HA\mbox{YACHID—THE UNIQUE MESSIAH}

“Take now your son, your one and only son, whom you love.”

(Genesis 22:2)

“God has sent his one and only Son into the world,
that we might have life through him.”

(1 John 4:9)

by Paul Sumner

Isaac and Yeshua are both called the “one and only” sons of their fathers. Isaac is Abraham’s \textit{yachid}. Yeshua is God’s \textit{monogenes} (Greek). Both words mean unique.

The link between the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament is the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, a translation done by Jewish scholars living in Egypt before the time of Yeshua. [See Endnote]

The word \textit{yachid} occurs 12x in the Hebrew Bible. This table lists how the Septuagint renders \textit{yachid}.

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<th>Hebrew Yachid—\textit{ןְחֵיד}</th>
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<td>Genesis 22:12 your one and only son (Isaac)</td>
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<td>Genesis 22:16 your one and only son (Isaac)</td>
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<td>Judges 11:34 She was his one and only daughter [גֻּלְפִּית yechidah, fem.]</td>
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<td>Jeremiah 6:26 Mourn as for an only son</td>
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In the Greek New Testament, Yeshua is named monogenes five times.

**John 1:14b**

We beheld his glory, glory as of a one and only [son] from the Father. *1*

**John 1:18**

No one has seen God at any time, the one and only [Son] of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, That One has revealed him. *2*

**John 3:16**

God loved the world in this way: he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**John 3:18b**

He who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

**1 John 4:9**

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

Older English translations of these five passages read “only begotten Son.” This follows the 4th century Latin Vulgate which emphasizes “begetting” [unigenitus]. However, the Greek mono (one, singular) and genes (genus, kind) means “one of a kind, an only one, someone unique.” The Vulgate reflects a later theological turn of thought reimposed on the NT. *3*


**Notes**

1) John 1:14 and 18 do not have the Greek noun “Son” [huios]. But the masculine form monogenes is understood to mean “one and only Son.”
2) Based on several old Greek manuscripts of John 1:18, many modern translations read “the only God” [monogenes theos] instead of “the only one of God” [monogenes theou]. The difference in Greek is one letter in the two forms of “God” as they were typically abbreviated in the earliest uncial manuscripts.

\[ \Theta\varepsilon\ = \text{theos, God} \quad \Theta\gamma = \text{theou, of God} \]

In my opinion, the older reading theos [the only, unique God] is a theological change introduced into the Greek text in Egypt, and is not original.

The lexicographer Joseph Thayer believed monogenes theos to be “foreign to John’s mode of thought and speech...dissonant and harsh,” and “appears to owe its origin to a dogmatic zeal which broke out soon after the early days of the church” (Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T., 418).


These Modern Hebrew translations have (ben) yachid at John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9—Delitzsch, Salkinson, Israel Bible Society. The Aramaic Peshitta New Covenant has yechidaya. David Stern uses “only Son” and “only and unique Son” in his Jewish New Testament.

Monogenes is used elsewhere for others besides Yeshua: Luke 7:12, 8:42, 9:38; Hebrews 11:17 (for Isaac).

The Loved One
In addition to being God’s monogenes, Yeshua is also his agapetos: his only-beloved one. *1*

Matthew 3:17 [allusion to Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
Behold, a voice out of heaven saying,
“This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 12:18 [quoting Isa 42:1]
“Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen;
My Beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased.”

Matthew 17:5 [see Deut 18:15; Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
“This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well-pleased; hear him!”

Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22 [see Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
“You are my Son, the Beloved, in you I am well-pleased.”
Mark 9:7 [see Deut 18:15; Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
A voice came out of the cloud, “This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!”

Luke 9:35 [see Deut 18:15; Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
A voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”
[Some Grk mss. read: “my Son, the Chosen”]

2 Peter 1:17 [see Isa 42:1; Ps 2:7]
An utterance . . . was made to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well-pleased.”

Note
1) The phrase “my Son, the Beloved” is normally translated “my Beloved Son.” I follow the Greek word order to emphasize that agapetos is actually a noun in these verses, not merely an adjective (though it functions as a adjectival noun, as the modifier “Holy” often does in the phrase “the Holy Spirit”).

The Hebraic Link to Yeshua
Let’s put together our findings to show that Yeshua’s two designations—monogenes (“one and only”) and agapetos (“beloved”)—reflect the one Hebrew term yachid.

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Love is an aspect of yachid. We see this clearly in Genesis 22:2. “Take now your son, your one and only [yachid] (son), whom you love, Isaac.” Isaac was the offspring of Abraham, but he was not Abraham’s only biological son. Ishmael was his first-born son. Yet Isaac is described as the patriarch’s special, unique and only-loved son.

When referring to Yeshua’s status as a son, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke use “beloved” (agapetos). This term is used for dear children in the Septuagint. In his gospel account, John chose the term “unique” (monogenes) for Yeshua, which also referred to precious children in Jewish circles. John’s intent merges with that of the others. All four gospel writers lead our attention back to the Hebrew word yachid.

Unique Son, Unique Messiah
The Hebrew Scriptures refer to God’s various “sons.” They include angels
The Multitudes were amazed at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority, not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28-29)

They became astonished. (Matthew 13:54)

Never did a man speak the way this man speaks. (John 7:46)

These Jewish authors knew there was no messiah like him, nor any son cherished more by God. And they hoped that others would believe that Yeshua is to God what Isaac was to Abraham—haBen haYachid, the Unique Son—through whom all the “families of earth” will be “blessed” (Gen 12:3; 26:24).

The Unique God

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) testifies to the uniqueness of Israel’s God.

Discerning Messiahs

The NT says there are, and will be, false or anti-Messiahs (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7). Given their reality, it behooves people to know how to distinguish one messiah from another. From the NT’s point of view, of course, Yeshua is the only true anointed one sent by and from God. The NT would argue that people need to know what exactly a “messiah” is and does.

In the Hebrew Bible, there are many messiahs (“anointed ones”). These are priests (Lev 4:3; 6:15), kings (1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 22:51), and prophets (Isa 61:1; Ps 105:15). Each one sets down a pattern of character and activity for future generations to note and remember how God himself—the one who established these messiahs—defines the term “Messiah/Mashiach.”

Why is This Messiah Different From All Others?

To his disciples, Yeshua of Nazareth was different from all other Jewish leaders. His truthfulness and righteousness threatened and unmade them, thrilled them and gave them a taste of new life.

Yet his uniqueness was not proven merely by calling him One and Only. The NT writers penned their portraits of Yeshua so that people in other times and lands—who did not know him personally—could see and hear for themselves that their declaration of his uniqueness before God was true.

The multitudes were amazed at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority, not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28-29)

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The Unique God

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) testifies to the uniqueness of Israel’s God.
Hear, O Israel!  
The LORD our God  
The LORD is unique.

The Hebrew word for “unique” is the numeral **echad**, which often denotes singular uniqueness (2 Sam 7:23; Zech 14:7; Song 6:9). In the ancient world, into which Israel was about to enter, they needed to know that their God was the One and Only deity who loved them, the one to whom they owed their love because he redeemed them from Egyptian slavery and led them to a new life. The **Shema** gave them a banner of faith and an obligation.

This one, unique God is said—in the NT—to be the Father of Yeshua (Acts 3:13; 5:30; Hebrews 1:1-2).

See the full article **Echad in the Shema**.

**The Unique Two**

Taken together, the Hebrew Bible and the NT Gospels witness to the fact that God and Messiah are both unique. None is like them as Father or Son. In John 17:3 are words of Yeshua that may intend to combine ancient Hebrew with New Testament theology into a kind of **Messianic Shema**:

This is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God,  
and Yeshua Messiah whom you have sent.

• Paul Sumner

www.hebrew-streams.org/works/ntstudies/yachid.pdf

**Endnote**

Not long after the conquests of Alexander the Great, his native Greek became the international language in the Mediterranean area by the 3rd century BCE. Most Jews living outside geographical Israel had learned to speak it. In fact, many had lost their working knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, and needed a modern-language Bible translation. The Jewish community in the grand metropolis Alexandria, Egypt, commissioned a team of scholars to translate the five books of Torah into Greek around 250 BCE. In time, the other books of the Tanakh were translated. The whole Greek Bible came to be known as the Septuagint, the version of the “Seventy” (scholars).

The Septuagint forms a bridge between the Tanakh and the New Testament. For the NT documents, as we have them, are also written in the so-called “Common
or Koine Greek” of the turn of the Era.

In the Septuagint are Hebrew concepts and expressions crystallized in Greek. The NT is also a collection of writings by Jews about Hebrew religion in the same Hellenistic tongue. If we compare the Greek in both books we can ultimately bring the NT face to face with the ideas in the Hebrew Bible and look for similarities.

References

• Even-Shosan, *Konkordantzia Hadashah* (1981)
• Hatch & Redpath, *Concordance to the Septuagint* (1897)
• Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.)