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It was late in 1976 that I was led - in hindsight, by the Holy Spirit - to re-read the **Tanakh** (the so-called Old Testament - the Hebrew Scriptures), which I had first started reading at an early age. I kept coming then across familiar passages which stood out, in a new light; one passage in particular struck me as odd.

I had always been a believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac & Israel - and while I 'knew' that God was omnipotent, I was also aware that there was one thing that was beyond Him: by His very nature, God cannot lie! But if God is not lying, as surely He is not, I discovered what to me was a tremendous paradox in Ex. 33. In v.11 there, it says that God spoke to Moses face to face, "as a man does to his friend"; yet in v.20, God tells Moses that no-one can see Him and remain alive!

This really had me puzzled. Who was it then that was Moses' interlocutor, to whom Moses refers as God, and yet Moses remains alive. And the Bible tells of others, too, who reportedly saw God and remained alive.

Although by this point in time I knew very little of the New Testament, having just leafed a bit through it, I was aware that Christians claimed that Jesus was God - or, as I had heard it said, that 'Jesus was the Second Person of the Godhead'. If they were right, was it possible that those of whom the **Tanakh** says that they saw God, actually saw this 'Second Person of the Godhead' - whom one can presumably see and yet remain alive? But how could they be right? How could I believe that a man - and Jesus was said to have been born of a woman - could become God? Until, that is, it is realised that it is not man who became God, but God Who chose to manifest Himself as man!

Early in 1977 I came across Psalm 110; the **Tanakh** I was then reading was a Hebrew-English edition, the English being the KJV, and I was checking the English against the Hebrew original. Commencing, as it does (after the superscript "A Psalm of David"), with "The Lord said unto my Lord...", it is apparent that King David is here referring to someone he calls "my Lord", who is being addressed by the Lord (YHWH). Moreover, with this verse continuing "... Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool", this person being addressed by YHWH must be divine!

In v.4, the English reads: "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." But the Hebrew differs!

In the Hebrew, the last part of the verse, which in the English is rendered "after the order of Melchizedek", is: אַל־דִּי־רַתִּי מַלְכִי־צֶדֶק (AL-DIVRATI MALKI-TZEDEK). Had it been אַל־דִּי־רַתִּי (AL-DIVRAT), I would have had no reason to quibble with the rendering "after the order of". However, אַל־דִּי־רַתִּי (AL-DIVRATI) can only be "upon my word" - which parallels "... sworn and will not repent..." [The poetry of the **Tanakh**, it should be noted, is expressed in synonymous parallelisms.]

Obviously, then, in this verse the Lord is speaking directly to 'Melchizedek'. And just as obviously, to me, the person to whom David refers in v.1 as "my Lord" must be 'Melchizedek'. Finding this most intriguing, I turned to the only other passage in the **Tanakh** where this person 'Melchizedek' appears - 'out of the blue': Gen. 14:18-20.

Here I should point out that, over the years, I have had much occasion to deal with semantics; and semantically, 'Melchizedek' conveys no meaning. The Hebrew מַלְכִי־צֶדֶק (MALKI-TZEDEK), on the other hand, is most meaningful. It carries the meaning of 'King {possibly 'My King'} of Righteousness'!

The Hebrew מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם (U'MALKI-TZEDEK MELEKH SHALEM), which is how Gen. 14:18 commences, is rendered in the KJV "And Melchizedek king of Salem..." מֶלֶךְ (MELEKH) in Hebrew is 'king', while שָׁלֵם (SHALEM) carries the meaning of 'complete', 'without blemish', 'perfect'. [At this point in time, I was not yet acquainted with the Epistle to the Hebrews - nor with Jesus' reference to 'Melchizedek'.]

In this passage, it is recorded that Malki-Tzedek - "priest of the most high God" - invoked the name of the most high God to bless Abraham, and that Abraham "gave him tithes of all". One of the theories current concerning the 'Melchizedek' of Genesis 14 is that he was a Canaanite priest-king (of a place called Salem). But I could not conceive of Abraham - who walks and talks with God, to whom Scriptures refer as God's friend, and who has the Covenant promise - offering a tithe to and accepting the blessing of a Canaanite priest-king; or any other mere human being, for that matter. But if the one confronting Abraham is someone whom he recognizes as being greater than himself - the 'Perfect King' - the sequence in this passage assumes a most meaningful significance.

Consider also Abraham's response to the king of Sodom, when the latter offers him the booty: "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord (YHWH)... that I will not take any thing that is thine..." (Gen.14:22-23). At what stage had Abraham sworn this oath (to YHWH)? And why had Malki-Tzedek appeared on the scene - 'out of the blue' - just as the king of Sodom set out to meet Abraham?

Here, to me, was an obvious manifestation (the first recorded) of YHWH in human form! Thereafter there is also the (widely acknowledged) appearance of God in human form in Gen. 18. With proof thus from the Hebrew Scriptures that God does manifest Himself in human form, I was challenged with whether I could accept the claim - in the New Testament - that **Yeshua** (Jesus), born of woman, was/is divine! [By this time, I was prepared to accept that He could be a messianic type - possibly the suffering Messiah of rabbinic teaching.]

At Caesarea Philippi (as recorded in Matt. 16:13-17 - reported in the other Gospels as well), after asking His disciples who the people say that He is, Yeshua questions *them* as to who *they say* that He is - to which Peter responds that He is "the Messiah, the Son of the Living God". This elicits the statement by Yeshua, that "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven" - the revelation being that the Messiah **is the Son of God!** - It was by divine revelation that I arrived at the same conclusion. And there can be no doubt, scripturally, that the Messiah is fully human and fully divine!

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But what about the reference in Hebrews, to **Yeshua** being "a high priest **after the order of Melchizedek**"? Was the writer of Hebrews in error?

Where reference to 'Melchizedek' is concerned, the various translations of both the **Tanakh** and the New Testament draw on the Septuagint, which often has renderings different from the Hebrew. Yet the rendering in Hebrews is perfectly valid!

Yeshua is the name given to the Second Person of the Godhead when He chose to be born of woman, and is the name by which we know Him in His incarnation; in this name He conquered death and sin, and opened a new and living way to the Father. But in His various appearances recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Second Person of the Godhead manifested Himself as, for instance, the "Angel of the Lord", the "Captain of the Lord's Host" - and also as, certainly in my understanding, "Malki-Tzedek".

It is in the office of eternal priest-king that **Yeshua** is "high priest **after the order of** Malki-Tzedek!