

TRUE MESSIAH - PROPERLY ANOINTED; FALSE MESSIAH - SMEARED WITH OINTMENT¹

I. INTRODUCTION

The ninth chapter in the Book of Daniel has been a popular item in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. The passage that is commonly extracted from this chapter as an example of a “fulfilled messianic prophecy” is Daniel 9:24-27 because, according to most Christian translations, it contains two direct references to “the Messiah” (Daniel 9:25-26). Using mistranslations and mathematical hocus-pocus, missionaries transform this passage into a prophecy that allegedly foretells the coming of Jesus and his crucifixion.

The analysis presented in this essay demonstrates that the claims are inconsistent with what the Hebrew Bible teaches. Moreover, since these claims also include references to being anointed, the anointing process, as defined and applied in the Hebrew Bible, is cast into a template against which the "anointing" of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, is compared in order to test its validity.

II. CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF DANIEL 9:25-26

Table II-1 shows side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the passage Daniel 9:25-26. The Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ (*mashi'ah*) and its respective renditions in the two translations are shown in highlighted form.

¹ Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized font***
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
 - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
 - A vocalized letter ח is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
 - The letter ה is transliterated as “h”
 - The letter ח is transliterated as “ch”
 - The letter כ is transliterated as “k”
 - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
 - A vocalized **SHVA** (וְ אָשִׁיחַ) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
 - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the **daGESH** (emphasis)

Table II-1 – Daniel 9:25-26

	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Daniel 9			דניאל ט
25	Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.	And you should know and understand that, from the emergence of the word to restore and build Jerusalem until an anointed ruler, [shall be] seven weeks; and [in] sixty-two weeks it will be restored and be built, street and moat, but in troubled times.	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>וְתִדַע וְתִשְׁכַּל מִן-מִצְאָ דְבַר לְהָשִׁיב וּלְבַנּוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד-מְשִׁיחַ נָגִיד שִׁבְעִים וְשִׁבְעִים וְשָׁבוּעִים וּשְׁנַיִם וּשְׁשִׁים תְּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחַרוּץ וּבְצוֹק הָעֵתִים :</p> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">כה</div> </div>
26	And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.	And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one will be cut off, and [he] will be no more; and the city and the Sanctuary will be destroyed by people of the coming ruler, and his end will come about like a flood; and by end of the war, there will be desolation.	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>וְאַחֲרֵי הַשִּׁבְעִים שָׁשִׁים וּשְׁנַיִם יָכַרַת מְשִׁיחַ וְאִין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יִשְׁחִית עִם נָגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ בְשִׁטְף וְעַד קֵץ מִלְחָמָה נִחְרָצַת שְׁמֹמוֹת :</p> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">כו</div> </div>

A significant disagreement exists between the two translations in their respective renditions of the noun מְשִׁיחַ. A study of the applications of this term in the Hebrew Bible helps resolve this issue.

III. REVIEW OF HEBREW TERMINOLOGY

According to the Hebrew Bible, the men who were selected to serve as **high priest** [כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל] (*koheh gadol*) and **king** [מֶלֶךְ] (*melech*) had to undergo a ritual anointing ceremony. The Hebrew root verb מָשַׁח (*mem-shin-het*), which appears in the Hebrew Bible 70 times in various conjugations, is used on 63 occasions to describe an **act of anointing**, i.e., applying a specially prepared oil or compound to someone or something for the purpose of sanctification or consecration; and on the seven remaining occasions, it is used in the context of covering something with paint or oil for various other purposes.

Someone who went through the process of anointing was referred to as מְשִׁיחַ, **an anointed one**, in the Hebrew Bible. The term מְשִׁיחַ, which derives from the root verb מָשַׁח, is used in the Hebrew Bible on 39 occasions in various declensions and forms. The salient point concerning the applications of מְשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible is that none of these refer to the Messiah. The reason is that the usage of the noun מְשִׁיחַ as the current Hebrew term for Messiah is a product of the first century B.C.E. – information that emerged from research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Around that time, the Jewish messianic vision experienced a significant paradigm shift from the

expectation of an era (i.e., the “End of Days”) to an expectation of a Jewish leader who will deliver Israel (a "Redeemer"). This fact alone defeats the claim by Christian missionaries concerning references to the Messiah in Daniel 9:25-26.

IV. APPLICATIONS OF THE NOUN מָשִׁיחַ IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

An analysis of the 39 applications of the term מָשִׁיחַ (35 nouns and 4 adjectives) in the Hebrew Bible, and the way these are rendered in most Christian Bibles, provides biblical evidence that refutes the claims regarding its occurrences in Daniel 9:25-26.

Table IV-1 shows the 39 instances of מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible. Each form of the term is shown separately along with its frequency of occurrence, a pronunciation guide (CAPS identify the accented syllable), the respective Scriptural citations, the correct English translation, and the respective KJV rendition. Chapter and verse citations are from the Hebrew Bible; verse numbers in Christian Bibles, if different from the Hebrew Bible, are shown in brackets.

Table IV-1 – The term מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible and its KJV renditions

Hebrew Term	#	Pronunciation	References	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
מָשִׁיחַ	3	<i>mASHI'ah</i>	2Samuel 1:21 Daniel 9:25 Daniel 9:26	an anointed [one] an anointed [one] an anointed [one]	anointed the Messiah Messiah
*הַמָּשִׁיחַ	4	<i>ha'mASHI'ah</i>	Leviticus 4:3,5,16, 6:15[22]	the anointed [Priest]	[the priest] that is anointed
מְשִׁיחַ	8	<i>m^oSHI'ah</i>	1Samuel 24:6,10, 26:16; 2Samuel 1:14,16, 19:22[21], 23:1; Lamentations 4:20	anointed [one] of -	anointed [of]
בְּמָשִׁיחַ	3	<i>bim'SHI'ah</i>	1Samuel 26:9,11,23	against the anointed [one] of -	against [the LORD's] anointed
לְמָשִׁיחַ	1	<i>lim'SHI'ah</i>	1Samuel 24:7	to the anointed [one] of -	to [the LORD's] anointed
מְשִׁיחִי	1	<i>m^oshiHI</i>	1Samuel 2:35	my anointed [one]	mine anointed
לְמְשִׁיחִי	1	<i>lim'shiHI</i>	Psalms 132:17	for/to my anointed [one]	for mine anointed
מְשִׁיחֶךָ	6	<i>m^oshiHEcha</i>	Habakkuk 3:13; Psalms 84:10[9], 89:39[38],52[51], 132:10; 2Chronicles 6:42	your anointed [one]	thine anointed
מְשִׁיחוֹ	7	<i>m^oshiHO</i>	1Samuel 2:10, 12:3,5, 16:6; Psalms 2:2, 20:7[6], 28:8	his anointed [one]	his anointed, *[the LORD's] anointed
לְמְשִׁיחוֹ	3	<i>Lim'shiHO</i>	2Samuel 22:51; Isaiah 45:1; Psalms 18:51[50]	to his anointed [one]	to his anointed
בְּמְשִׁיחִי	2	<i>bim'shiHAI</i>	Psalms 105:15; 1Chronicles 16:22	at/upon my anointed [ones]	[touch not] mine anointed

* - These are the 4 instances of מָשִׁיחַ as an adjective.

The KJV rendition of the term מָשִׁיחַ differs from the generic “an anointed one” in only two cases out of the 39 instances, both occurring in Daniel 9:25-26. Given the historical fact that the association of the term מָשִׁיחַ with the Messiah post-dates the Book of Daniel, it appears that the KJV translators rendered the term in this manner in order to create a pointer to the Christian Messiah.

A related issue arises from the manner in which some other Christian Bibles render the noun מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26, as shown in Table IV-2.

Table IV-2 – The term מָשִׁיחַ as rendered in other Christian Bibles

Source	Verse	Source Translation	Correct Translation
<i>Amplified Bible (AMP)</i>	Daniel 9:25	the Anointed One	an anointed one
	Daniel 9:26		
<i>New International Version (NIV)</i>	Daniel 9:25	the Anointed One	an anointed one
	Daniel 9:26		
<i>New Living Translation (NLT)</i>	Daniel 9:25	the Anointed One	an anointed one
	Daniel 9:26		
<i>World English Bible (WEB)</i>	Daniel 9:25	the Anointed One	an anointed one
	Daniel 9:26		

The translation of מָשִׁיחַ as “the Anointed One”, although closer to the correct “an anointed one”, still contains Christological bias, though it is more subtle. The purpose of definite article “the” and the capitalization of the terms in the expression “Anointed One” is, by design, a pointer to Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity.

For the sake of fairness, it should be noted, however, that not all Christian Bibles have mistranslated מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26. Among the Christian Bibles that translate the term correctly are: *Basic Bible in English (BBE)*, *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*, and *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*.

V. ANOINTING ACCORDING TO THE HEBREW BIBLE

A. The process of anointing

According to the accounts in the Hebrew Bible, the substance and the ritual are the two significant components of the anointing process.

1. The substance

In order to be considered properly anointed, a king (or high priest) had to be sprinkled with a special substance that was stored in a special container, and which was prepared from pure olive oil, according to the following formula:

Exodus 30:22-25 – (22) And the L-rd spoke to Moses, saying, (23) "And you, take for yourself spices of the finest sort - of pure myrrh five hundred [sheqel weights]; of fragrant cinnamon half of it, two hundred and fifty [sheqel weights]; of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty [sheqel weights], (24) and of cassia five hundred

[sheqel weights] according to the sacred sheqel, and one hin of olive oil. (25) And you shall make it onto an oil of sacred anointment [שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת-קֹדֶשׁ (*SHEmen mish'HAT-Qodesh*)] a perfumed compound according to the art of the perfumer; it shall be an oil of sacred anointment [שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת-קֹדֶשׁ]."

No other substance is acceptable for anointing and, being a holy substance, this anointing oil had to be stored in the (portable) Tabernacle while the Israelites were in the wilderness and, later on, in the Temple in Jerusalem.

2. The ritual

Moses was commanded to anoint his brother Aaron as the first high priest:

Exodus 29:7 – And then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour [it] upon his head, and anoint him.

The Hebrew Bible contains several accounts that describe the anointing of royalty in Israel.

King Saul

Saul was anointed as King of Israel by the prophet Samuel, who poured the special oil on his head:

1 Samuel 10:1 - And Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it on his [Saul's] head, and kissed him. And he [Samuel] said, "Indeed, the L-rd has anointed you to be a ruler over His inheritance."

King David

David, the son of Jesse, was anointed as King of Israel by the prophet Samuel, who poured the special oil on his head:

1 Samuel 16:13 - And Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers. And a spirit of the L-rd passed over David from that day forth, and Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

King Solomon

Solomon was anointed King of Israel by the High Priest, Zadok, who poured the special oil on his head, in the presence of the prophet Nathan:

1 Kings 1:34,39,45 - (34) And Zadok the [high] priest and Nathan the prophet shall anoint him [Solomon] there as king over Israel, and blow the horn and say, "[Long] live King Solomon."
(39) And Zadok the [High] Priest took the horn of oil from the Tabernacle [the Sanctuary] and anointed Solomon, and they blew the shofar [ram's horn], and all the people said, "Long live king Solomon."
(45) And Zadok the [high] priest and Nathan the prophet anointed him [Solomon]

king in Gihon, and they came up from there rejoicing, and (therefore) the city was in an uproar; that is the noise you were hearing.

B. A template for the anointing of kings

The Biblical accounts of the anointing of the first three kings of Israel – Saul, David, and Solomon – contain the following six unique elements of a template for the process of anointing royalty of Israel, one of whom will be מְשִׁיחַ:

- [1] A special preparation from pure olive oil was used as the oil of anointing.
- [2] Being sacred, the anointing oil was stored in the Temple.
- [3] A universally recognized prophet performed the ritual of anointing a king.
- [4] The prophets used **the vial of oil**, or **the horn of oil**, to anoint the new king, not merely a vial of oil or a horn of oil.²
- [5] The oil of anointing was poured only on the head.
- [6] Anointing was tantamount to crowning a king (or appointing a high priest).³

VI. ANOINTING ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

This template for the anointing process can now be used to test the validity of the anointing of Jesus, as it is described in the New Testament.

A. The process of anointing

1. The substance

The four Gospel authors describe the substance used on Jesus as follows:

Matthew 26:7-9(KJV) – (7) There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. (8) But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? (9) For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Mark 14:3-5(KJV) – (3) And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (4) And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? (5) For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

Luke 7:37(KJV) - And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

² King David and his royal descendants were anointed with the sacred oil poured from “the horn”. According to the Jewish Sages, this indicated the superiority of the Davidic kings over the non-Davidic kings of Israel (e.g., Saul), who were anointed using “the vial”.

³ Saul, David, and Solomon all sat on the throne as kings soon after being anointed. They successfully fought those nations that were enemies of Israel. They commanded entire governments, complete with soldiers, spies, tax collectors, foreign ambassadors, treasuries, palace servants and courts.

John 12:3-5(KJV) – (3) Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. (4) Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, (5) Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

The data on the anointing substance are summarized in Table VI.A.1-1.

Table VI.A.1-1 – Anointing substance according to the Four Gospels

Source	Substance	Container	Sacred/Profane
Gospel of Matthew	Expensive ointment	Alabaster box	Profane
Gospel of Mark	Expensive ointment of spikenard	Alabaster box	Profane
Gospel of Luke	Ointment	Alabaster box	Unspecified
Gospel of John	Expensive ointment of spikenard	Unspecified	Profane

2. The ritual

All four Gospel authors describe the manner in which Jesus was anointed:

Matthew 26:7(KJV) - There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Mark 14:3(KJV) - And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Luke 7:37-38,46(KJV) – (37) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, (38) And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. (46) My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

John 11:2(KJV) - (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

John 12:3(KJV) - Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

The data on the anointing ritual are summarized in Table VI.A.1-2.

Table VI.A.1-2 – Anointing ritual according to the Four Gospels

Source	Anointer	Placement of substance
Gospel of Matthew	A woman	On the head of Jesus
Gospel of Mark	A woman	On the head of Jesus
Gospel of Luke ⁴	A woman	On the feet of Jesus
Gospel of John	Mary of Bethany	On the feet of Jesus

⁴ In Luke 7:46 Jesus actually admits that his head was not anointed with oil. Not that it would have made any difference if Simon had poured oil on his head, since Simon was not a recognized prophet of Israel who had access to the sacred oil that was kept in the Temple.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the purpose of the anointing process is to crown a king (or appoint a high priest). Yet, according to the New Testament, the purpose anointing Jesus was neither of the above:

Matthew 26:12(KJV) - For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Mark 14:8(KJV) - She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

B. Elements of the ritual of anointing Jesus

The elements of the process that was described in the Four Gospels as the anointing of Jesus are listed below in the same order as the elements in the template for the anointing process that was developed in Section V-B:

- [1] The substance used to anoint Jesus was an ointment of spikenard.⁵
- [2] It is unknown from where the costly ointment of spikenard came. It clearly was not a sacred substance, since people complained about having wasted it by pouring it on Jesus rather than selling it and giving the money to the poor.
- [3] Jesus was anointed by a woman (Mary of Bethany, who is described as a sinner).
- [4] The ointment used on Jesus was contained in an alabaster box.⁶
- [5] There are conflicting accounts in the New Testament about where on his body the anointing substance was applied to Jesus. The accounts in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark say it was applied to his head; while the accounts in the Gospels of Luke and John state it was applied to his feet only.
- [6] Jesus declared that his anointing was a preparation for burial, i.e., for death, and not for kingship.⁷

VII. COMPARING THE ANOINTING OF JESUS WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Table VII-1 contains an element-by-element comparison of the anointing process in the template against the accounts described in the Gospels. For each element in the template, a **YES** or **NO** indicates whether or not the respective element from the Gospel accounts meets the specification set forth in the Hebrew Bible.

⁵ *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Publishers [1991]), describes **spikenard** as: "1. An aromatic plant, *Nardostachys jatamansi*, of India, having rose-purple flowers. 2. A costly ointment of antiquity, probably prepared from the spikenard."

⁶ The authors of the New Testament refer to Jesus as the "son of David", implying that he is from the royal line of King David: **Matthew 1:1(KJV) - The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**. If, as claimed in the New Testament, Jesus were a bona fide king of the Davidic dynasty, why was the anointing substance taken from *an alabaster box* and not from that special vessel called *the horn*?

⁷ The New Testament is silent on whether Jesus sat on the throne of David during his lifetime, and whether he led a Jewish army in any battles against Israel's enemies and defeated them. Likewise, there is no mention in the New Testament of Jesus being in command of an entire political government.

Table VII-1 – Hebrew Bible specifications versus New Testament accounts of anointing

Item	Specifications in the Hebrew Bible	According to the New Testament	Comments	Valid?
[1]	The oil of anointing was a special mixture of spices and pure olive oil.	The substance used to anoint Jesus was an ointment of spikenard.	Ointment of spikenard, no matter how costly, cannot substitute for the sacred special oil.	NO
[2]	Being sacred, the oil of anointing had to be stored in the Temple.	The spikenard was not sacred, and its source is unknown.	Sacred items were kept in the Temple, and were not offered for sale.	NO
[3]	A recognized prophet had to anoint a king.	A woman named Mary anointed Jesus.	Did a recognized prophet anoint Jesus?	NO
[4]	A special vial, or special horn, of the special anointing oil had to be used in anointing a king.	The spikenard ointment used on Jesus came from an alabaster box.	The Hebrew Bible never speaks of alabaster containers used for holding the oil of anointing.	NO
[5]	The oil of anointing was poured on the head only.	2 accounts - head only; 2 accounts - feet only.	Which version of the account is the true one?	NO
[6]	The anointing was a preparation for kingship (or high priesthood).	Jesus declared his anointing was to prepare him for burial.	Jesus never reigned as the monarch over any kingdom.	NO

This comparison demonstrates that the anointing of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, violates all the requirements for a valid anointing of royalty in Israel, as specified in the Hebrew Bible.

Conclusion: The “anointing” of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, violates all the requirements set forth in the Hebrew Bible, which makes him a false Messiah.

VIII. SUMMARY

Two important and interconnected issues were addressed in this essay. The first question concerns the Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ as it appears in Daniel 9:25-26:

© *What is the correct translation of the Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ, which appears twice in the passage Daniel 9:25-26?*

According to most Christian translations, the term מָשִׁיחַ points to Jesus either by being translated as “[the] Messiah” or “the Anointed One”. A word study on all 39 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the term מָשִׁיחַ in its various forms demonstrated that the correct translation is “an anointed one”, a *generic* reference to two different individuals who were to appear on the scene at some future time, neither of whom had any connection to the promised Jewish Messiah. Recalling that the Hebrew Bible was the Scripture in force during the lifetime of Jesus, it is evident that neither instance of מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26 points to Jesus.

The second question concerns the validity of the so-called “anointing” of Jesus:

© *Did the "anointing" of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, conform to the requirements specified in the Hebrew Bible?*

To help determine the validity of the "anointing" process, as described by the Four Gospels in the New Testament, a template for the anointing process of kings and high priests of Israel was developed from the accounts in the Hebrew Bible. The corresponding elements were then extracted from the accounts that describe the "anointing" of Jesus in the New Testament, and these were compared, element-by-element, against the template. The analysis demonstrated that, according to the specifications described in the Hebrew Bible, Jesus was not properly anointed.

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