



The GOWRA

an excerpt from the book

RUACH QADIM

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The famous archaeologist William Dever is reported to have said that the only new insights from the Bible that we know of today are coming out of the ground. This view is both commonplace and understandable, since we have had the Scriptures for millennia, so *what else is new?* As it turns out, the answer for the West, is plenty.

Linguistic difficulties such as we have been discussing aside, there are some very deep-rooted objections to the Greek text that are seldom spoken aloud in Jewish-Christian debate. Yet these have a huge impact in the way the former group sees the New Testament. For one, the genealogy in Matthew is an absolute mess in the Greek. Other variants, such as the so-called “*Old Syriac*” and medieval Hebrew manuscripts, also throw their individual problems into this textual soup, creating an even more nebulous mixture than the Greek traditions alone did.

Our task then is to sort through all these ancient witnesses and see which one, if any, can be designated as the original text of Matthew’s first chapter. First however, let us look at overcoming a few general objections that have arisen to all these versions regardless of language.

MATTHEW COME LATELY

The first major objection that should be dealt with is the idea that the genealogies in both Matthew and Luke were late additions to the official record. Furthermore, this school asserts, the entire issue of lineage would not have been important early on, since during the first decades of the faith the only types of literature that were supposedly around were “*narrative Gospels*” that simply listed the sayings of Messiah. While the issue of Gospel formation can be exceedingly complex in the liberal school, it should come as little surprise that the traditional religious viewpoint is that the Gospels came directly from the pen of the apostles or their associates. That being said, the fact that three of the four Gospels call Y’shua the ‘Son of David’ is highly significant.¹ With most scholars assigning the time of Mark’s Gospel to around the year 70, this fact alone proves that the lineage of Messiah was an important issue within a generation of his death.

Additionally, we have even stronger proof in the letters of Paul:

“Paul, a servant of Messiah Y’shua, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of Elohim, the Gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets and Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who was born of a descendant of David, according to the flesh.”

- ***Romans 1:1-3 (NASB)***

In this case, even the most liberal scholars acknowledge that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, which by itself proves absolutely that the verse had to be composed no later than the common year 67, when the apostle died. Therefore, once again we see the lineage of Messiah as having both an early and important emphasis.

¹ Matthew 20:30, Mark 12:35, Luke 1:32.

NATHAN VERSUS SOLOMON

Moving on, the second allegation against Matthew's genealogy has to do with the majority opinion that it reflects the line of Joseph and therefore Luke's list would relate then to Mary's descendants. If that is true, then a problem arises from the fact that Matthew traces the ancestral line through Solomon, whereas Luke lists another son of David, Nathan (*2 Samuel 5:14*). Here is why:

...“As surely as YHWH lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by YHWH, the Elohim of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.”

- *1 Kings 1:29-30*

Put simply, if the throne must go through Solomon's line, how can someone descended from another son of David lay claim to it? The answer is, according to all the rules of Jewish kingship, that they cannot. Therefore, if Luke is reflecting Mary's ancestors, then we have a big problem. Since a virgin birth scenario effectively sets Joseph's lineage aside in matters of royal power, Mary *must* therefore be a direct descendant of Solomon in order for her son to rule. Joseph's descent from David's son Nathan only entitles him to his property in his ancestral home of Bethlehem, but confers no other status upon him (*Luke 2:4*).²

Fortunately however, the Aramaic clearly shows that the “*conventional wisdom*” has got it backwards. Matthew is recording Mary's lineage, which does come from Solomon, and Luke is recording Joseph's.³ The actual proof of that scenario though will be revealed later on.

A variation on this attack is derived from the fact that Mary's cousin Elizabeth is not descended from Judah at all, but from Levi, (*Luke*

² Admittedly though, this is where certain aspects can get rather complicated. Royalty does pass from father to son, and does so right up until Mary's birth. However, a fair question to ask is how does her son have the right to rule coming straight from her? The answer is that Joseph's seed does not count because it did not impregnate Mary in the first place. Therefore, the royalty that runs straight down to Mary maintains the line. However, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit holds the Divine Seed, and it is from this last part that the chain is completed and Y'shua is given full royal rights that he would not have from his adopted father alone. Granted today's Orthodox Jews would never agree to this scenario, because from their view the virgin birth could not have happened at all. However, if we assume the virgin birth as a genuine historical event, then this scenario is the only way to keep all the rules of royal lineage in this particular circumstance.

³ The idea that Matthew is Mary's lineage and Luke's Joseph may be revolutionary in the West, but it has powerful ancient testimony in the East. Mar Aphrahat, a fourth century Syrian saint, wrote the following:

“Joseph was called the father of Y'shua (even though he was not born from his seed), but the name of fatherhood was transmitted from Adam to Joseph, through sixty-three generations.”

- **Demonstrations, 23:20, c.f., Women in Aphrahat: Some Observations, Adam Lehto, HUGOYE: JOURNAL OF SYRIAC STUDIES, Vol. 4, No. 2 July 2001 <http://syrcm.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol4No2/HV4N2Lehto.html>**

Since only Luke's genealogy starts with Adam, this has to be what the saint is referring to.

1:5). The thinking goes that if Elizabeth is from another tribe, then so must Mary be. However, that is not necessarily the case. The fact is, inter-tribal marriage was quite common, and when it did happen the woman was simply counted as being part of the husband's tribe. Furthermore, all children from that marriage have full inheritance from their father's tribe. A good example of this concept is with Ruth, who although born a Moabite is listed specifically by Matthew as being counted as part of her husband, Boaz's tribe. Even if Mary was descended from Levi like her cousin was, her offspring would still be credited to Joseph's tribe, which is Judah.⁴

WILL THE REAL ZERUBABEL SON OF SHEALTIEL PLEASE STAND UP?

Our next problem is a bit more complex, because it requires us to cross-reference alleged lineage groups in both Matthew and Luke and contrast each with what Tanakh records as per table-1:

	1 Chr. 3:15-19 2 Chr. 36:1-10 / 2 Kgs. 23:1-24:17 ⁵	Hag. 1:1	Matt. 1:11-13	Luke 3: 27-28 (reverse order)
1	Josiah	Not listed.	Josiah	Addi
2	Jehoiakim & Jehoaz (a.k.a. Shallum)	Not listed.	Jeconiah and his brothers	Malki
3	Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah, Jehoicin)	Not listed.	Shealtiel	Neri
4	Shealtiel & Pediah	Shealtiel (father of)	Zerubabel	Shealtiel
5	Zerubabel	Zerubabel		Zerubabel

Table - 1

⁴ The exception to this is when priestly lines became polluted with foreign marriages, in which case those lines were considered unfit for holy service, (*Ezra 7:10-12, 10:18*), and other returnees were required to separate also from their foreign wives as well. However, that has nothing to do with the scope of our study, which deals exclusively with marriage between the tribes of Israel itself. Therefore, a Levite marrying a Judahite woman could continue in service if he was also a priest, but a Levite who married a Babylonian woman could not. Ruth's case however is even more revealing because it appears that her righteousness was so strong as to allow herself, a pagan woman, to be counted as one of Judah, probably due to her willingness to abandon her gods and embrace YHWH (*Ruth 1:16-18*). This is in sharp contrast to Ezra's situation, where priests were commanded not to inter-marry upon going into the Captivity, and did what they wanted to anyway. They had in effect become like Ruth's people, while Ruth showed herself worthy to be considered part of their inheritance. At any rate, the final proof with regards to the application of Ruth is in the first rule of Hillel, or *kol v'khomer (light and heavy)*, which states that what is true for the heavy must also be true for the light. In this case, the heavy aspect is that Ruth the Moabite woman is considered worthy to become part of Judah because she no longer worships idols. If that is true for someone in her (*heavy*) situation, how much more true is it for an Israelite who has not broken their covenant with YHWH (*light*)?

⁵ Of course, the listing in 2 Kings only goes as far as Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin), since the generations that followed were after the Exile and out of the scope of that particular book.

The 1 and 2 Chronicles citations are combined for the sake of clarity. The former lists the descendants in birth order, whereas the latter lists them in the order they ruled as kings. As a result, the lists at first glance look to be out of order from one another. I have also summarized each name with its concordant aliases for the same reason. However, there are still some other facets that need to be accounted for.

First of all, Jehoiakim and Jehoaz were brothers, but they ruled in opposite order from their birth. After them come Jeconiah and his brothers, followed by Shealtiel. However, it is at this point that we come to what appears to be a major discrepancy. 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 lists Zerubabel as the son of Pediah; Haggai 1:1 and Matthew 1:11-13 though both call Zerubabel the son of Shealtiel!

The resolution however is found in the levirate rules, which we will detail extensively towards the end of this section. For now though, the salient point is that Shealtiel must have died and his brother Pediah married his widow, who in due course bore Zerubabel. According to this tradition, even though Zerubabel is the biological son of Pediah, the lineal records of Israel technically credit him to the deceased Shealtiel. As a result, 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 records the family biological list, while Haggai references the legal one. Since the levirate procedure keeps the same family line intact, it makes good sense for Matthew to record the generations in this manner, not to mention the fact that Matthew is literally giving credit where the Torah says it is clearly due! Finally, when counter-missionaries attack the so-called difference between Matthew and 1 Chronicles, such tactic is in fact a “*straw man*”, since the duality of the list is reflected in Tanakh itself.

The other aspect is that Shealtiel and Zerubabel were very common names. When we look at the full lists (*table-2, overleaf*) of generations in Chronicles and Kings, we see that none of Luke’s names before or after the famous pair line up at all. There is no conflict between the two Gospels as has sometimes been supposed, instead, Luke is simply recording the same names for another father-son pair.

JECONIAH’S CURSE

The final general problem that critics love to pounce on has to do with one of Y’shua’s ancestors, the last king of Judah:

“‘As surely as I live’, declares YHWH, ‘even if you Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave birth to you into another country, where neither of you was born, and

there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to.’ Is this man Jeconiah a despised, broken pot, and object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of YHWH! This is what YHWH says: ‘Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring shall prosper, none will sit on the throne of David, or ever rule anymore in Judah.’”

- *Jeremiah 22:24-30*

1 Chr. 3:15-24		Luke 3: 26-28 (reverse order)
1	Josiah	Addi
2	Jehoiakim & Jehoaz (a.k.a. Shallum)	Malki
3	Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah, Jehoicin)	Neri
4	Shealtiel & Pediah	Shealtiel
5	Zerubabel	Zerubabel
6	Meshullam, Hananiah (sons), and Shelomith (daughter) ⁶	Rhesa
7	Hananiah	Joanan
8	Shecaniah	Joda
9	Neariah	Jesech
10	Elionai	Semein
11	Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven in all ⁷	

Table - 2

So, in theory at least, anyone who is descended from Jeconiah cannot sit on David’s throne, which of course is a problem when:

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name of Y’shua. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. Master YAH⁸ will give him the throne of his father David.”

- *Luke 1:31-32 (NIV with YPIV cross-reference)*

⁶ Listing females in Middle Eastern genealogies is rare, but as we see here, not unheard of.

⁷ For the sake of clarity, I have confined this portion of the list to those children who themselves are recorded as having offspring. In the case of the last seven names, they are included for the sake of completeness since none of their descendants are recorded in that biblical book.

⁸ The Aramaic word for YHWH (יהוה) is MARYAH (ܡܪܝܬܐ) which literally translated as LORD YAH, or the singular form of the Tetragrammaton. In the Aramaic Old Testament, MARYAH replaces YHWH almost 7000 times. Additionally, and unlike other words for Elohim such as ‘the LORD’, MARYAH can only mean YHWH.

Many Greek textual defenders have tried to suggest that Matthew's lineage is of Messiah's father Joseph, and therefore does not carry the curse. However, while the Talmud says that Jews are counted as such ethnically if their mothers are Jewish, royal inheritances were always passed down from father to son, and this is definitely a royal genealogy that Matthew is trying to relate here. Therefore, Messiah must be descended from David on both sides of his family tree, and this curse would hold either way if it were not for one fact:

It was lifted!

If the rabbis of the Talmud have any weight in the matter, they ruled unanimously that Jeconiah was forgiven for his many transgressions by the end of his life. The reason for this belief arose from Scripture itself, as each component of this curse was turned back. Let's look at these facts which prove the case.

- The curse says, "*record this man as if childless*", and yet in the same section admits that Jeconiah has children, and in fact continues to do so during his punishment.
- The curse says that Jeconiah would never prosper, but even Jeremiah, who wrote the words of that original admonition, reports the following:

"In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jeconiah, king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jeconiah from king of Judah and freed him from prison on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a great seat of honor higher than those of other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jeconiah put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jeconiah a regular allowance as long as he lived, till the day of his death."

- **Jeremiah 52:31-34**

- The curse even goes so far as to proclaim that "*for none of his offspring shall prosper, none will sit on the throne of David, or ever rule anymore in Judah.*" Granted the days of the kings of Judah were gone for two generations. However, notice the verse even covers *any kind of ruler in Judah*. If the curse were still enforced, how does anyone explain this passage:

"The word of YHWH came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month. 'Tell Zerubabel the **governor of Judah** that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day,' declared

YHWH Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant, Zerubabel son of Shealtiel', declares YHWH, 'and I will **make you like my signet ring**, for I have chosen you,' declares YHWH Almighty."

- *Haggai 2:20-23*

Zerubabel, as it turns out, is the grandson of Jeconiah (*1 Chronicles 3:17-19, Matthew 1:12*), so not bad for a guy who was neither supposed to prosper nor rule. Also the imagery Haggai uses could not be stronger, for just as Jeremiah said that Jeconiah was the signet ring YHWH would remove, so now this same man's grandson is the signet ring Elohim wishes to put on! In the Middle East, a king's signet ring bore the royal seal. The king, when he wished to authenticate a command, would take his ring and impress the insignia into clay, which would later harden and be attached to the royal document. Therefore, in both cases, the signet ring is a very visible sign of regal power, very much akin to a scepter or crown. When the ring is removed, the power goes, and vice versa when in it is put back on.

Now that we have successfully defended all versions of the genealogy in Matthew, let us turn our focus to the Greek traditions.

BEWARE GREEKS BEARING TEXTS

While the previous scenarios can be easily explained away with a little extra effort, the biggest problem of them all has to do with the way the generations are recorded in *all Greek manuscripts* of Matthew's first chapter. There are two rules that the apostle insists be followed, first:⁹

"Thus there were **fourteen generations** in all from Abraham to David, **fourteen generations** from David to the exile in Babylon, and **fourteen generations** from the exile to the Messiah."

- *Matthew 1:17*

So we have here 3 sets of 14 generations each. The question then comes up if that means we can only have 14 names per set? To find out, let's look at the actual list in table-3 (*opposite*).

Both the first and second sets are 14 generations equaling 14 names, or are they? In the actual text of Matthew, David is also mentioned in this set as well, and this is where the second rule comes into play: **Names that are mentioned twice are only counted once, and belong to the first place they are recorded.** In other words, if David were counted in set 2 only, that would mean it would have 15 names and set 1 only 13, which clearly contradicts the statement of Matthew 1:17.

⁹ The lone exception to the "14, 14 and 14" formula in Matthew 1:17 is in the Old Syriac Cureton manuscript, which lists 18 generations. This oddity however will be discussed in detail later on.

After all, why go to all the trouble of summarizing “14, 14 and 14” when, only one line after the last name, it is clear that at least two sets don’t add up to that number? The only way to have these two sets come out right therefore is if David belongs to set 1, and set 2 starts with Solomon.

The reason this second rule is so important also has to do with the next group of names, which starts by mentioning the last generation of set 2: Jeconiah. Therefore, if we cannot count David twice in sets 1 and 2, neither can we break the rule and count Jeconiah twice in sets 2 and 3. That clear analysis grates against the skin of Greek NT adherents because, as set 3 will show, they need all the names they can get!

	1 st Set	2 nd Set	3 rd Set
1	Abraham	Solomon	Shealtiel
2	Isaac	Rehoboam	Zerubabel
3	Jacob	Abijah	Abiud
4	Judah	Asa	Eliakhim
5	Perez	Jeshosophat	Azor
6	Hezron	Jehoram	Zadok
7	Ram	Uzziah	Akim
8	Amminadab	Jotham	Eliud
9	Nahshon	Ahaz	Eleazar
10	Salmon	Hezekiah	Matthan
11	Boaz	Manasseh	Jacob
12	Obed	Amon	Joseph “ <i>husband</i> ” of Mary, of whom was born
13	Jesse	Josiah	Y’shua the Messiah
14	David	Jeconiah	

Table - 3

In a word: OOPS, did someone forget a generation? So now, if the Greek reading of Matthew’s first chapter is the original, set 3 has only 13 names. If we count Jeconiah twice to “*make it work*” then we are faced with an even greater problem - we have to count David twice, so now the sets will consist of 14, 15 and 13 names respectively. Therefore, no matter what we do with this text, it will always come up short and contradict its author.¹⁰ Please keep this central problem in mind, as we will get back to it in a detailed relationship to the Aramaic momentarily.

¹⁰ There is also a mystical element that demands 14 names in each set. In Jewish thought, the numbers 3 and 7 both represent perfection. The list also represents a Jubilee pattern, for after six sevens, the last set would emerge and usher in the Messianic Age (*Daniel 9:24-27*). Additionally, in Hebrew the letters also stand for numbers, and David’s name just happens to have a numerical value of 14, meaning 3 sets of the value 14 that harks back to David also indicates perfection in the Messiah.

OTHER SEMITIC WITNESSES

There are five other manuscripts of Matthew that are quite obscure and rarely discussed in Gentile-Christian circles. Of these, three were written in Hebrew and two in Aramaic. The Hebrew group is perhaps best represented by the *Dutillet* manuscript, and its two more fragmentary cousins, known as *Shem Tob* and *Munster*, follow its lead. On the Aramaic side we have the so-called 'Old Syriac' group of manuscripts known separately as *Cureton* and *Siniaticus*. In this portion however, we will only deal with the first four. I will devote special attention to Siniaticus later on.

Starting with the Hebrew, the first aspect to factor in is their very late dates, as not a single one of them is older than the year 1300. Now granted, document age should not by itself be used to discredit the entire group. A manuscript can be very late, but if it has a clear line of attestation in its readings going back further it can be considered reliable. A good example of this principle has to do with the book of Isaiah. Up until 1947, the earliest extant manuscripts of Isaiah were dated to the eleventh century. Then, with the advent of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a nearly identical copy of Isaiah was unearthed that was at least 1,000 years older, and so the Leningrad Codex's readings of Isaiah were completely validated. However, with the Hebrew group of Matthew, their readings do *not* find attestation elsewhere in the manuscript record.

The second strike against this manuscript group is the places they were found. We might have anticipated these 'treasures' to be unearthed in Israel, the only place where Hebrew was widely spoken. Failing that, perhaps elsewhere in the Middle East, where Hebrew's sister language of Aramaic dominated. The fact is, neither was the case. All these manuscripts were from Europe, and two were from Rome itself. With no textual linkage to the past, there could hardly have been a more unlikely place for an 'original Hebrew Gospel' to be found.

Shem Tob and *Munster* are, even by their most ardent supporters, acknowledged to be in horrible condition both textually and physically. All attempts to show more ancient renderings in any them have failed miserably. However, the greatest problem with the Hebrew Group is that the evidence someone tried to "*correct*" the text is all over the place. This is the third, and most devastating, strike of them all. It seems the various Hebrew redactors were aware of the problems in set 3 lacking a name, so they came up with an ingenious solution: Just *add* one! That's right, when they could not explain this problem in the Greek they just penciled some guy named "*Avner*" into their Hebrew version. How this name somehow was missed by Greek and Aramaic writers whose versions are a thousand years older and whose attestation is hundreds of times more numerous than *Dutillet* and Company is never adequately explained.

What is very explainable though, is the motive behind the alteration. Persecution of Jews during this time in Rome was pandemic, and Church documents clearly show that ‘completed Jews’, or those who had converted to Roman Catholicism, were encouraged to witness their faith to their brethren who had not yet ‘seen the light’. These ‘completed Jews’ knew that they could not do this with a Greek text, since their only sacred language was Hebrew and a smattering of Aramaic in Hebrew script. The other problem was that, just as in apostolic times, genealogy was seen as a critical aspect of proving who the Messiah was. The ‘completed Jews’ knew all too well that to show any text with an inherent contradiction of a missing name was tantamount to hanging a sign up that read, “*This is a forgery, please do not treat it with any respect.*”

CURETON’S FOLLY

In the early decades of the 19th century a very rare Aramaic manuscript of the Gospels was discovered on the grounds of Saint Catherine’s Monastery, located at the site of the traditional Mount Sinai. This manuscript and its supposedly older counterpart known as *Siniaticus* formed the so-called ‘Old Syriac’ family and New Testament scholarship has never been the same since.

Over the last hundred years or so, many scholars looked to the *Cureton Gospels* (named after its eventual owner, the Earl of Cureton) and its sister manuscript, as a way of explaining the vast differences between the Peshitta Aramaic and Greek versions of the New Testament. As evidence mounted that showed extensive divergences which could not be accounted for in a Greek to Aramaic translation, eager western scholars seized on what for them was the next best thing. The Peshitta, they claimed, was not translated from the Greek, but revised from these other Aramaic versions instead. However, as we will see with both of these documents, they have deep problems of their own. Starting with the Cureton which has a very unique rendering of the 2nd genealogy set:

1	Solomon	11	Jotham
2	Rehoboam	12	Ahaz
3	Abijah	13	Hezekiah
4	Asa	14	Manasseh
5	Jeshosophat	15	Amon
6	Ahaziah	16	Josiah
7	Joash	17	Jeconiah
8	Amaziah		
9	Jehoram		
10	Uzziah		

Table - 4

Now what in the world is going on here? First we lose generations and now we are practically tripping over some extra ones? Well, as it turns out, the scribe who did this had the best of intentions. As a matter of fact, 2 Kings 14-15 faithfully records these same three generations that the Peshitta version omits. So, on the surface, it appears that Cureton is Torah-accurate, whereas Peshitta dropped the three names on the floor somewhere and never picked them up.

However, before everyone goes down that *Peshitta revised from Old Syriac* road again, they would do well to ask this question: Why does every Greek New Testament manuscript, *regardless of family or text type and going as far back as the second century*, also miss these same three names? Is this one scrappy little *Cureton* right and standing as a lone witness against thousands of contrary textual witnesses? The oldest Greek versions predate Cureton by at least 200 years.

Well, as we are about to discover, appearances can be quite deceiving. One of these scribal traditions is clearly reflecting a deep understanding of Jewish culture and Scriptural interpretation, while the other only appears to do so. Which is the fraud and which the original?

Matthew is doing far more than giving a list of generations. Rather, he is showing Messiah to have a *royal lineage* as a direct descendant of David. However, David was not the first king of Israel. That honor was given to Saul, and it is his example that showcases the first of two rules in recording the progeny of kings:

“Samuel said, ‘Why do you consult me, now that YHWH has turned away from you and become your enemy? YHWH has done what he predicted through me. YHWH has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors - to David. Because you did not obey YHWH or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, YHWH has done this to you today.’”

- **1 Samuel 28:16-18**

From this point on, no descendant of Saul can ever lay claim to the throne of Israel. This rule, I believe, is easily understood by most scholars and lay people. However, there is a corollary to this rule that is less well known but equally binding. It states that within a lineage certain generations can be invalidated, but the inheritance can still stay within that group. Or, to put it another way, the house of Judah can keep ruling, but certain rulers of Judah are not counted as genuine kings. The answer for how this contingency got triggered, ironically, comes not from Judah, but from the house of Israel:

“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of YHWH than any of those before him...He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did

more to provoke YHWH to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.”

- **1 Kings 16:30, 33**

This idolatrous act, and many other grievous sins, led to the inevitable warning and rebuke of the prophets:

“Then the prophet quickly removed his headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, ‘This is what YHWH says: You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.’”¹¹

- **1 Kings 20:41-42**

“Then Micaiah answered, ‘I saw all Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and YHWH said these people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’”

- **1 Kings 22:17**

Then when judgment does come, it is horrific:

“This what YHWH, the Elohim of Israel, says: ‘I anoint you king over YHWH’s people Israel. You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants and the prophets and the blood of all YHWH’s servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slave or free.’”

- **2 Kings 9:6-9**

So Ahab’s house is cut off, but what does that have to do with the house of Judah, which Messiah is descended from? The answer lies here:

“Now Jehosaphat had great wealth and honor, and he had allied himself with Ahab by marriage...Then Jehosaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king...He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he had married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of YHWH. Nevertheless, because of the covenant YHWH had made with the house of David, YHWH was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain the lamp for him and his descendants forever.”

- **2 Chronicles 18:1, 21:1, 4-7**

Therefore, we have a bit of a contradiction here. On the one hand, Ahab’s sin was so great that Elohim had no problem permanently taking

¹¹ Notice also that this particular sin of Ahab, letting a man live that Elohim consigned to destruction, is also nearly identical to the sin that also got Saul’s line permanently disqualified in 1 Samuel 28:16-18.

his house away. On the other, Judah, although perpetually blessed because of David, also had Ahab's tainted blood flowing through its heirs! Since the Scripture cannot be broken, the only solution could come from the most sacred place of them all, the Ten Commandments:

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, YHWH Elohim am a jealous Elohim, punishing the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those that hate me.”

- Exodus 20:4-5

So that was the bottom line as far as Matthew was concerned. He knew that these generations were cursed and, even though they are counted physically, to refer to them as ancestors was tantamount to invalidating Y'shua's claim to be Messiah!

However, some critics will no doubt point to the fact that Manasseh, who is a direct ancestor of Y'shua, sinned far worse than Ahab did and for far longer, 55 versus Ahab's 22 years. Although this is clearly true, at least two factors spared this evil king from sharing Ahab's fate. First is the perpetual covenant with David's house just mentioned, which Elohim clearly did not want to break. Second, Manasseh got lucky in a way Ahab did not as Ahab was both preceded and followed by very evil men who sat on his throne. By contrast, Manasseh, evil as he was, had the good fortune of being sandwiched between Hezekiah and Josiah, two of the most righteous rulers Judah ever produced. As for Manasseh himself, there is even a record of this very epitome of evil actually repenting of his sins and making some restitution in the last years of his life (*2 Chronicles 33:12-17*)! Therefore, taken together, the punishment of Judah was less severe than that of Israel. Ahab's line was wiped out forever, whereas Judah was allowed eventually to return to the land and rule after only two generations of captivity in Babylon.

In the end then, only the Peshitta version shows the advanced understanding of Torah that would have been the hallmark of a first century pious Jew in Israel like Matthew. The Cureton, on the other hand, also shows the marks of its redactor: A Greek Orthodox monk writing more than 400 years after the fact.

ENTER THE GOWRA (ܩܘܪܐ)

Now a question needs to be asked: if this proof that I am about to discuss is so revolutionary, how is it that no one else picked up on it before? The answer, as I hope to show, has more to do with the way the Aramaic word is understood rather than how the Greek was translated from it. Here is what I mean: a western language like Greek - and also

English - operates under an organizing principle of having one word each for almost every nuance and shade of meaning. For example, I could walk to work, or I could amble, stride, stroll, and so on. Because this is how our native language is structured, we take such diversity of discrete terminology for granted. In fact, its very precision is one of the reasons why Greek is the predominant language for scientific and medical terminology. Break down the word *orthodontist* into its components of *ortho* (*straight*) and *dontia* (*teeth*), and even with no knowledge of what that person does, the Greek can reveal it without effort.

On the other hand, Hebrew and Aramaic have the exact opposite trend. They have relatively few words, and each word can have as many as half a dozen unrelated meanings, which goes a long way to explaining why the truth had not been discovered centuries ago. First though, let's look at the actual verse where it occurs:

“And Jacob fathered Joseph, the *gowra* of Mary, from whom was born Y’shua, who was called Messiah.”

- *Matthew 1:16 (YPIV, cross referenced to NIV)*

The word *gowra* is derived from the root GBR (גבר) which means “*strength*”, or sometimes “*judgment*”. In Semitic culture, a male is given the responsibility of using his strength to protect other members of his family who are either too weak or too old. The idea is that, with regards to females in particular, that a *gowra* must be present at all stages of her life. When she is born, her *gowra*, or protector-guardian, is her father, (*Psalm 127:4-5*). When she marries, the term then applies to her husband (*Joshua 1:14, Daniel 6:24*)¹². Finally, when she is elderly, if her husband is gone, *gowra* can even technically refer to an infant male, if he is the oldest male left in the family line or if other males are not directly mentioned (*Job 3:3*). Another way to look at the diversity of meaning is:

 (Gawra) “Elder/Father/Head-of-Household”	 (Gura) “Husband”
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Before the advent of vowel markings, these words would have been indistinguishable from one another, leaving the reader to judge solely based on context and experience. The timeframe of the Aramaic being in this unmarked state coincides exactly with when the Greeks would have been circulating their earliest versions of Matthew.

¹² In both of these verses, and also in Psalm 128:1-4, the word GOWRA applies to both the man's role as father and husband. The fact that no “*father exclusive*” rendering of GOWRA exists in the Old Testament at all, either by direct reference or else translation into a cognate of Aramaic (*AWA*) or Greek (*PATER*), explains very well how the confusion arose. The reason is, a man can simultaneously hold both roles, and without it necessarily being clear as to which role is intended. This word also pronounces the letter BEYT as a “W”, a rare but well-known feature of this dialect of Aramaic, hence “*gowra*” and not “*gabra*”. Finally, it should be noted that GOWRA is the spelling of the noun in the emphatic state, but it appears in the Peshitta in the construct state, spelled gimel-beyt-res-h-heh. In this form it is basically taking on a possessive character and is meant to be read as “her gowra”.

Furthermore, in the Aramaic New Testament as well, there are places that clearly point to a father-based meaning:

“Which of you *gowra* , if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?”

- *Matthew 7:9 (YPIV, cross referenced to NIV)*

“When they came to the crowd, a *gowra* approached Y’shua and kneeled before him. ‘Lord, have mercy on my son,’ he said.”

- *Matthew 17:14-15 (YPIV, cross-referenced to NIV)*

What emerges then is a fluid and dynamic term. In almost 80 instances, *gowra* is best translated as “*man*” when no other relationship clues are present. However, as we have been seeing, the moment a clarification is given, *gowra* will automatically take on the more specific meaning. If I were to say “*I saw a gowra walking down the street*”, the best translation would be *man*. But if I said instead, “*I saw a gowra walking down the street with his wife*”, then *husband* is the right term. The same holds true for “*with his mother*”, which would make the subject of the sentence a *son*, etc. The Greek New Testament, as can be guessed, typically has translated the *gowra* Joseph as “*husband*”, and in this the entire corpus of Greek manuscripts unanimously agree, going back to the second century. This choice was also quite understandable, since that is how *gowra* is rendered in the New Testament a majority of the time. Unfortunately, the result of that choice made *this Joseph* of the same generation-strata of Mary, and **this is exactly why it seemed a generation in set 3 disappeared completely from the official record.**

However, before explaining this idea in greater detail, let us look at *another Joseph* listed just three lines later:

“Because Joseph her BAALAH¹³ (**בַּאֵלָה**) was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.”

- *Matthew 1:19 (YPIV, cross-referenced to NIV)*

Unlike *gowra*, this new word *baal* has much less flexibility. Originally meant as the Hebrew and Aramaic word for “*lord*”, *baal* also became known as a popular pagan deity that frequently enticed the Israelites into idolatry. However, by the time of Y’shua this word had only one meaning with regards to human relationships: *husband*. So, within three lines, two Josephs are mentioned, and in each case they are described by a word that has a majority reading of “*husband*”. Why would Matthew use two different terms so close together when all it would do is create confusion if he was talking about the same man? Why

¹³ BAALAH (**בַּאֵלָה**) is the same word as BAAL, but conjugated in the construct (*possessive*) state. This rendering then actually reads HER HUSBAND.

use one word that specifically only means “*husband*”, only to use another word with multiple meanings, practically side by side?

We will return and answer that question a little later on. For now though we need to look at how Semitic story structure plays into this situation. Here is a handy comparison:

	Matthew 1:1-18	Genesis 5:1-18
INTRO	1 The historical record of Y’shua the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham	1 This is the history of the descendants of Adam.
LIST	2 Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram, 4 Aram fathered Aminadab, Aminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, 5 Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse, 6 and Jesse fathered King David. Then David fathered Solomon by Uriah’s wife, 7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, 8 Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah, 9 Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah, 11 and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. 12 Then after the exile to Babylon Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, 14 Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, 15 Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob, 16 and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Y’shua who is called Messiah.	When Elohim created people, he made them in the likeness of Elohim. 2 He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.” 3 When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born, and Seth was the very image of his father. 4 After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 5 He died at the age of 930. 6 When Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born. 7 After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 8 He died at the age of 912. 9 When Enosh was 90 years old, his son Kenan was born. 10 After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 11 He died at the age of 905. 12 When Kenan was 70 years old, his son Mahalalel was born. 13 After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 14 He died at the age of 910. 15 When Mahalalel was 65 years old, his son Jared was born. 16 After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 17 He died at the age of 895. 18 When Jared was 162 years old, his son Enoch was born...
RECAP	17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations.	1 When the human population began to grow rapidly on the earth
CHANGE	18 The birth of Y’shua the Messiah came about this way	2 the sons of Elohim saw the beautiful women of the human race and took any they wanted as their wives. 3 Then YHWH said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years.”

Table - 5

First there's an introduction to the genealogy, followed by the actual list of names, a summary, and then, finally, the subject moves from the past to the present. So Matthew is following the same story pattern as in Genesis 5.¹⁴ Therefore, here is one powerful reason why we have a *gowra*-Joseph in 1:16 and *baal*-Joseph in 1:19. These are two different men, the former being associated with the past and the latter in the now-shifted present. The fact that *gowra* can also mean "husband" as well as "father/guardian" is at least incisive on why confusion could exist on proper rendering of this verse for almost 2,000 years.

THE FINAL PIECES

In the end, we only have two authentic and genuinely ancient traditions to compare: the Greek and the Peshitta. However, now we come to what may be the most challenging question of them all: Why would Matthew not simply call the first Joseph *awa* (אבא), which can only mean father, and be done with the ambiguity? There are four possibilities that more than account for this unusual choice.

First, there is the issue of avoiding further scandal through a confusion of words and names in the close proximity of the two Josephs. If Matthew had called the first Joseph *awa*, he would have a bit of snickering going on behind his back by the time he got to verse 19, where he introduces the next Joseph as her husband, so it could be interpreted as if she married her father and was pregnant out of wedlock at the same time! Explaining one facet of this situation (*virgin birth*) is hard enough without having this additional problem to deal with. So, by calling the first Joseph *gowra*, Matthew is telling his native Aramaic speaking Jewish audience, "Look, this is her protector-guardian, and this other guy is the one she married that just happens to have the same name."

The second scenario has to do with communicating Joseph the father's status as an important man within his family line. *Gowra* is a title of honor that a man earns by being a consistently responsible protector for both his wife and children (*Psalms 128:1-3*). Additionally, most early traditions depict Joseph as an elderly or middle-aged man at the time of the Nativity. In later books of Tanakh though, we have a very interesting trend with regards to this word:

"The Levites, from the age of thirty and upward, were counted; the head count of their *gowrim* was 38,000."

- 1 Chronicles 23:2

¹⁴ Another great example of this process is found in Genesis 10, which breaks down this way: Stage 1 (v. 1), stage 2 (v. 2-4), stage 3 (v. 5), and stage 4 (v. 6). The process also repeats two more times in this chapter.

If the Levites aged 30 and over are *gowrim* - the plural of *gowra* - then what about younger men? Well, Torah demands that every man who reaches the age of 20 register in the Temple, and from that point on must pay a tax for his life due on the Day of Atonement (*Exodus 30:11-16, 38:25-26*). If such a man happens to be between 20 and 29, then Scripture gives him another designation:

“None of the *anashim* from twenty years up who came out of Egypt shall see the land that I promised...”

- *Numbers 32:11*

In this case the word, expressed in its plural form above, is rendered as *anash* (אָנָשׁ) in the singular. Now the way Hebrew works, there are many occasions when two words may share a general meaning, but only one has a specific application from that meaning. A good way to think of this is with the generic English term *male*, which can be father, son, brother, or child. Needless to say, all fathers are males but not all males are fathers. It is the same situation here. All *gowrim* (*those who are 30 years or older*) are also by definition *anashim* (*those older than 20*), but it is not the case that all *anashim* are also *gowrim*. The specific definition is an inclusion therefore of the general one, but not vice versa.

Another aspect to this lexical soup is that *gowra* can also be translated as “*mighty man*” or “*warrior*”, implying that instead of just protecting his family, such a man could be charged with performing the same service for his entire town, or even his country (*Joshua 7:14,17,18*). Therefore, if both of these definitions applied to Joseph, calling him a *gowra* may have been Matthew’s way of saying that the man was more than just a husband and father but was also a powerful and important man in his own right, and one worthy of respect.

A third very strong theory centers on what is implied rather than what is overtly stated in official dictionaries. The fact is, female genealogies are extremely rare in the Middle East. Inheritance, as a matter of law both inside Israel and throughout the region, passes from father to son. However, the virgin birth presents a rather unique spin to this official tradition. Now at this point let me just say that, whether anyone reading this believes in such an event or not is irrelevant to this discussion. Certainly the evidence regarding such an important aspect of the New Testament deserves to be explored fully, but not here. Instead, the proper thing to do is to focus on the fact that Matthew himself certainly believed this happened, and therefore we need to see how this belief would be reflected in his writing.

Assuming that the listing of females in a lineage and the virgin birth are a rather uncommon combination of events, we can then look at the use of the word *gowra* to see why it may not have been picked up previously by scholars over the centuries. If we look in other sources for

every single relevant aspect of the birth of the Messiah and try to apply it to non-immaculate conceptions, it should not be surprising if we don't find a corresponding 'dictionary entry'. What we do find comes as Semitic cultural idioms passed down in both Jewish and Assyrian circles.

The usage of the word *awelid* (אָויליד) strongly points to a clear passing of lineage from father to son. In those cases then, it is expected that the father would be called an *awa*. However, if a man has only daughters, he has not produced an heir to carry on the family line. Instead, the female children are more of a burden to him until such a male heir comes along. Therefore, the daughters he has would think of him more as a *parent*, but not a *father* per se. His job is to be their protector only, not to pass on his possessions, hence - a *gowra* to them.

In that case, if Mary was either an only child or simply one of several female children, then the Joseph in Matthew 1:16, even if he were technically her father, would be more properly called her *gowra*. Matthew would not have even listed this lineage at all were it not for the fact that he felt compelled to do so. Reason being, his belief in the virgin birth made Joseph's lineage invalid in terms of kingship, so if he does not list Mary's as a descendant of Solomon, he has no chance of successfully witnessing to his Jewish audience.

The fourth and final possibility is that a levirate marriage happened, along the lines of this Torah regulation:

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, the widow must not marry outside of the family. Her *ga'al* (*husband's brother*) shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother in law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out of Israel."

- **Deuteronomy 25:5-6**

Is this what happened? If it had, then the brother (*Joseph*) who took the deceased father's place would have been a *protector-gowra* to both Mary and her mother. Also, because of this rule, whoever married Mary's mother the second time would have to, by definition, share the exact same lineage as the man who died. Now in terms of following the rules of royal descent, there would have been no actual change in bloodline, because it would have happened right *before* Y'shua was conceived, as opposed to many generations previously where different sons could spawn tributary generations. However, perhaps Matthew here wished to provide a little extra careful language, since an opponent to Y'shua might uncover this fact and stir up a lot of trouble about it. Instead, Matthew admits it openly, thus diffusing any controversy by bringing the facts to the table at the earliest possible moment.

There is another linguistic development with this last possibility to consider. According to the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, the Targum for Ruth 2:20 lists Boaz as *gowra*, replacing *ga'al* (גאל) in the Masoretic Text. The reason the substitution is significant is because Boaz is engaged in a variation of levirate procedure and is acting as both Ruth's *levir* while the text anticipates his role as her future husband!¹⁵ It is also no accident that *ga'al* is the exact same word used in the 'classic levirate' law as mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-6.

Any of these four possibilities then, or even a combination of them, are strong potential answers to this mystery. If an ultimate answer is to be found, many more years of research will clearly be required. What we can say though with absolute certainty is the effects that this proof has even in its current state on modern New Testament scholarship are seismic ramifications, and manifest themselves in two ways.

First, it completely solves the problem of the missing generation in the second century Greek manuscripts and all others going forward, because regardless as to whether Joseph is Mary's father or uncle, he is not on the same 'generation line' as she is. Only now does that missing generation reveal itself as having been in front of everyone all along as: Joseph (12) the *guardian* of Mary (13) who gave birth to Y'shua (14).

Second, it also points to the early origin of the only text that preserved it, the Peshitta. If the earliest Greek versions of Matthew 1 go back to the second century, then the Peshitta, which they clearly were mistranslated from, must be earlier still.

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¹⁵ Granted Boaz is not a younger brother replacing his elder sibling as a husband. However, it is clear from the text of Ruth that the "*kinsmen-redeemer*" procedure is intended to accomplish the same thing under slightly different circumstances.