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The Superiority of the Son in His Person and Work 1:1 to 10:18

The first readers of **Hebrews** were part of a community whose recent history and experiences had been tragically discouraging. Following **Isra'el's** captivity in Babylon, hopes were revived for the return of the visible manifestation of **God**. Yet, the prophecies of **Haggai** and **Zechariah** regarding the return of the Sh'kinah glory, to rebuild the Temple had not been realized. Five centuries of frustration followed.

In the generation preceding **Yeshua's** day, revolts and other bloodshed took the lives of more than 100,000 Jews. In 31 BC, an earthquake had killed another 30,000. Severe famine and pestilence also took their toll. Herod the Great bled the land mercilessly with unrelenting taxation, a blight that continued long after his death. Messages of hope were rarely heard; despair was everywhere. The average person felt the hopelessness of the times and longed for relief, something to buoy the spirit.

In this depressing situation the writer of **Hebrews** urged his readers to look at **Messiah** quite differently from the usual way, as the coming **Liberator**.



The most prominent Jewish expectation associated with **Messiah** was the exaltation of the Davidic throne. This would be accompanied by a golden age of peace and joy. No rabbi anticipated the magnitude of **His** glory as it is seen in **1:1** to **10:18**. The commonly held Jewish views of **Messiah** required radical revision. **He** is no monarch, not even a super-

David, but a being of awe-inspiring nature. **God** had identified with a man by becoming a man. In **Him** and through **Him**, **YHVH** had spoken most conclusively and completely. Nothing remained to be said, for **the Son is the radiance of the Sh'khinah glory and the very image of God's essence (1:3 CJB)**. When Jewish people speak of the glory of **God** they use the word *kavod*. The word conveys the idea of *heaviness*. In our time, concepts of **the LORD** are characterized by a kind of weightlessness. You hear it in the songs and prayers, the attitudes of people. But for **Isra'el**, **God's weightiness** is seen in all that **He** is and all that **He** does.

The glory that **Isra'el** witnessed on **Sinai (Exodus 24:16)** also filled all of **God's** world (**Isaiah 6:3**). Now that same *kavod*, revealed in **Messiah** could be known by all who trusted in **His** saving work on the cross. The writer of **Hebrews** wanted to strengthen the followers of **Yeshua** by helping them focus on the superiority of **the Son in His Person and His** work. It is impossible to estimate the importance of this truth to those Jewish believers who received this letter. Branded *mesbumadim* (traitors to **Isra'el's** faith), they were subject to enormous pressures. Then, as now, faith in Jesus comes at a price. You cannot be a believer without suffering at the hands of the world. Therefore, the rejection of family and friends needed to be offset by the love and full acceptance they received from **ADONAI's** eternal **Messiah, the God-Man**, and sustainer of all things.¹¹

There were three pillars of Judaism in the days when **Hebrews** was written: **angels, Moses, and the Levitical Priesthood**. The writer will deal with each one separately: first **the angels (1:4 to 2:18)**, then with **Moshe (3:1-6)**, and finally **the Levitical Priesthood (4:14 to 10:18)**.