.

²⁷⁶ Guzik, "Psalm 132 – Remembering the Promise to David and Beyond."

²⁷⁷ The context of Psalm 132:6-8, as well as the promise in 2 Samuel 7.

example of the impermanence of the anointing. Solomon's special anointing was likely removed after he finished the temple (מְשִׁיחַ is task-based, which will be discussed later). However, even if it remained, it was revoked later on in his life. First Kings 11 speaks of how Solomon turned from YHVH and "did what was evil in the sight of YHVH and did not wholly follow YHVH, as David his father had done (1 Kings 11:6)." Because of this, YHVH raised adversaries against Solomon. First Kings 11:11-13 expounds that due to Solomon's disobedience, the kingdom will be torn from the hand of his son (except for one tribe, the tribe of Judah). As displayed by Saul, apostasy renounces the anointing. Solomon was led astray by his wives as he grew older, following Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech. He descended into polytheism, just like the cultures around him. With Solomon's apostasy, the anointing was removed from him and the kingdom was taken from his line (except for Judah, for the sake of David).²⁷⁸ The temple built by Solomon was the one sacked by Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BC. First Kings 9:6-9 prophesies of this, detailing that if Solomon turns away from YHVH, Israel will be cut off and the temple will turn into a heap of ruins. Solomon's renouncement of YHVH is the reason King Cyrus is eventually attributed as מְשִׁיחַ and is sent to set Israel free from Babylon and rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:23).

There are five remaining references to non-specific kings in the Davidic line. The first is Psalm 2:2, which has already been established as a dual reference to a Davidic

²⁷⁸ The promise YHVH made to David in 2 Samuel 7 is still kept through the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem being given to Solomon's son. It could be supposed that Solomon was no longer מְשִׁיחַ after he fulfilled his task of building the temple, especially since he is never deliberately called this title again after 2 Chronicles 6:42.

king at the time of its composition or the Messianic King to come.²⁷⁹ The next is Psalm 89:38, in which the Psalmist is almost rebuking YHVH for breaking His covenant. The entirety of the Psalm is spent painting the picture of YHVH's promises and culminates with this verse. YHVH has broken the promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7:15 by his abandonment of David's heir and line (Psalm 89:33). The rebuking, however, is not by a spirit of blasphemy, but a spirit of faith.²⁸⁰ It appears to be immediately speaking of Solomon, especially with the use of נְשִׂינָה , since no other kings in David's line are explicitly referred to in this way. However, it could be hypothesized that David's descendants were under a type of anointing—or had an anointing available to them—because of David's obedience. Nevertheless, as stated in this Psalm, YHVH turns away from them because of their apostasy and wickedness. As formerly expounded, Psalm 89:51 is another Psalm with dual meaning. The first is in the sense of the kings of Judah, with the following term “footsteps” meaning their actions and subsequent sorrowful outcomes. The other is about the Messiah. Psalm 132:10, as previously mentioned, mentions both Solomon and David's line overall. The Psalmist gives the impression that this prayer is spoken during a time where YHVH has turned away from the anointed. The supplication is for favor to rest upon every Davidic king, for the sake of David.²⁸¹ The Lamentations 4:20 verse utilizes the expression “the breath in our nostrils” before נְשִׂינָה . It is an expression based on Genesis 2:7 which represents "our life's breath." The phrases

²⁷⁹ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 54.

²⁸⁰ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, under “Psalm 89:38.”

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, under “Psalm 132:10.”

“the breath in our nostrils” and “YHVH’s anointed” are used in apposition. They speak of a king. Although Zedekiah’s capture is referenced in this verse, it is not specifically speaking of him. Rather, it is mentioning the theocratic king, as YHVH’s anointed, and the person who was the agent of God’s promise (2 Samuel 7).²⁸² Throughout the study of the references to the kings of Israel and Judah, it has been shown that to be called “YHVH’s anointed” was not an honor bestowed upon every king. However, as noted in this section, מָשִׁיחַ is often used in connection to the Davidic line of kings outside of David and Solomon. It is preferred that no specific king is being cited in these verses (other than David and Solomon); rather, the line of David is anointed by its connection with the first king—David (2 Samuel 7). The psalmists and Jeremiah were speaking from the knowledge of YHVH’s promise in 2 Samuel 7:16 that David’s house and kingdom would be made sure forever before Him, and David’s throne would be established forever. The other kings are not rulers who enact the divine will of YHVH, not in the same manner in which Saul, David, Solomon, and Cyrus are.²⁸³

It could be supposed that when referencing the Israeli and Judean kings, other people in the Bible may only be calling them “anointed” because of their kingly titles and the unction that was bestowed upon them.²⁸⁴ However, the language utilized by the authors of Scripture is very particular. YHVH and the authors chose to employ the noun

²⁸² C. F. Keil, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary On the Old Testament*, vol. 8, *Jeremiah; Lamentations* (repr. 1866-91; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 533.

²⁸³ Ben-Shahar, “‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah’,” 411.

²⁸⁴ Such as with Abishai and David, or even David and Saul.

מָשִׁיחַ when they could have used a different form. The four kings who were physically anointed—Absalom, Jehu, Joash, Jehoahaz—are called anointed kings because of the fleshly unction. Yet, they are all referenced by the verb, not the noun. Significantly, the author and YHVH used the noun form when mentioning specific individuals. Even though the people of the Bible, like Abishai, may have been referring to the physical anointing, YHVH had a different meaning in mind. Out of the 304,901 words in the *Tanakh*, the noun form is only employed 39 times.²⁸⁵ YHVH had a reason for the exclusivity of this term. It is only for particular individuals (within certain parameters) that He commissions, not for anyone who is physically anointed. Although anointing can be representative of the covering of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is not always in the oil. It does not always mean the Spirit of YHVH now rests upon that person. As YHVH says in 1 Samuel 16:7, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For YHVH sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but YHVH looks on the heart.” Therefore, looking only to the physical anointing for evidence of YHVH’s Spirit is pointless, because it is not the outward flesh and works that reflect the Spirit, but the inner attitude.

מָשִׁיחַ is employed twice to indicate the patriarchs. The writer lists them second-to-last because the first mention of the patriarchs as מָשִׁיחַ in the English Bible is in Psalms. The priests, Messiah, and kings are initially referred to before the book of Psalms. In Psalm 105:15, the “anointed ones” and “prophets” are both references to the patriarchs. Although these men were not outwardly anointed, מָשִׁיחַ is used to display their holiness

²⁸⁵ “How Many Words Are There in the Tanach?,” *Mi Yodeya*, last modified August 06, 2014, <https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/44230/how-many-words-are-there-in-tanach>.

and how YHVH set them apart.²⁸⁶ They were often regarded as “prophets” because they were the receivers of special revelation.²⁸⁷ They were the prophet, priest, and king in their family structures.²⁸⁸ First Chronicles 16:22 is likely a quoting of Psalm 105:15. However, the Psalm continues with the evidence of YHVH’s loyalty through the retelling of the nation of Israel’s history. The chronicler does not do the same but starts anew with verse 23, which is a hymn of praise (comparable to Psalm 96:1-2).²⁸⁹ The Hebrew of the two passages is almost identical, except for diacritical marks and the structure of the noun נְבִיא (Nabi, or “prophet”).

| Psalm 105:15 | 1 Chronicles 16:22 |
|---|---|
| אֶל־תִּגְעוּ בְמִשְׁחֵי וְלְנְבִיאֵי אֶל־תִּרְעוּ: | אֶל־תִּגְעוּ בְמִשְׁחֵי וְנְבִיאֵי אֶל־תִּרְעוּ: |

The difference in the נְבִיא structures is that the Psalm utilizes a conjunction ו plus a prepositional ל while the Chronicle uses a conjunction-turned ו (BMP rule) and a prepositional ב. Despite these slight differences, translators still render them identically.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, under “Psalm 105:15,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/psalms/105.htm>.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. Abraham is called a “prophet” in Genesis 20:7 as an intercessor.

²⁸⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, On the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 2, *Job-Isaiah, Jer.-Mal.* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), under “Psalm 105:15,” e-SwordX.

²⁸⁹ C. J. Ellicott, ed., *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, vol. 3, *I Kings—Esther* (London, ENG: Cassell and Company, 1905), under “1 Chronicles 16:22,” https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_chronicles/16-22.htm.

²⁹⁰ See Table 5: Psalm 105:15 & 1 Chronicles 16:22 Parallel. The only one that differs is the *Brenton Septuagint Translation* with the rendering of the verb רָעַע; however, it could be translated the same in both and still maintain the equivalent meaning.

Overall, to be YHVH's Anointed is to be specifically and specially commissioned by YHVH for a purpose, gifted with the Spirit as described in Isaiah 11:2. The title מָשִׁיחַ likely gave rise to the idea of special election and girding related to the concept of anointing.²⁹¹ This special election and girding constitute a reciprocal covenant between YHVH and the chosen one. YHVH provides divine protection and opens doors for the anointed, and he obeys and devotes himself to YHVH. In short, these men were enactors of the divine will. For some, like David, the anointing was permanent. For others, like Saul and Solomon, it was not. The anointing is not erased by committing any sin, for David would have been disqualified from the moment he fornicated with Bathsheba or had Uriah killed.²⁹² The commission is severed by apostasy and disobedience, or by a completion of the task for which they were commissioned. Although none of David's successors were as devoted to YHVH as he was, they are generally attributed as anointed in passages of Scripture because of the righteous king who began their line. They had the potential and capacity to live up to their ancestor and be called מָשִׁיחַ, yet none other than Solomon did. The patriarchs were given the tasks of prophet, priest, and king for their entire household. They were appointed to begin the holy line and perpetuate the worship of YHVH in their houses. He anointed each of them for a purpose, despite their shortcomings and failures. Their devotion and holiness maintained the mantle of

²⁹¹ Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), s.v. "מָשִׁיחַ 5417."

²⁹² If anointing was lost because of any type of sin, David would have lost it probably even before Bathsheba and Uriah, since no one is sinless. The sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah are the clearly identified iniquities of David in Scripture, which is why they are noted above.

anointing on them. The last type of person מָשִׁיחַ is attributed to is the pagan, King Cyrus II. He is not classified with the other kings since he is not from the nation of Israel. As aforementioned, he is Median and Persian by birth and is not a follower of YHVH. He is the first and only person in Scripture who is not a follower of YHVHism that is attributed by this title. Although other pagans are used by YHVH, like Nebuchadnezzar II or Shalmaneser V, none are named in this way. The Jews would have been shocked to hear that a pagan was to act as YHVH's anointed.²⁹³ They longed for a redeemer like David, who was successful in battle but also righteous at heart. Instead, they received a savior who wielded a sword like David but did not possess the same devotion to YHVH.²⁹⁴ The skepticism and confusion the Jews possessed has continued throughout history to the present time, leading to multiple interpretations of how Cyrus can be called YHVH's anointed one and what the title truly means.

Differing Views Concerning the Nature of Cyrus' Anointing

There are various theories on how Cyrus can be called YHVH's anointed in Isaiah 45:1. The viewpoints expounded in this section are from those who believe Cyrus was anointed and called. The difference lies in the nature of his calling. The first theory is that Cyrus was anointed, but commentators give this title too much importance. Cyrus'

²⁹³ I. W. Slotki, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Isaiah; Hebrew Text* (London, ENG: The Soncino Press, 1961), 222; Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 392. In Isaiah 45:9-13, Deutero-Isaiah rebukes the people for their doubts. YHVH has created everything and can do as He likes.

²⁹⁴ Tim Bossenbroek, "The Anointed One (Isaiah 45:1-22): 1-8; Matthew 22," Hessel Park Church, October 18, 2020, <https://www.hpcrc.org/sermons-read/the-anointed-one-isaiah-451-8-matthew-2215-22>.

“anointing” merely denotes that he is to be a monarch, nothing else.²⁹⁵ Another view is that of Lisbeth Fried, where Deutero-Isaiah penned the oracle in chapter 45 to authenticate Cyrus as the new Davidic king. This calls for the end of the Davidic line, meaning that YHVH now accomplishes His purposes through Cyrus like he once did through David. Fried takes it a step further than other proponents of this belief with the hypothesis that the Achaemenid line as a whole replaces the Davidides.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, the more traditional commentators agree that Cyrus is merely a temporary servant of YHVH.²⁹⁷ There is an emphasis placed upon the term “temporary,” since his relationship to YHVH is non-covenantal and he has not converted to YHVHism.²⁹⁸ He is merely a vessel through which the divine will is enforced.²⁹⁹ This view also highlights the idea that the reference to Cyrus is critical to the theory of history that is laid out within the book of Isaiah.³⁰⁰ Each view has its own merits, and will be discussed below; however, the writer believes a different theory, which will be explained later.

The first theory is that Cyrus is only anointed in the sense that he is a king. The title לְמָשִׁיחַו (Limshichō, “to his anointed”) attributed to him in Isaiah 45:1 (and the title מָלְאִי in Isaiah 44:28) is not intended to mean that he is special in any way.³⁰¹ Robert Alter

²⁹⁵ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 373.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 374.

²⁹⁷ Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” 161.

²⁹⁸ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

²⁹⁹ Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” 161.

³⁰⁰ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 373.

believes it is merely a political term, rather than a theological or eschatological one. Cyrus is YHVH's anointed because he is a king whose rule is underwritten by YHVH in the grand scheme of His historical plans.³⁰² On the contrary, the term מָשִׁיחַ is almost entirely used as a synonym for the term מֶלֶךְ (*Melek*, or "king") mainly in poetry where the two terms are parallel to one another (1 Samuel 2:10, 2 Samuel 22:51, Psalm 2:2, Psalm 18:51 [H]). When מָשִׁיחַ is paired with the divine name, it is displaying the portrait of a perfect, righteous, and pious king. This designation causes issues when it comes to Cyrus since he is a worshiper of Marduk.³⁰³ Yet, John Collins reports that calling a king מָשִׁיחַ during the monarchic period was synonymous to his enthronement and nothing else.³⁰⁴ If Isaiah was penned in the 8th century BC, it would have been during the monarchic period (divided kingdom). Therefore, in Cyrus' case, it can only mean that he is a king, rather than a special individual. Proponents of this view may also use the argument of Isaiah 45:1-8 as an enthronement oracle to support their belief. Claus Westermann, and other form critics, suppose that these eight verses are a type of monarchic vision that implements enthronement traditions.³⁰⁵ The form critics argue that when placed beside Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, Isaiah 45:1-8 matches the enthronement

³⁰² Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, 772. See marginal note for Isaiah 45:1.

³⁰³ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1981), s.v. "māshîah."

³⁰⁴ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 394.

³⁰⁵ Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 15b, *Isaiah 40-66* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 253.

style.³⁰⁶ C. Seitz agrees with Westermann, explaining that this oracle is YHVH's commissioning of Cyrus.³⁰⁷ Westermann goes on to utilize the Cyrus Cylinder and its similarities to further connect the oracle with investiture to the kingly office.³⁰⁸ Therefore, it would denote Cyrus' status as an earthly king.

Although מָשִׁיחַ is utilized to mainly refer to kings, the term is not solely meant to be interpreted as a perfect, righteous, and pious king, nor does it possess a different meaning during the monarchic period.³⁰⁹ It is not merely a political title, either. If it were, then all kings would be called this, since YHVH is the one who upholds all of history. No ruler ever comes to power without His allowance. Furthermore, in the context of the Isaiah oracle, מָשִׁיחַ signifies one who is chosen for a certain deliverance-related task. In Cyrus' case, the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian oppression and captivity.³¹⁰ Dr. Meir Ben-Shahar specifically lists the action of deliverance as a reason why kings were called anointed.³¹¹ Therefore, "YHVH's anointed" has a larger meaning than just a reference to a perfect and holy king. Therefore, Cyrus being called as such is not negated

³⁰⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 199. See Table 6: Enthronement Psalms & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel.

³⁰⁷ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 254-5.

³⁰⁸ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 200. See footnote 15.

³⁰⁹ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, s.v. "māshîah"; Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 394.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 396. Saul was called to deliver the people from the Philistines. Ben-Shahar says that David was not called for such a purpose, but he was in 2 Samuel 3:18. Ben-Shahar also lists Jehu as one of the kings that was anointed for deliverance; however, Jehu is never referred to by the noun form מָשִׁיחַ, only the verb מָשַׁח.

by his Marduk worship.³¹² In addition, it has been shown in the previous section that מָשִׁיחַ does not possess a different meaning in the monarchic period; however, even if it did, it is preferred that it would not have mattered in the case of Isaiah 45. Although Isaiah wrote during the 8th century BC (divided kingdom), he was prophesying about the end of the exilic and the beginning of the post-exilic periods. Therefore, because he was looking forward to a different time, מָשִׁיחַ could have possessed a different meaning than the one common during that particular time frame. However, this is only applicable if the claim that מָשִׁיחַ means something different during the monarchic period is substantiated, which it is not. Moreover, it is uncertain whether Isaiah 45:1-8 can be attributed as an enthronement oracle. It lacks any particular investiture metaphors.³¹³ Although it matches the style and content of Psalm 2 and 110, it is missing a similar form and layout.³¹⁴ Many scholars question whether Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 are even enthronement accounts themselves.³¹⁵ From the New Testament, it is seen that מָשִׁיחַ in Psalm 2:2 is not referencing a king about to be crowned for office, but is looking forward to Jesus (Acts 13:32-33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5).³¹⁶ Psalm 110 names David's son as his Lord and calls the king a priest, which is prohibited in Israel.³¹⁷ The status of being both a priest and a king

³¹² This title is also used to refer to the patriarchs. מָשִׁיחַ is connected with the priests, but the entire title (YHVH's Anointed) is not utilized until the references to kings.

³¹³ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 254.

³¹⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 199.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, s.v. "māshîah."

³¹⁷ Ibid.

implies a theocratic king. The only person to fulfill the requirements for both is Jesus, the Messiah.³¹⁸ The “enthronement Psalms” are messianic, even though some immediately reference a human monarch of Israel.³¹⁹ Gary Smith notes that the oracle is best interpreted as “a revelation of what God plans for this king (but it was not a commissioning of Cyrus).”³²⁰ Commissioning connotes a direct command to a person or group of people, so in that sense, Cyrus is not commissioned by YHVH in the oracle. The oracle is not written for him, but to bring hope to the Hebrew people concerning YHVH’s forthcoming deliverance.³²¹ Furthermore, while Claus Westermann names the similarities between the Isaiah oracle and the Cyrus Cylinder as “remarkable,” the comparisons are often strained. When placed side-by-side, the language of each is not necessarily “remarkably” similar.³²² Both speak of a deity empowering Cyrus to take over Babylon and send the captives and their gods back to their home countries. However, the Cyrus Cylinder is clear that Marduk knows Cyrus and walks alongside him “like a real friend.”³²³ In the Isaiah oracle, it is specifically stated that Cyrus does not know YHVH: “For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, *though you do not know me*. I am YHVH, and there is no other, besides me there is

³¹⁸ Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 203-4.

³¹⁹ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, s.v. “māshîah.”

³²⁰ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 254.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² See Table 7: Cyrus Cylinder & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel.

³²³ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 283.

no God; I equip you, *though you do not know me* (Isaiah 45:4-5).”³²⁴ Moreover, the Cyrus Cylinder is much more specific concerning the events because it is not prophecy like the Isaiah account. It was penned after the Babylonian conquest as Persian propaganda to repudiate Nabonidus and uplift Cyrus.³²⁵ Therefore, even if Isaiah 45:1-8 was an enthronement oracle that was only concerned with naming Cyrus as a king, it still would not match up with the Cyrus Cylinder. The Cyrus Cylinder is unconcerned about his enthronement but is written as propaganda.³²⁶ Finally, it is never recorded that Cyrus is physically anointed with oil. Men who are promoted to the kingship (through the establishment of a new line or in direct opposition to a rival claimant) were always physically anointed with oil.³²⁷ Cyrus would qualify for both, as he establishes the Achaemenid line in place of the Neo-Babylonian one. Yet, it is never recorded that he is anointed (by the verb form). Altogether, it is proven that Cyrus’ anointing does not solely denote human kingship.

A second theory is that the author of the Isaiah 45 oracle wrote to legitimize Cyrus as the new Davidic monarch, effectively ending David’s line. YHVH now uses Cyrus in the same way He used David.³²⁸ Within this theory are variant perspectives, which will be discussed below. The first is that of Joseph Blenkinsopp, who details that

³²⁴ Emphasis added by writer.

³²⁵ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 199.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ben-Shahar, “‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah’,” 395.

³²⁸ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

Isaiah 40-48 focuses on the return from exile (43:5), the restoration of Jerusalem (44:26; 45:13), and the construction of the new temple (44:28). Since he views particular Jeremiah (23:5-6, 30:8-9, 33:14-26) and Ezekiel (34:23-24, 37:24-25) passages as later additions to the text, he believes that the comparable texts in Isaiah do not mention the restoration of the native Davidic dynasty.³²⁹ Although Isaiah 1-33 heavily focus on the ideal Davidic king, the synchronic exploration of chapters 34-66 displays that there is no longer an anticipated Davidic king.³³⁰ Because of this, the naming of Cyrus as YHVH's Anointed intimates that the Jews accepted Cyrus as the authentic successor to the Judean monarchy.³³¹ However, that does not mean the Achaemenid line replaces the Davidic line. Another proponent of this perspective is Klaus Baltzer, who believes this oracle was penned between 464-423 BC³³² to criticize the rule of Artaxerxes I. His notion is that Deutero-Isaiah has made Cyrus the new David. Cyrus is anointed in the same manner that David was. However, this anointing is only temporary and Cyrus is not a Judean king, since he is never called מָלֵךְ.³³³ Cyrus' status as a "replacement David" was transient and did not extend past his rebuilding of the temple and city, releasing of the exiles, and the conquering of other rulers.³³⁴ The third observation beneath the larger idea of Cyrus as

³²⁹ Blenkinsopp, "The Cosmological and Protological," 497-98.

³³⁰ Marvin A. Sweeney, "Swords into Plowshares or Plowshares into Swords? Isaiah and the Twelve in Intertextual Perspective on Zion.," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 102.

³³¹ Blenkinsopp, "The Cosmological and Protological," 497-98.

³³² Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts*, 70.

³³³ Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 374.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

the new Davidic monarch is that of Lisbeth Fried. She believes that Deutero-Isaiah was a contemporary of Cyrus who penned the oracle to authenticate him in his new position as the Judean monarch. The Davidic succession is exchanged for the Achaemenid line.³³⁵ Fried cites the “Cyrus songs,” as she calls them, in Isaiah (41-48) to legitimize her point. Davidic themes regarding the anointed one’s triumphs are applied to Cyrus rather than a Davidic king. The Davidic ruler in Psalms 2, 18, and 20 is gone and replaced by Cyrus.³³⁶ The specific Isaiah references she points to are: 41:1-4, 41:25-26, 44:24-28, 45:1-8, 9-13, 46:8-11, 48:14-16a. Within these references, Cyrus is called YHVH’s shepherd, anointed, beloved, and enactor of His purposes. All are Davidic epithets.³³⁷ By attributing him with these sobriquets, Deutero-Isaiah is placing Cyrus and his line as the rightful successors to the Davidic kingship, the legitimate Davidic monarchs.³³⁸

The main issues with these particular viewpoints are that they do not give any merit to the prophetic nature of Isaiah, nor do they understand the audience of Isaiah 40-48. In the case of Blenkinsopp, his argumentation concerning the lack of a native Davidic dynasty post-exile is weak. There is no evidence that the mentioned Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages are later additions. The idea that the Davidic monarch goes completely unreferenced in the Isaiah passages is untrue.³³⁹ Besides, Isaiah 40-55 is about the

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 390.

³³⁷ Ibid., 391.

³³⁸ Ibid., 392.

³³⁹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 505. The Davidic Seed is mentioned again in Isaiah 53:2 in the description of the young plant, the sapling which grows from the cedar of the Davidic line, even after it fell.

deliverance of Israel, not the Davidic dynasty. Since the redemption of Israel is the primary theme, it makes sense that “David” or the “house of David” is not the focal point.³⁴⁰ However, even if this future Davidic king was completely unmentioned in Isaiah post-Cyrus, he is spoken of in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and most of all, Chronicles. The books of Chronicles end the *Tanakh* with the reminder of the good things concerning the line of David and the even better things to come. Blenkinsopp’s point is even more confounding since he does not believe that Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel are truly prophetic books. He blames the Davidic references on later additions to the books, but what would it matter even if they were? It is indicated by a plethora of other writings, later than these and later than the supposed additions, that the Davidic monarch was still anticipated by the Jews. The entirety of the argument is contradictory.

In the case of Klaus Baltzer, the point of the passage is missed. It was not penned to criticize Artaxerxes I. The section itself is a message of hope to the Hebrew audience that YHVH will save them. It is also evidence of how great and supreme YHVH is, not Cyrus.³⁴¹ The idea that Cyrus is temporarily the “new David” may be partially true, as Cyrus certainly typifies the Davidic Messiah to come. The writer agrees that Cyrus and David are anointed in a similar way, indicated by מָשַׁח, but that David was anointed more

³⁴⁰ Cheol K. Choi, “A Critical Evaluation of the Proposal That Cyrus Replaced the Davidic King in God’s Program in Isaiah 40-55” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010), 78.

³⁴¹ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 254.

in the sense of being a righteous and pious king.³⁴² Cyrus was anointed specifically for a task, not for kingship.³⁴³ The writer also agrees with Baltzer that Cyrus was king over Judah, but he was not a Judean king—meaning, he ruled over the area, but he was not inaugurated especially for that particular office. Portions of Baltzer’s argument are agreeable, however, his dating of the passage to the time of Nehemiah negates the entirety of it. He names it as non-prophetic propaganda against Artaxerxes I. Yet, he goes on to discuss the nature of Cyrus’ anointing and his position as the New David as though they are certain to be fulfilled, rather than simple words to slander the current monarch.

Moreover, Fried argues that Isaiah 45 is propaganda written to legitimize Cyrus as the new Davidic monarch. There are many issues with this idea. The first is the fact that the authors of Scripture, even if the writing was not guided by plenary-verbal inspiration, would not have written a biased account in their holy book to legitimize a pagan ruler. Especially not when they were consistently looking forward to a Davidic Messiah still to come. Nowhere in Scripture is the Achaemenid line mentioned as the new holy line. Although the house of David did not see the throne again, the implications of the Achaemenid empire replacing the Davidic monarchy go beyond the political realm. Because the house of David is tied to the theological implications for the Messianic king,

³⁴² Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, s.v. “māshîah”; Ben-Shahar, “‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah’,” 394. David had a mission like Cyrus, but he was specially anointed as Israel’s king in addition to being anointed for a mission.

³⁴³ *Ibid.* Cyrus’ anointing did not, in any way, determine his kingship. He was anointed to take Babylon, free the Jews, and allow them to rebuild. Once that was accomplished, the anointing came off him. He continued to be king of Judah even after the anointing was removed, indicating that it was not placed there to name him as the monarch.

attempting to argue that the Achaemenid rulers superseded them would negate the prophecy concerning the Messiah that will come from David's line. The throne of Israel is more than just a political position and framing it the way Fried does takes away the theological significance owed to it. Altogether, there are 10 Achaemenid kings in Judah from 539-331 BC.³⁴⁴ After the Nehemiah account with King Artaxerxes I (Nehemiah 1-2, 445 BC),³⁴⁵ no other Persian kings are mentioned.³⁴⁶ Yet, the Davidic Monarch continues to be mentioned and anticipated. During the same time as Ezra 1-10, Nehemiah 1-2, and Malachi was the writing of Chronicles. It may have even been penned after these portions, as the exact dating is unknown.³⁴⁷ Even as the Achaemenid line is being erased from Scripture, the Davidic hopes continue. The next part of Fried's argument concerns the language and themes of the "Cyrus songs." It is significant to note, however, that these are not "Cyrus Songs," as they are not addressed to Cyrus. There are references to him in these chapters, but they are not penned for his commissioning, as aforementioned.³⁴⁸ Additionally, Fried points to Davidic themes and epithets being

³⁴⁴ Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts*, 70.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. Except in the case of Malachi, which was likely penned during Artaxerxes I's time, approximately 433 BC. However, it does not make mention of the king.

³⁴⁷ Christopher W. Morgan, ed., *Systematic Theology Study Bible: Introduction to 1 & 2 Chronicles* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 449. The Chronicler was a priest or Levite in the temple during the Achaemenid period after the people had returned from Babylon (539-332 BC); Shawn Aster, "The Book of Chronicles," My Jewish Learning, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-book-of-chronicles/>. Most scholars attribute it to the 5th century BC, making it one of the latest books in the *Tanakh*.

³⁴⁸ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 254.

utilized when describing Cyrus. The themes she mentions of Psalm 2, 18, and 20 may be more or less Davidic; however, their application to Cyrus does not mean the Davidic ruler of these passages is replaced by Cyrus. Psalm 2 and Psalm 18 both look past an immediate king and to a future Davidic Messiah (David's Seed) beyond the rulers of the time. It is false to say the Davidic monarch in these passages is gone since He is realized in the person of Jesus. Moreover, the "Davidic epithets" Fried speaks of are not necessarily "Davidic." "Shepherd" is a common symbol for a king.³⁴⁹ "Anointed" refers to many others outside of the Davidic line.³⁵⁰ "Beloved" is also attributed to the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 11:15, Psalm 108:6) and the tribe of Benjamin (Deuteronomy 33:12). These sobriquets are not solely Davidic; therefore, using them to speak of Cyrus does not paint him as the "new Davidic king." In addition to the minute reasons these argumentations are incorrect, there are overarching ones that apply to the larger concept. Not only are prophecy, the audience of Scripture, and biblical inerrancy cast aside by these perspectives, but so is the main requirement to replacing David—devotion to YHVH. Although Isaiah 45:3 says, "that you may know that it is I, YHVH, the God of Israel, who call you by your name," there is no indication the Cyrus ever converted to YHVHism.³⁵¹ However this "knowing" could be in the same sense that Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar II know the God of Israel is the supreme God without actually converting. Ezra 1:2-4 supports the idea that Cyrus did realize it was YHVH who roused

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 250.

³⁵⁰ See Table 3: מְשִׁיחַ Translations and Occurrences.

³⁵¹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 201.

him to accomplish these things. Although he calls him “YHVH, the God of heaven” in verse 2, it does not necessarily mean he became an adamant follower of YHVH. David, by contrast, was quite devoted to YHVH. He was a man after YHVH’s own heart and he always had been (1 Samuel 13:14). David’s obedience and holiness is what established YHVH’s covenant with him in 2 Samuel 7. Therefore, if someone was to be a “New David” or take the place of the Davidic line, it would likely be someone similar to David, or at least a follower of YHVH. When examining Blenkinsopp and Fried’s arguments it is significant to note that although Cyrus returned the people to their land, he did not return their hearts to YHVH. It is known from passages like 2 Kings 10:31 that when the king falls into iniquity and apostasy, the nation soon follows. The mark of a true, anointed (מָשִׁיחַ) Davidic king is that he leads the people to YHVH. Jesus does so in the New Testament, not only for Jews but for Gentiles also (Matthew 11:27, 28:19-20, John 14:6-7, 15:15, 17:24). Therefore, Cyrus’ anointing does not imply that he is the legitimate Judean king, nor the new David, nor the replacement Davidic monarch. He is called מְשִׁיחַ for a task, not a kingship.

The last main perspective is that of traditional commentators. They argue that Cyrus’ servitude is temporal and non-covenantal, as he never converts to YHVHism.³⁵² He is an agent through which the purposes of YHVH are fulfilled.³⁵³ Additionally, the mention of Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1 are significant to the prophetic nature and history of the book of Isaiah.³⁵⁴ The writer has fewer issues with this perspective than

³⁵² Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” 161; Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

³⁵³ Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” 161.

³⁵⁴ Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah?,” 374.

the others, although she prefers a slightly altered viewpoint. The only problem posed is that Cyrus' anointing was non-covenantal. Although it was not covenantal in the same way it was with someone like David, being YHVH's anointed automatically creates a covenant. Tryggve Mettinger holds that "divine anointment constitutes a covenant between God and his 'anointed', who operates as God's vassal."³⁵⁵ In Mettinger's perspective, the anointment refers to the blessed status of the man as well as the mutual vows between the deity and human. YHVH protects and guides the anointed while the anointed accomplishes His will.³⁵⁶ Therefore, Cyrus and YHVH have a covenant of this kind, as viewed in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1-7 with YHVH going before him and Cyrus fulfilling all that He desires. It denotes a provisional covenant for as long as he is the anointed, which is removed after he accomplishes YHVH's purposes. The preferred perspective out of the three mentioned in this section is this one; however, it does not fully encapsulate what is meant by מָשִׁיחַ when referring to King Cyrus.

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism surrounding Isaiah 45 is significant to prove the authenticity of Cyrus' naming in the text. The originality of his name in Scripture is important to display the validity of his title as anointed. First, it must be established that the Hebrew and Aramaic of the *Tanakh* have not been leveled or edited. An example of the lack of textual editing/leveling is seen in the name "Nebuchadnezzar." The Hebrew form is נְבוּכַדְנֶצְצַר

³⁵⁵ Ben-Shahar, "'Anointed' and 'Messiah'," 401.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

(*Nebûcadne'tsar*). The actual transliterated Akkadian is *Nabû-kudurri-usur*, which is properly attributed into Hebrew in Ezekiel's accounts as נְבוּכַדְרֶצַר (Nebûcadretsar). There are at least 3 different spellings: the Hebrew, the "Babylonian" Hebrew, and the Aramaic (נְבוּכַדְרֶצַר, or *Nebûcadnetsar*, likely a defective spelling of the Hebrew). They are all retained in their original spelling. If there had been leveling or editing, the terms would be synthesized to the same spelling. This is one small, yet extremely relevant, example. If there was any editing or leveling at all, the name would be changed. Yet, it remains in the three spellings.

Many scholars of the present day lean toward Charles Torrey's assessment that any specific references to Cyrus should be attributed to a later writer and not to the prophet.³⁵⁷ Joseph Blenkinsopp agrees, especially regarding Cyrus' name in Isaiah 44:28. He marks this verse as a later addition because it is a recreation of 44:26.³⁵⁸ Along the same vein, R. K. Harrison suggests that two uses of כּוֹרֵשׁ are glosses that were included after Cyrus was revealed as the anointed one.³⁵⁹ Yet, Torrey and Blenkinsopp advocate for the removal of the name, while Harrison believes it should remain to display the correct interpretation of the text.³⁶⁰ Despite many modern scholars agreeing with Torrey, there is no indication that כּוֹרֵשׁ is not part of the original text. Blenkinsopp's reasoning for omitting 44:28 is that it is a recreation of verse 26; however, repetition is significant in

³⁵⁷ Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 373.

³⁵⁸ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 252.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

³⁶⁰ Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah?," 373; Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 251.

biblical literature, especially in poetry and prophecy.³⁶¹ Concerning Harrison's proposal, it could be used to explain the construction of Isaiah 45:1, but it loses validity when it comes to 44:28's construction. Even if his perspective only applied to 45:1, then the name still would have been given in the preceding verse. However, the stress upon Cyrus' name and on YHVH's knowledge of it in Isaiah 45:3-4 implies that כּוֹרֵשׁ is original to the text.³⁶² Additionally, if Deutero-Isaiah penned the oracle post-fall of Babylon, Cyrus' name would likely be listed more than just twice.³⁶³ The references to Cyrus are vague if read before his advent. However, it is written this way for a purpose. The point is not that Cyrus is the Redeemer, but that YHVH is. Cyrus is only the vessel He uses for the deliverance. The faith of Judah needed to be in YHVH, not in the mysterious Cyrus.³⁶⁴

Further against Torrey's argument is evidence from the Hebrew text itself. The lack of additions can be seen in the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a), found at Qumran, dating back to 125 BC. It is the most substantial and best-preserved of all the biblical scrolls. It is also the only one that is nearly complete. The scroll is 1,000 years older than the "oldest" manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible utilized before 1947.³⁶⁵ In this form, it still possesses the term לְכוֹרֵשׁ, which means "to Cyrus."

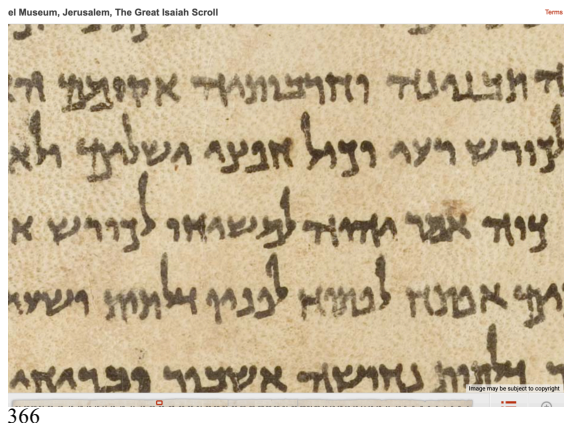
³⁶¹ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 252.

³⁶² Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*. See footnote 99.

³⁶³ Kenneth E. Jones, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary: Isaiah-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 3:122.

³⁶⁴ Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 252.

³⁶⁵ "The Great Isaiah Scroll," The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, accessed May 1, 2021, <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah#45:1>.



Additionally, if there is a disputed term or phrase in the *Tanakh*, there are usually *Masorah* to explain the issue or a *Kethiv-Qere* that lists the written and spoken terms. There are no noted *Masorah* or *Kethiv-Qere* on the text to signify any issue with it. The early Christian versions of the texts do not seem to take issue with the name, either. The Septuagint rendering may even reflect a translation from a manuscript of proto-Masoretic tradition, making it even older and, possibly, more reliable.³⁶⁷ In Isaiah 45:1, the Septuagint retains the phrase, “Οὗτω λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τῷ χριστῷ μου Κύρω,” which is the exact Greek equivalent of the Hebrew text, ending with the genitive form of the Greek name for Cyrus, Κύρω.³⁶⁸ The Latin Vulgate translates it as, “*haec dicit Dominus christo meo Cyro,*” which is also a direct translation from the Hebrew.³⁶⁹ All extant

³⁶⁶ “The Great Isaiah Scroll.”

³⁶⁷ Frank Moore Cross Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1958), 132.

³⁶⁸ Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, trans., *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 880.

³⁶⁹ Jerome, trans., “The Prophecy of Isaias: Chapter 45,” *The Latin Vulgate*, accessed June 30, 2021, <http://www.latinvulgate.com/verse.aspx?t=0&b=27&c=45>. It also gives the genitive form of the Latin term, which is “Cyrus” in the nominative form.

versions include Cyrus' name. Therefore, it is most likely that this is true prophecy given by YHVH concerning Cyrus the Great, king of Medo-Persia.

The Writer's View Concerning the Nature of Cyrus' Anointing

Overall, it can be proven that Cyrus' anointing does not merely denote kingship, nor does it place him as the new Davidic monarch. He is not physically anointed by a prophet.³⁷⁰ He does not convert to YHVHism.³⁷¹ His name is not a later addition or a gloss on the text. So, then, how is he called *מְשִׁיחַ*? Admittedly, YHVH's naming of Cyrus is quite peculiar when placed against his utilization of other pagan figures in the *Tanakh*. It is definitively different from the nature of the anointing witnessed in priests, kings, patriarchs, and the forthcoming Messiah. Cyrus is anointed in the same sense as being consecrated—dedicated formally to a religious or divine purpose.³⁷² He is not anointed as the other kings are, for he is a foreigner. Kings like Saul, David, or Solomon were dually anointed for the kingship but also for a divine purpose; they were also anointed physically, while Cyrus was not. Although it is uncertain when the anointing rested on Cyrus—whether from the beginning of his life, the start of his reign, or the battle at Babylon—it can be assumed that Cyrus was not merely anointed for the kingship of the Near East. Although YHVH utilized his position and paved the way for him to take that

³⁷⁰ If he was, it is not recorded in the *Tanakh*.

³⁷¹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 201-2

³⁷² Slotki, *Isaiah; Hebrew Text*, 219; *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Oxford, ENG: Oxford University Press, 2020), s.v. “consecrate,” https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/consecrate.

office, the point of his anointing was not for him to be a powerful monarch but to free the Jews and allow them to rebuild. In the case of Cyrus, מְשִׁיחַ assigns him as “one consecrated by YHVH to be His agent and representative.”³⁷³ He was not chosen because of any innate goodness, but because of the holy mission he was given.³⁷⁴ It implies a divine covenant, through which YHVH will protect and make the way clear for him to enact His will. Cyrus is not YHVH’s anointed for the rest of his life, as his task has clear parameters. Once it is completed, he no longer occupies the office. John Calvin puts it this way: “God deigns to call [Cyrus] his ‘Anointed,’ not by a perpetual title, but because he discharged for a time the office of Redeemer.”³⁷⁵

One aspect of the writer’s view that was unmentioned in previous sections is that in his time as anointed, Cyrus typifies the Messiah. He embodies the forthcoming Messiah through the Spirit of YHVH coming upon him in a large measure so that he could be prepared for the heavenly assignment.³⁷⁶ It is often refuted that a foreign pagan could epitomize this Messiah, Jesus, that has been prophesied of and anticipated for hundreds of years. Yet, YHVH establishes in Isaiah 43:19 that He is about to do something new. The house of David consistently disrespected YHVH (Isaiah 7:13, 39:2)

³⁷³ John Skinner, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: Isaiah* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 2: under “Isaiah 45:1,” <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/isaiah/45.htm>.

³⁷⁴ Slotki, *Isaiah; Hebrew Text*, 220.

³⁷⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary On the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2010), 3: under “Isaiah 45:1,” <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/cal/isaiah-45.html>.

³⁷⁶ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 195.

and there was none to be found among them to deliver Israel. Yet, this does not mean YHVH abandoned His promises; no, He kept them, just in an unexpected way. Such as with Ruth, a Moabitess, who became an ancestress to David and Jesus (Ruth 4:13-22), Cyrus, a Persian, embodies the Davidic Messiah (Isaiah 53:10, Zechariah 11:4, 13:7, John 8:29, 10:11).³⁷⁷ What makes him an embodiment of the Messiah is simple. Being YHVH's chosen vessel, the one who will complete YHVH's desires, is what frames him in this way. He is viewed in this light even moreso through his completion of these things, whereby YHVH is glorified and revealed to all.³⁷⁸ Another sense is in the way that Cyrus accomplishes something for the sake of the YHVH's chosen ones, just as Jesus dies on the cross (accomplishes something) so that the ones YHVH calls to Himself can be saved. On the contrary, scholars like Fried believe that because Cyrus is referred to as YHVH's "shepherd" and YHVH's "anointed," that he replaces the Davidic king and becomes the Messiah.³⁷⁹ However, as previously stated, this is unsupported. Cyrus does not become the Messiah because he does not fit every Messianic prediction. For example, although Cyrus' birth origins can be a little uncertain at times, it is a fact that he was not born of a virgin, as predicted in Isaiah 7:14. Nor does he endure the sufferings allocated to the Servant Messiah in Isaiah 53. Although the idea of his replacement is false, the sobriquets (especially רֹעֵי and מְשִׁיחַ) are two of the most significant terms ascribed to the

³⁷⁷ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 197.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

³⁷⁹ Choi, "A Critical Evaluation," 17.

true Messiah, Jesus. Due to this language, he becomes a type of Christ, a former embodiment of the One still to come.³⁸⁰

Therefore, Cyrus is a Messianic embodiment, evident in YHVH rousing him as a conqueror who rescues the chosen people. Yet, in the Servant Songs of Isaiah, there is a more evident Christ figure, the Servant, whose position as the Messiah would be fulfilled not by military power but by suffering and exoneration (Isaiah 49-55).³⁸¹ This Servant is the foreshadowing of Jesus and His life. Jesus is the complete manifestation, while Cyrus' deliverance is a mere foreshadowing of what will be completed through the Servant Jesus.³⁸² The fact that Isaiah ends on the description of the Servant rather than Cyrus displays how YHVH was showing something bigger and better to come—a Messiah who would save all people, not with military office or brute force, but with His atoning death.

³⁸⁰ S. Lewis Johnson, "Cyrus: Anointed of Jehovah and His Greater Captain," SLJ Institute, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://sljinstitute.net/the-prophets/isaiah/isaiah-cyrus-anointed-of-jehovah-and-his-greater-captain/>. The One still to come during his time, but now the One who has already come (Jesus).

³⁸¹ Choi, "A Critical Evaluation," 78.

³⁸² Ibid.

Chapter 4

Purposes & Theological Implications of the Anointed Cyrus

Introduction

The Medo-Persian King Cyrus is called *לְמִשְׁיָחוֹ*, or His Anointed, in Isaiah 45:1. Throughout the rest of this chapter and the surrounding context of Isaiah 40-55, different reasons for his calling are revealed, as are the theological implications of a pagan ruler being called *לְמִשְׁיָחוֹ*. The purposes can be broken down into two categories: (1) for the sake of the elect group, Israel, and (2) for the entire inhabited earth to know YHVH as the true God. The theological implications are further divided into three intimations: YHVH is the true God, YHVH's redemptive plan, and YHVH's power to utilize anything or anyone to enact His plans. YHVH's will is accomplished through individuals whom He

commissions for a specific purpose.³⁸³ Even though Cyrus did not know Him, YHVH commissioned Him for a reason. Although there are multiple explanations and implications, the most important thing to remember is that YHVH is the true God who will always work things out for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

Purposes

For the Sake of the Elect

The most evident purpose for YHVH commissioning King Cyrus as His “Anointed one” is listed in Isaiah 45:4—for the sake of His servant Jacob and YHVH’s chosen one, Israel.³⁸⁴ In the Old Testament, Israel can be seen as YHVH’s “elect” nation out of the multitude of people groups. After the exodus, where YHVH delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, He establishes the Sinaitic Covenant with them, calling Israel as a whole His chosen nation, His “treasured possession” (Exodus 19:5).²²

Almost one-thousand years after the first exodus, Israel is once again in captivity, this time in Babylon. By 539 BC, they had been exiled for approximately 66 years.³⁸⁵ The temple, and Jerusalem, had been demolished for 47 of those 66 years.³⁸⁶ The purpose in utilizing Cyrus as His vessel was for YHVH to set the Jewish captives free and for Cyrus

³⁸³ Meyer, *Isaiah*, under “Isaiah 45.”

³⁸⁴ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 198.

³⁸⁵ Depending on when they were initially deported. 66 years is from the first deportation in 605 BC of Daniel and other upper-class Jews, as described in Daniel 1:3-4.

³⁸⁶ Judging from passages like 2 Kings 25:8, that Nebuchadnezzar II entered Jerusalem in the 19th year of his reign, this would make the date of the siege 586 BC, since his reign began in 605 BC.

to rebuild the temple and city. Although the Jews rebuilt the temple and the city themselves, Cyrus provided a royal order that they were allowed to do so and restored the temple artifacts to them that Nebuchadnezzar II had carried off during the siege of 586 BC (Ezra 1:7-11). The overall point is that it is for Israel's sake, not Cyrus', that YHVH calls Cyrus by his name in Isaiah 44 and 45, setting him apart from other pagan rulers with epithets such as "shepherd" and "anointed."³⁸⁷ Even though YHVH does call Cyrus by name, like he does with Jacob in Isaiah 43:1, it is primarily so that He can keep the promises He made to His elect people, Israel.³⁸⁸

Although Cyrus is an important figure in Isaiah 40-48, his reign and prosperity were given to him to help restore Israel, not to be the main subject of these chapters.³⁸⁹ The true God, YHVH, was unknown to Cyrus (Isaiah 45:4), so why would he be the main focus of these deliverance passages?³⁹⁰ Although Cyrus did not know YHVH, He was known by His people and displayed that even in the rising and falling of empires, He works out the good for His Church, His chosen ones.³⁹¹ With that being said, the main subjects are YHVH and Israel, and the overarching theme of Isaiah 40-48 is the

³⁸⁷ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 198.

³⁸⁸ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 202.

³⁸⁹ Choi, "A Critical Evaluation," 77.

³⁹⁰ The purpose in these statements is to show that although a discussion of Cyrus is significant, it always comes back to YHVH and what He does for His people.

³⁹¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary On the Whole Bible: Isaiah to Malachi* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1986), under "Isaiah 45," e-Sword X.

restoration of Israel by YHVH through Cyrus.³⁹² The exit from Babylon and return to Jerusalem represents a second Exodus (Isaiah 43:16-21; 44:26-27; 48:20-21). Unlike when they were in Egypt, the Jews were in Babylon because of their idolatry and infidelity. Despite their unfaithfulness, YHVH sees their suffering, hears their cries, and still delivers His people when He “remember[s] His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob (Exodus 1:24).” When the time was right, He commanded them to depart from their place of exile, declaring that He was the One who had redeemed them (Isaiah 48:20). Isaiah 48:21 is especially reminiscent of when the Israelites were being led from Egypt and YHVH provided for them in the desert. This reference to a second Exodus, and the others, display the promise that He will do the same for Israel as they leave Babylon, so long as they remain loyal to their God.³⁹³

Commentators like Alter cite the prophecy about Cyrus in Isaiah 45 to be “a peculiarly Israel-centered view of the world that Cyrus’ conquests are imagined as coming about strictly to rescue the people of Israel from its exile.”³⁹⁴ One could argue that Cyrus’ conquests, although used to rescue the Jews, were not only for that purpose. There were other reasons, as aforementioned, for this calling. Furthermore, the Old Testament is a collection of books that document the journey of YHVH and Israel. It is unsurprising if it is “Israel-centered” because Israel is one of the main subjects of the story (although, YHVH is the most important subject). Moreover, even though Cyrus

³⁹² Choi, “A Critical Evaluation,” 77.

³⁹³ Jones, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, 129.

³⁹⁴ Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, 772. See marginal note for Isaiah 45:4/

may have had other motives for the conquest, he still accomplishes what YHVH has purposed for him to do. The “Israel-centered” view does not negate his other purposes, as one can still find echoes of them in history.³⁹⁵ None are as supported, however, as the motive of rescuing Israel and restoring their temple.³⁹⁶

The World will know YHVH

Another purpose in attributing such Messianic language and commission to Cyrus is that all people will know YHVH is the true God.³⁹⁷ The progression of the Isaiah 45:1-8 oracle shows that Cyrus’ calling is so that Cyrus might know YHVH (45:3), Israel might know YHVH (45:4), and the world might know YHVH (45:6).³⁹⁸ The first is that Cyrus might know. YHVH’s actions in Isaiah 45:1-3 are all hinged upon one term in verse 3—*לְמָאן* (*lama’an*), or “to the end that.”³⁹⁹ He does it all “to the end that” Cyrus will know the One who is calling him by name is Lord. All of his triumphs, culminating with his allowance of the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild (Ezra 1:1-4), should show

³⁹⁵ Such as with the *Cyrus Cylinder*, and his reason being to restore Babylon to Marduk.

³⁹⁶ Much of Cyrus’ history is unknown or uncertain. Although there is the *Cyrus Cylinder*, there are very few substantial documents which tell of Cyrus’ conquests that are not based on conjecture or bias. The account of the Jews being rescued and the temple being restored is the most supported reason, upheld by Scripture, but also many historians, i.e. Josephus.

³⁹⁷ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 203.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

him that the One who has made his paths clear is YHVH, the God of the Jews. The terminology does not necessarily mean he will become a worshiper of YHVH, but that he will know the accomplishments were not his own.⁴⁰⁰ Delitzsch puts it this way, “And all this success is given to him by [YHVH], that he may know that it is [YHVH] the God of Israel who has called out with his name, i.e., called out his name, or called him to be what he is, and as what he shows himself to be.”⁴⁰¹

The second group that are to know YHVH is the true God is Israel. Idol worship was a significant problem in the time of Isaiah. It was the kindling for the siege of both Israel and Judah. Although Kenneth Jones explains that this type of idolatry was less prevalent during the exile, Israel still has a long history of being unfaithful in her covenant with YHVH.⁴⁰² She constantly forgets who has redeemed her time and time again. Ezekiel 8 & 16 are good references for the type of idolatry that was occurring during the 6th century BC before Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem. This idea plays into the preceding section of Cyrus being utilized for the sake of the elect. It was not only that YHVH’s chosen people would be delivered, but that He upheld the covenant and His promises, showing them that He is the only true God who can do so. The handmade gods of Babylon cannot do what He did. Marduk cannot save as He did. It was not Marduk

⁴⁰⁰ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 197.

⁴⁰¹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 444. The writer substituted the term “Jehovah” for “YHVH” to retain the symmetry of the paper.

⁴⁰² Jones, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, 128. The idolatry mentioned in Isaiah 48:5 was more prevalent in Isaiah’s time than during the exile.

that commissioned Cyrus, but YHVH.⁴⁰³ Would a pagan god have given them the opportunity to rebuild their temple to another deity? Certainly not. Therefore, it would be evident to the Jews that YHVH was fulfilling His promises and His covenant to them by rescuing and restoring them. The oracle of Isaiah 45:1-8 is not given to Cyrus, but rather, to the Jews who cannot see how YHVH's promises of restoration can be kept. The main issue found in the context of this oracle, is how to convince the Jews that YHVH can still save them.⁴⁰⁴ YHVH saves in His own way, raising up Cyrus, so that the Jews will know that He is God.

The third group that is to know of YHVH's power is the rest of the world. Isaiah 45:6 is very clear that even though YHVH equipped Cyrus when he did not know Him, it was done so that the world may know "from the sun's rising place to its setting (Alter's *Hebrew Bible* translation)" that there is no god other than YHVH. The phrase "from the sun's rising place to its setting" describes the earth in its entirety. All people will have knowledge of YHVH.⁴⁰⁵ Additionally, the usage of *יְהוָה* to describe Cyrus is evidence that YHVH is God of the entire world and all the earth is to know Him. Typically, *יְהוָה* is used to describe priests, kings, prophets, and patriarchs of Israel. YHVH could have used someone from Israel to bring deliverance, but He did not. He used a pagan king in order to show that YHVH is not the Lord of Israel alone, but is the Lord of the all people. Israel

⁴⁰³ The Cyrus Cylinder tells us that Cyrus believed Marduk to be the one who commissioned him to take Babylon in order to restore Marduk as the patron deity of the city. Ezra 1:2 later points to Cyrus giving credit to YHVH.

⁴⁰⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 200.

⁴⁰⁵ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 199.

was not made elect for its own sake but to show the nations the way to YHVH. Just as its election was not for its own sake, its deliverance was not either.⁴⁰⁶ Israel's deliverance by Cyrus was a sign to the world that YHVH is the only true God. Furthermore, Isaiah 45:14-25 displays how the redemptive plan of YHVH is not only for Israel, but for all people of the earth.⁴⁰⁷ Specifically, Isaiah 45:14 entails that the judgment YHVH brings to the nations through Cyrus will set the stage for the abolishment of paganism and the universal belief in YHVH as the only One.⁴⁰⁸ Although not all people knew YHVH through Cyrus' conquest of Babylon, that is the reason for which he was raised. It is not necessary to think this prophecy would have an immediate fulfillment with Cyrus, but that his commission merely sets the scene for all humanity to know YHVH in the future. Cyrus was commissioned so that the Jews could return to Palestine, so that Jesus could be born in Bethlehem, so that redemption could be completed through Jesus.⁴⁰⁹ The prophecy in the latter verses comes to fruition in the final historical fulfillment that happens at the judgment of the world.⁴¹⁰ At this time, "every knee shall bow to [YHVH], and every tongue shall confess to God (Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:10)."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 200-01.

⁴⁰⁷ Jones, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, 125.

⁴⁰⁸ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 447.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, SCT: T&T Clark, 1874), under "Romans 14," <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/meyer/romans/14.htm>.

⁴¹¹ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 447.

Theological Implications

YHVH is the True God

As there are specific reasons for YHVH attributing Cyrus as His Anointed and commissioning him as the enactor of YHVH's plans, there are also specific theological implications behind YHVH's decision to do so. The most important, as always, is that YHVH is the true, unrivaled, prophetic God who possesses many attributes and superior power. The first assertion is that YHVH is the only true God, unique in His power and attributes. Isaiah 45:6 begs the question of how a prophet can propose such wide assertions in the name of God. The answer is because there is no other God than YHVH. Everything that happens, happens because He has set it into motion.⁴¹² He is matchless in light of all else, and Isaiah 40-48 stresses this overall superiority. Because of this superior power, YHVH had the power to rescue Israel, as well as the desire to do so. By saving His chosen ones from exile in Babylon, He displayed how He has no rival or equal.⁴¹³ All Scripture paints the redemptive plan of YHVH and displays how He is worthy to be worshiped. Even though YHVH raised up Cyrus on His behalf, YHVH is still Israel's "foremost champion. His word is upon them, but His heart is among them. He bears the brunt of their battle, and their deliverance, political and spiritual, is His own travail and agony. Whomever else He summons on the stage, He remains the true hero of the drama."⁴¹⁴ YHVH is the true God, the main subject of any passage within Scripture.

⁴¹² Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 202.

⁴¹³ Choi, "A Critical Evaluation," 117.

⁴¹⁴ Geoffrey W. Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 6: under "Isaiah 45," e-Sword X.

Because of this, He can raise up a pagan king, call him רִשְׁמֵי , and empower him to complete the victories he did.

Another implication is that YHVH is a prophetic God. 19 books of the *Tanakh* are called the *Nevi'im*—the Prophets. In these books, YHVH prophesies through chosen men to reveal His plans to come for all nations. Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Cyrus was given around 160 years before Cyrus’ time, with chapters 40-66 being prophesied in approximately 711 BC.⁴¹⁵ Cyrus was born around 580 BC;⁴¹⁶ His rise to fame began around 551 BC with his first battle against his grandfather Astyages, king of Media.⁴¹⁷ The timeline of 150-160 years from Isaiah to Cyrus established by many commentators fits with Cyrus’ rise to power rather than his siege of Babylon. By 711 BC, the northern kingdom had already fallen, and the southern kingdom was not far behind (Jeremiah 25:8-11). No one knew of this mysterious Cyrus, as neither Cyrus I or II were born yet. To bring comfort and hope, YHVH speaks of their eventual deliverance through an anointed one. Although he is not the redeemer they expected, he fulfills YHVH’s promises 160 years later with the siege of Babylon. YHVH spoke through Isaiah that He would “subdue nations before [Cyrus]...disarm kings...open the doors before [Cyrus], so that the gates will not be shut...(Isaiah 45:1).” YHVH also said, “I will go before [Cyrus] and level the mountains; I will break down the gates of bronze and cut through the bars of

⁴¹⁵ “Isaiah: Bible Timeline.”

⁴¹⁶ Kristin B. Rattini, “Who Was Cyrus the Great?,” *National Geographic*, May 06, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/people/reference/cyrus-the-great/>.

⁴¹⁷ Dando-Collins, “Cyrus' First Battle,” in *Cyrus the Great: Conqueror, Liberator, Anointed One*, 50-57.

iron (Isaiah 45:2).” The references to the gates of bronze are often seen as a connection to the 100 gates of Babylon.⁴¹⁸ As already explained, Cyrus made it into the city by diverting the Euphrates into smaller canals and basins so that the water dwindled away from the, providentially open, river gates. Cyrus’ army took the path of the weakened river bed into the city, and that is how he conquered Babylon, despite her many gates and impenetrable walls.⁴¹⁹ YHVH was promising the people, through Isaiah, that Cyrus would come and rescue them from Babylon, the city of many gates. No gate or fortress could keep out what YHVH had ordained.

The Isaiah 45 prophecy is not the first, nor is it the last, time YHVH’s prophecy comes true. As aforementioned, there are 19 prophetic books in the *Tanakh*. For example, Jeremiah 25:12 promises that Babylon will become an “everlasting waste.” Today, all that is left of the magnificent city is debris and ruins across less than one square mile. Archaeologists believe the Euphrates River has altered its course since the height of the city, putting most of the ruins underwater.⁴²⁰ The mud bricks of the ancient city continue to decay and disintegrate, and eventually, there will be nothing but mounds of dirt and rubble.⁴²¹ YHVH fulfilled His promise in Jeremiah that Babylon would be nothing but an everlasting waste, as that is what it has become in modern day. Another, very important, example is the person of Jesus. J. Barton Payne lists around 574 verses in the Old

⁴¹⁸ Jones, *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, 124.

⁴¹⁹ Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

⁴²⁰ “Where Is Ancient Babylon Located Today?,” Maps of the World, May 26, 2021, <https://www.mapsofworld.com/answers/history/where-is-ancient-babylon-located-today/#>.

⁴²¹ Jane Arraf, “Ancient Babylon in Iraq Restored,” NPR, November 17, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/17/668856494/ancient-babylon-in-iraq-restored>.

Testament which directly predict the coming Messiah.⁴²² Even from the very beginning, in Genesis 3:15, Jesus is prophesied of in the Seed of Eve, who will crush the head of the serpent, Satan. In the prophets, Jesus is predicted of 39 times. He fulfilled the prophecies in that He was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:33), was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1, 6), and was preceded by John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6). He entered Jerusalem and they shouted “Hosanna!” (Zechariah 9:9-10, Psalm 118:25-26; Matthew 2:19, Mark 11:9, Luke 19:38, John 12:13), but He was betrayed soon after (Psalm 69:25; Acts 1:20). His side was pierced as He hung on the cross (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37), He was crucified alongside criminals (Isaiah 53:9a; Matthew 27:38), but He was buried in the rich man’s tomb (Isaiah 53:9b; Matthew 27:57). His agony on the cross was the fulfillment of His suffering in the place of all sinners (Isaiah 53:6, 9, 12; Romans 4:25, 1 Peter 2:21-25).⁴²³ YHVH always knows the plans of the future. Jesus knew what His fate would be before it happened, as He pleaded with God the Father, “‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’ (Matthew 26:39).” YHVH had revealed His plans for Jesus long before they ever occurred, prophesying and promising a better Davidic King, the ultimate Anointed One, the true Messiah.

In the scope of Isaiah 40-48, the fact that YHVH is a prophetic God delineates Him further from the gods of the other nations. Isaiah 44:9-20 details how idols are

⁴²² Walter Kaiser Jr., “Jesus in the Old Testament,” Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, August 9, 2011, <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/jesus-in-the-old-testament/>.

⁴²³ Ibid.

handmade, but the people still treat them as if they are transcendent beings. The main argument against idols is that they are unable to prophesy like YHVH. Nothing they have said in the past can be brought to fruition, and anything spoken now is merely a restated sentiment from the past. YHVH, on the other hand, successfully prophesied in the past and victoriously does so in the present age.⁴²⁴ Isaiah 48:1-5 has YHVH telling the Israelites to recall what He has prophesied of in the past that has now come true. He prophesied of those things long ago. He knew the unfaithful stubbornness of His people and how they would try to claim their idols were the cause of the events instead of Him. But YHVH is clear that he is in charge of human history, not the manmade gods.⁴²⁵

YHVH's Continued Redemptive Plan

In order for YHVH's redemptive plan to continue, the Jews had to be delivered from exile in Babylon. Isaiah 45:2 utilizes redemptive terminology as YHVH addresses Cyrus, but it is important to note that Cyrus was not the cause of redemption, nor did he enact redemption, but was merely setting the stage for the true Deliverer. The victories brought to Cyrus by YHVH were done for the purpose of continuing His redemptive plan.⁴²⁶ The Jews had to be rescued from Babylon so that they could return to Palestine where Jesus, the true Messiah, was to be born centuries later.⁴²⁷ Redemption is promised,

⁴²⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 196.

⁴²⁵ Choi, "A Critical Evaluation," 130.

⁴²⁶ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 196.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

and that promise is undergirded by the recurring phrase כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה (*Koh amar Adonai*—“Thus says YHVH”) in the section of Isaiah 44:23-47:15. This phrase is typically used to instill assurance in YHVH’s promises to deliver and redeem. In this context, it further displays that the promises and prophecies listed are not just general utterances from a prophet, but that they are the precise words of YHVH. The reliability of the words as YHVH’s is extremely significant to this segment, especially when the path for redemption is to be paved by a pagan.⁴²⁸ It would be more difficult for the Jews to believe it was so if it were not given from the very mouth of YHVH. But despite whether one believes it or not, Cyrus paved the way for the true Redeemer to come in. Because of Cyrus, one day every knee will bow to YHVH in Christ (Philippians 2:10-11).⁴²⁹ Isaiah 45:16-17 shows that YHVH is the Savior, by the idea that the idolaters are put to shame, but Israel is redeemed with an everlasting redemption. This eternal redemption is not only physical but is also spiritual and final.⁴³⁰

YHVH Can Use Whomever He Chooses

One of the more significant implications of Cyrus being named as YHVH’s anointed is to show that YHVH can use whomever He chooses to enact His plans and will. Although Cyrus is to know who YHVH is now by His commissioning of him, it ultimately does not matter that Cyrus does not know YHVH or if he ever did come to

⁴²⁸ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 193.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁴³⁰ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 448.

know Him.⁴³¹ Even before Cyrus knew of Him, he was still called “shepherd” and “anointed.” It is not a requirement for someone to believe in YHVH for Him to use them to enact His will. He is the Lord and Creator of all people, therefore all people will serve Him, whether it is knowingly and with gratitude, with a calm ignorance, or even with a surly and rebellious mind.⁴³² All of the situations listed in this prophetic oracle (Isaiah 45:1-8) have one starting point, and that starting point does not change if those involved do not know what it is. YHVH is unique (Isaiah 45:6, “there is no other”), Cyrus has been commissioned (Isaiah 45:5, “equipped”) by YHVH. It all begins with YHVH.

YHVH is the ruler of the earth and His will is accomplished despite what the human will desires.⁴³³ This can be seen in people like Jonah, who could not outrun the will or plan of YHVH. He did not want to go to Nineveh, but he still ended up going despite his desires. Another example is the Mesopotamian soothsayer, Balaam. He was a wicked prophet that only wanted to make money from pronouncing curses on Israel; however, YHVH would not allow him to do so. He continuously spoke blessings at the behest of YHVH (Numbers 22-24). Additionally, Nebuchadnezzar II was bent to the will of YHVH when he was stirred up as the destroyer of Jerusalem. Just as YHVH stirred up Nebuchadnezzar II as the destroyer, He stirred up Cyrus as the deliverer. The point is that it is not necessarily about Cyrus, but about YHVH, the Most High King, and how He is able to appoint anyone He desires to His purpose. Paganism does not hold Him back because He is “God of gods and Lord of kings (Daniel 2:47).”

⁴³¹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 202.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 202.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

King Cyrus of Medo-Persia, a tolerant polytheist, is called YHVH's anointed in Isaiah 45:1. The following verses of the oracle describe how YHVH will go before him in order that he can accomplish all of His purposes successfully. Isaiah's prophecy concerning Cyrus was given around 160 years before Cyrus' time, with chapters 40-66 prophesied in approximately 711 BC.⁴³⁴ Long before Cyrus was born, around 580 BC,⁴³⁵ YHVH had a plan for him. According to Psalm 139:16, the history of a person's life is set out by YHVH and written in His book before it ever happens. A perfect life plan exists for each human, planned by YHVH Himself (Ephesians 2:10).⁴³⁶ Cyrus' path was paved even before the world was formed, not just 160 years before his advent. YHVH has a

⁴³⁴ "Isaiah: Bible Timeline."

⁴³⁵ "Cyrus the Great," Iran Chamber Society.

⁴³⁶ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*,
<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/psalms/139.htm>.

plan for His world and His people. He is able to use any vessel for His plans because He is the One who formed it all. His power is all-encompassing and never-ending. YHVH uses Cyrus for many reasons, for the immediate path of deliverance for His people and for the broader purposes in redemptive history. Everything He does is so that the world will know who the true God is. Without Cyrus as a forerunner to the true Messiah, Jesus, the plan of redemption would not have worked in the same way. YHVH's naming Cyrus as יְהוָה underscores the redemptive plan beyond the Jews and predicts the availability of salvation to all people through the advent of Jesus, the true יְהוָה .

Although Cyrus' temperament aligned with YHVH's purposes for him, it is important to note that even if it had not, YHVH still would have been able to use him. However, it could be supposed that YHVH chooses people according to their dispositions, or that He gives them the personalities that will fit His plans. Nebuchadnezzar II was sadistic and YHVH used him for destruction. Cyrus II was benevolent and YHVH used him for deliverance. Cyrus was also a military genius and utilized that knowledge to overtake most, if not all, the near east. He even captured Babylon, a previously impenetrable stronghold.⁴³⁷ Yet, YHVH is the One who gifted Cyrus with an aptitude for warfare and He is the One who paved the way for him to conquer the near east. Despite his temperament, accomplishments, or life in general, it is ultimately not about Cyrus, but about YHVH. Many interpreters make the mistake of calling Isaiah 45 "Cyrus' commission" or a "Cyrus song." They place the pagan ruler as the subject or the audience of the text. Although Josephus credits Cyrus' deliverance of

⁴³⁷ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, 282.

the Jews to his reading of the Isaiah text,⁴³⁸ this conclusion is unverified. The prophecy was not given to tell Cyrus of his mission, but to bring comfort to the Hebrew people that deliverance would come. Yet, it is not by Cyrus' power, but by YHVH's might.

Cyrus is called מְשִׁיחַ by YHVH's power and provision. It is by His plan that the usual definition of the term can change when referring to Cyrus. King Cyrus is anointed into a covenantal arrangement with YHVH for a temporary time, in order that he can fulfill the deliverance prophecy given by YHVH. Although the base reason for this thesis is to clarify the intended meaning of the messianic language assigned to Cyrus in Isaiah, there is a larger point on the horizon. YHVH is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He knew that 505 years after Cyrus' completion of His plans, that the perfect Messiah, His Son, would die on the cross and resolutely deliver all people for all time.⁴³⁹ Cyrus is merely an imperfect foreshadowing of the greater promise to come—the Anointed One who saves all through substitutionary atonement.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 287.

⁴³⁹ Justin Taylor and Andreas Köstenberger, "1,981 Years Ago Today: Why We Believe We Can Know the Exact Date Jesus Died," The Gospel Coalition, April 03, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/1981-years-ago-today-why-we-believe-we-can-know-the-exact-date-jesus-died/>. The preferred dating of Jesus' death is AD 33, while the preferred date of the Jews' deliverance from Babylon is 538 BC. Although the city was taken in 539 BC by Gubaru/Ugbaru/Gobryas, Cyrus did not enter until the last month or so of 539 BC.

מְשִׁיחַ Translations and Occurrences

| Hebrew Term | English Translation | Occurrences |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|
| בְּמִשְׁחָם | against anointed | 3 |
| בְּמִשְׁחָי | My anointed ones | 1 |
| הַמְּשִׁיחַ | the anointed | 4 |
| לְמִשְׁחָם | to (the) anointed | 1 |
| לְמִשְׁחָי | for My anointed | 1 |
| לְמִשְׁחָהוּ | to His anointed | 3 |
| מְשִׁיחַ | Messiah | 3 |
| מְשִׁיחַ | anointed | 8 |
| מְשִׁיחְךָ | Your anointed | 5 |
| מְשִׁיחֶיךָ | of Your anointed | 1 |
| מְשִׁיחִי | My anointed | 1 |
| מְשִׁיחוֹ | His anointed | 7 |
| בְּמִשְׁחָי | My anointed | 1 |

מָשִׁיחַ in Scripture

| | |
|---|---|
| priests | Leviticus References: - 4:3 - 4:5 - 4:16 - 6:22 |
| Refers to coming king from the house of David, i.e. Jesus | 1 Samuel References: - 2:10 - 2:35 Psalm References: - 2:2 ⁴⁴¹ - 89:51 ⁴⁴² |

⁴⁴⁰ George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), under “4899. מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach),” https://biblehub.com/hebrew/strongs_4899.htm. All uses and translations were found in *The Englishman's Concordance*.

⁴⁴¹ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 54.

⁴⁴² Benson, *Kings-Proverbs*, under “Psalm 89:51.” Verse 51 in English translations, but verse 52 in Hebrew text. This reference to מָשִׁיחַ can be taken in two ways. The first is in the sense of the kings of Judah, with the singular being utilized in place of the plural. The second is in the sense of the Messiah, whose coming was anticipated by the Jews. The pagans around them knew of their anticipation of this Messiah and reproached them for their expectation and hope.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 132:17⁴⁴³ <p>Daniel References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9:25⁴⁴⁴ - 9:26⁴⁴⁵ - Habakkuk 3:13⁴⁴⁶ |
| kings | <p>1 Samuel References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2:10⁴⁴⁷ <p><i>Saul</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12:3 - 12:5 - 24:6 - 24:10 - 26:9 - 26:11 - 26:16 - 26:23 <p><i>Supposed upon Eliab, but was incorrect</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16:6 |

⁴⁴³ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, under “Psalm 132:17,” The verb 𐤏𐤍𐤏𐤍 suggests a reference to prophecies concerning the ultimate Messiah, where it is used as a title for Him. 𐤏𐤍 is a symbol for “king” in Daniel, so the words may be intended to point to a Messianic king.

⁴⁴⁴ Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 203-4. The status of being both “an anointed one” (denoting priesthood) and a “prince” (denoting kingship) implies a theocratic king. The only person to fulfill the requirements for both is Jesus, the Messiah.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 206-7. The “cutting off” of the anointed one referenced here refers to Jesus’ first advent, where he was subjected to a violent death on the cross. His death “cut him off” and left Him with nothing as He died and the Jews claimed, “We have no king but Cæsar.”

⁴⁴⁶ Keil, *Minor Prophets*, 424-5. Due to the parallelism of this verse, it may seem as though Habakkuk is referring to the nation of Israel as the anointed that YHVH went out for. However YHVH’s anointed is not the chosen, holy nation. Israel is never named the anointed one because of its commissioning to be “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). The reference here is to the divinely-commissioned king of Israel. Yet, this not denoting a specific king, but the Davidic monarch overall, which culminates in the Messiah, Jesus. The reign and authority of David’s line continues forever through Him.

⁴⁴⁷ Keil, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel*, 384. The king which Hannah prophesies of by the Spirit of God is not a specific king, but the ideal king that Israel gained in David and his line, ultimately to the Messiah, Jesus.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | <p>2 Samuel References:</p> <p><i>Saul</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1:14 - 1:16 - 1:21 <p><i>David</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 19:21 - 22:51⁴⁴⁸ - 23:1 <p>2 Chronicles References:</p> <p><i>Solomon</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6:42 <p>Psalms References:</p> <p><i>David</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18:51 [H] - 20:7 [H] - 28:8⁴⁴⁹ - 132:17⁴⁵⁰ <p><i>Unspecified King in the Davidic Line</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 84:9 - 89:38 - 89:51 - 132:10 |
| the patriarchs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psalm 105:15⁴⁵¹ - 1 Chronicles 16:22 |

⁴⁴⁸ And to David's Seed thereafter.

⁴⁴⁹ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 232. David thinks of the people of Israel, who he is the head of as king, then himself. For this reason, YHVH is the refuge of David is also the refuge of Israel as a whole. Moreover, the לָהֶם of verse 8a is a preposition with a 3mp pronominal suffix, "their," which represents the collective Israel. However, in the Habakkuk 3:13 reference, Delitzsch makes the point that YHVH's anointed is not the chosen, holy nation. Israel is never named the anointed one because of its commissioning to be "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). The nation is not the "anointed one" in in Psalm 28:8.

⁴⁵⁰ Guzik, "Psalm 132 – Remembering the Promise to David and Beyond." Although this verse looks to the future Messiah, it also addresses David personally, indicated by the cross-references in 1 Kings 11:36 & 15:4.

⁴⁵¹ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, under "Psalm 105:15," <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/psalms/105.htm>.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| King Cyrus of Persia | - Isaiah 45:1 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|

Psalm 105:15 & 1 Chronicles 16:22 Parallel

| Translation | Psalm 105:15 | 1 Chronicles 16:22 |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>JPS Tanakh 1917</i> | Touch not Mine anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.' | Touch not Mine anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.' |
| <i>Brenton Septuagint Translation</i> | <i>saying</i> , Touch not my anointed ones; and do my prophets no harm. | <i>saying</i> , Touch not my anointed ones, and deal not wrongfully with my prophets. |
| <i>New American Standard Bible</i> | “Do not touch My anointed ones, And do not harm My prophets.” | “Do not touch My anointed ones, And do not harm My prophets.” |
| <i>English Standard Version</i> | saying, “Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!” | saying, “Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!” |
| <i>Christian Standard Bible</i> | “Do not touch my anointed ones, or harm my prophets.” | “Do not touch my anointed ones or harm my prophets.” |
| <i>New International Version</i> | "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." | "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." |

Enthronement Psalms & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel

| Psalm 2 | Psalm 110 | Isaiah 45:1-8 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury,</p> | <p>A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. The LORD has sworn and will not change his</p> | <p>Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.</p> | <p>mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.</p> | <p>places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things. “Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.</p> |
|--|--|---|

Cyrus Cylinder & Isaiah 45:1-8 Parallel

| Cyrus Cylinder | Isaiah 45:1-8 (ESV) |
|---|---|
| <p>“...[r]ims (of the world)...a weakling has been installed as the <i>enú</i> of his country; [the correct images of the gods he removed from their thrones, imi]tations he ordered to place upon them. A replica of the temple Esagila he has...for Ur and the other sacred cities inappropriate rituals...daily he did blabber [incorrect prayers]. He (furthermore) interrupted in a fiendish way the regular offerings, he did...he established within the sacred cities. The worship of Marduk, the king of the gods, he [chang]ed into abomination, daily he used to do evil against his (i.e. Marduk’s) city...He [tormented] its {inhabitant}s with corvée-work (lit.: a yoke) without relief, he ruined them all.</p> <p>Upon their complaints the lord of the gods became terribly angry and [he departed from] their reign, (also) the (other) gods</p> | <p>“Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other,</p> |

living among them left their mansions, wroth that he had brought (them) into Babylon (Š u . a n . n a). (But) Marduk [who does care for]...on account of (the fact that) the sanctuaries of all their settlements were in ruins and the inhabitants of Sumer and Akkad had become like (living) dead, turned back (his countenance) [his] an[ger] [abated] and he had mercy (upon them). He scanned and looked (through) a;; the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (i.e. Marduk) (in the annual procession). (Then) he pronounced the name of Cyrus (*Ku-ra-aš*), king of Anshan, declared him (lit.: pronounced [his] name) to be(come) the ruler of all the world. He made the Gutti country and all the Manda-hordes bow in submission to his (i.e. Cyrus') feet. And he (Cyrus_ always did endeavor to treat according to justice the black-headed whom he (Marduk) has made him conquer. Marduk, the great lord, a protector of his people/worshippers, beheld with pleasure his (i.e. Cyrus') good deeds and his upright mind (lit.: heart) (and therefore) ordered him to arch against his city Babylon (K á . d i n g i r . r a). He made him set out on the road to Babylon (DIN.TIR) going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops—their number, like that of the water of a river, could not be established—strolled along, their weapons packed away Without any battle, he made him enter his town Babylon (Š u . a n . n a), sparing Babylon (K á . d i n g i r . r a) any calamity. He delivered into his (i.e. Cyrus') hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him (i.e. Marduk). All the inhabitants of Babylon (DIN.TIR) as well as of the entire country of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors (included), bowed to him (Cyrus) and kissed his feet, jubilant that he (had received) the kingship, and with

besides me there is no God;
 I equip you, though you do not know me,
 that people may know, from the rising of
 the sun
 and from the west, that there is none
 besides me;
 I am the LORD, and there is no other.
 I form light and create darkness;
 I make well-being and create calamity;
 I am the LORD, who does all these
 things.
 “Shower, O heavens, from above,
 and let the clouds rain down
 righteousness;
 let the earth open, that salvation and
 righteousness may bear fruit;
 let the earth cause them both to sprout;
 I the LORD have created it.”

shining faces. Happily, they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come (again) to life from death (and) had all been spared damage and disaster, and their worship (his) very name.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth), son of Cambyses (*Ka-am-bu-zi-ia*), great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes (*Ši-iš-pi-iš*), great king, king of Anshan, of a family (which) always (exercised) kingship; whose rule Bel and Nebo love, whom they want as king to please their hearts.

When I entered Babylon (DIN.TIR) as a friend and (when) I established the seat of the government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, [induced] the magnanimous inhabitants of Babylon (DIN.TIR) [to love me], and I was daily endeavouring to worship him. My numerous troops walked around in Babylon (DIN.TIR) in peace, I did not allow anybody to terrorize (any place) of the [country of Sumer] and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon (K á . d i n g i r . r a) and in all his (other) sacred cities. As to the inhabitants of Babylon (DIN.TIR), [who] against the will of the gods [had/were..., I abolished] the corvée (lit.: yoke) which was against their (social_ standing. I brought relief to their dilapidated housing, putting (thus) and end to their (main) complaints. Marduk, the great lord, was well pleased with my deeds and sent friendly blessings to myself, Cyrus, the king who worships him, to Cambyses, my son, the offspring of [my] loins, as well as to all my troops, and we all [praised] his great [godhead] joyously, standing before him in peace.

All the kings of the entire world from the Upper to the Lower Sea, those who are seated in throne rooms, (those who) live in other [types of buildings as well] all the kings of the West land living in tents, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet in Babylon (Š u . a n . n a). (As to the region) from...as far as Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to ‘live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought into Babylon (Š u . a n . n a) to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their (former) chapels, the places which make them happy.

May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nebo for a long life for me and may they recommend me (to him); to Marduk, my lord, may they say this: ‘Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son,...’ ...all of them I settled in a peaceful place...ducks and doves,...I endeavoured to fortify/repair their dwelling places...”⁴⁵²

⁴⁵² Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 282-4.

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