

MESSIAH BORN IN THE SPRING? An Exegetical Argument

by Michael Rudolph

The Complete Jewish Bible translates Luke 1:26-27 into English as follows:

“In the sixth month, the angel Gavri’el was sent by God to a city in the Galil called Natzeret, to a virgin engaged to a man named Yosef, of the house of David; the virgin’s name was Miryam.”

The phrase (unmodified) “in the <ordinal numbered, eg. 1st, 2nd, etc.> month” appears numerous times in the *Tanakh*,¹ and only once in the New Testament. Since in every one of its Hebrew occurrences it refers to a numbered month of the Biblical calendar, it is reasonable to suppose that it’s meaning in the Greek is the same – that verse 26 in Luke 1 is saying that Gavri’el visited Miryam (the future mother of Yeshua) in the sixth month of the year.

While most commentaries are silent on the matter, the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries expresses an opposing view. Seemingly because verse 24 states:

“Following this, Elisheva his wife conceived, and she remained five months...,”

and also verse 36 states:

“You have a relative, Elisheva, who is an old woman; and everyone says she is barren. But she has conceived a son and is six months pregnant!”

Leon Morris interprets “*In the sixth month...*” in verse 26 to mean in the sixth month of Elisheva’s pregnancy, rather than in the sixth month of the year.²

I find this illogical in that it is inconsistent with the way other places in Scripture use the phrase “*in the sixth month.*” Although it is plain from verse 36 that it was indeed Elisheva’s sixth month of pregnancy, I believe it is coincidental and not the meaning of verse 26. If it were, verse 26 would have been rendered (in the Greek) in the same manner as verse 36 – in the possessive case – eg., “*in her sixth month*” or “*in the sixth month for her*” as translated in the NIV and NKJ versions respectively.

¹ Acronym for “Old Testament.”

² Leon Morris, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Revised edition, p. 80, (Leicester, England / Grand Rapids, Michigan: Intervarsity Press / William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988).

Luke 1:39 states that Miryam began her journey to visit Elisheva with haste. It is probable that the reason for haste was that Elisheva was elderly and six months pregnant, and Miryam wanted to be with her when she gave birth and perhaps assist her afterwards. This is clear because when Miryam arrived, Elisheva had not yet given birth and she stayed with Elisheva “*about three months*” (verse 56).

An important assumption in this paper is that Miryam was already pregnant when she arrived at Elisheva’s home; this is derived from Luke 1:41-44:

“When Elisheva heard Miryam's greeting, the baby in her womb stirred. Elisheva was filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and spoke up in a loud voice, ‘How blessed are you among women! And how blessed is the child in your womb! But who am I, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy!’”

To not accept this assumption requires another explanation for why Elisheva’s baby leapt in her womb when Miryam approached her, and why Elisheva called Miryam the mother of her Lord.

There are several other assumptions made in this paper that are equally reasonable. One of them is that the beginning of Miryam’s journey was very soon after Gavri’el visited her. That combined with the assumed fact that she was pregnant when she arrived at Elisheva’s home, makes it almost certain that the Holy Spirit inseminated Miryam at the time of, or immediately after, Gavri’el’s visit, in the sixth month of the year. Assuming a normal nine month gestation and a twelve month year, that would place Yeshua’s birth in the third biblical month – *Sivan* on the Jewish calendar. Interestingly, *Sivan* is the month in which *Shavuot* (Pentecost) occurs, in the Spring season. In the less likely case that it was a leap year with 13 months, Yeshua’s birth would have fallen in *Iyyar*, a month earlier, but still in the Spring.

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