

## Chapter 7 – Worship in the Apostolic Writings (NT)

In the previous chapter we learned that the Hebrew word "hishtachavah", which is often translated as "worship", does not mean acknowledgement of divinity, a divine being, or a divine nature, but is external evidence of an inner acknowledgement of persons of authority and honor. That person could either be the Eternal himself, his heavenly messengers, his delegated human agents, or other honorable persons.

If we study the Greek text of the Septuagint, we see that the Hebrew words "hishtachavah" and "sagad", as well as the Aramaic word "segid", were all translated to one Greek word, "proskuneo",<sup>[1]</sup> which means "kiss (with an air-kiss, or as a dog would lick its owners hand), flatter, bow". This word is also found in the Greek text of the Apostolic Writings (NT), which are the foundation for almost all the English translations.

Therefore, whenever we encounter the word "proskuneo" in the Greek text of the Apostolic Writings (NT) we must go back to the Hebrew origin of this word in order to comprehend it. In large, the word "proskuneo" has the same meaning as the Hebrew word "hishtachavah" and it is used in the same way in the Apostolic Writings as in the older writings.

### The Use of the Greek Word "Proskuneo" in Relation to the Messiah

We find the word "proskuneo" in the Greek translation of Matthew 2:2, 11. These verses have been translated in the following way:

*"Where is he who is born King of the Yehudim? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to **worship** ("proskuneo") him. ... They came into the house and saw the young child with Miryam, his mother, and they fell down and **worshipped** ("proskuneo") him. Opening their treasures, they offered to him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."*

The Hebrew text of Matthew, called "DuTillet", uses the word "hishtachavah" in these verses. We can see that most translators have chosen to use the word "worship" where the word "proskuneo" is found in the Greek. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is not correct to say that the Hebrew word "hishtachavah" which was translated into Greek as "proskuneo" always means "worship" in the sense of worship to the Eternal.

When the word "proskuneo" is translated as "worship", something is added to the text that was not there originally, which would allude to the wise men perceiving the child to be the Most High. How could the translators know whether the wise men from the East *worshipped* the child if the text does not say so? The text says "proskuneo" and this word does not mean "worship" but "bowing in reverence". This type of translation is one-sided and it misleads the reader into understanding the text in a way that conflicts with its original content. These wise men did not worship a little child. They had been educated in Jewish literature and wisdom by the Jewish wise men in Babylon and they would know that *Elohim is not a man... neither the son of man...* (Numbers 23:19). By bowing down they were honoring the small child, not as if it were the Almighty, the invisible Creator of the universe, but as the promised Messiah, the king of the Jews (Matthew 2:2).

The idea of worshipping a child, even if he was the future eternal king of Israel, as though he was the Invisible Almighty Creator, is an absurd thought for a Jew. This thought comes from the pagan world.

Another text where the word "proskuneo" reoccurs in the Greek translation is in Matthew 8:2, where it is written,

*"Behold, a leper came to him and **worshiped** ("proskuneo") him, saying, 'Lord, if you want to, you can make me clean.'" (HNV)*

In this verse the word "proskuneo" has once again been translated as "worshiped". In the Hebrew text DuTillet we find the word "hishtachavah". Almost all versions have translated "proskuneo" as "worship" which puts in a meaning in the verse that is not there. It is obvious that the translators consider this to be an act of worship as recognition of Yeshua as the Almighty. This is although an interpretation more than a translation.

The 1889 Darby Bibel translated "proskuneo" in most cases as "do homage", and the 1898 Yong's Literal Translation translated "proskuneo" in most cases as "bow". These words are closer to the original meaning of the word "proskuneo".

The point is that you cannot know by the word "proskuneo" if these men recognized Yeshua as the Almighty. Why did most translators then incorrectly use the word "worship"? Because they thought that these people really worshiped Yeshua, but that is an assumption because you cannot find any proof for it in the original Bible text.

In Matthew 28:17-18, it is written,

*"When they saw him, they **worshiped** ("proskuneo") him, though some had doubts. Then Jesus came up and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" (KJV)*

Most translators have chosen to use the words "worship" as a translation of the Greek word "proskuneo". But the word "bow" is a better translation of "proskuneo" since a God fearing Jew would not worship a man. On the other hand, he may definitely bow down to the promised Messiah and acknowledge the delegated power that he has received from the Most High. In the Hebrew text, DuTillet, we find the word "hishtachavah" in this verse. The Hebrew Names Version in this case translated the word "proskuneo" as "bowed down".

Since neither the Hebrew word "hishtachavah" nor the Greek word "proskuneo" necessarily means to worship the Almighty, one cannot claim, based on either of these words, that the disciples worshiped Yeshua and thus acknowledged him to be the Almighty Elohim. Consequently, if these passages are translated this way, the reader is deceived to believe that these disciples gave the same worship to Yeshua as they would have given to the Eternal in heaven. Even if this really is what they did, it cannot be proven by these Bible passages. There is yet another reason for such a biased method of translation. It is a way of incorporating a pre-supposed theology into the Bible passage even though the original passage itself does not support such a theology. Various English translations are guilty of this type of error in several places and therefore one ought to be very careful when basing one's understanding on such a translation.

A doctrine cannot be founded on a translation of the Bible since the translators most often add their own opinion of how the original text should be understood. This is, to a certain extent, unavoidable. Even using the Greek text as the foundation for a doctrine is not enough. We have enough historical evidence, as well as evidence from the Scriptures themselves, to convince us that the apostles and their followers did not write in Greek, but in Hebrew and Aramaic. One Syrian-Orthodox priest in Sweden, Jakob Elia, asserts that the Aramaic version of the NT that is used in the Syrian-Orthodox church was never translated from any other language.

Even if it would originally have been written in Greek, one must look at the text from a Hebrew perspective in order to understand the terms that are used in the Apostolic

Writings. The minds of the authors were not influenced by a Greek mindset but a Hebrew one. The divine revelation was given in a Hebraic context and in the Hebrew language. For this reason it is misleading to look at the Greek world of concepts in order to understand the Hebrew Apostolic Writings. They are not Greek in either grammar or mindset. If we use the Greek manuscripts, we must try to understand the Greek words by their corresponding Hebrew words. Otherwise we run a great risk of misunderstanding what we are reading. However, we ought to use primarily the Aramaic manuscripts that are older than the Greek ones, and – in spite of the fact that they have been edited – are closer to the originals and to the Hebraic understanding of the divine revelation.

Furthermore, our understanding of what the Messiah and his disciples taught must be completely in line with the revelation that Moshe and the Prophets had already presented in the Scriptures. Everything that is written in the apostolic Scriptures must be considered and interpreted according to the written revelation that was already given at Sinai and afterward.

To a Jew, it would be absurd to think that a man can receive the same respect that the Creator receives since he knows very well that Elohim is not a man or a son of man. The disciples bowing down before Yeshua, did not mean that they acknowledged him to be the Almighty, but that they acknowledged that he had been given the authority of Heaven. He was the Father's Messenger, but he was not the Father. It was as a Messenger that he was acknowledged and honored.

Let us look at yet another passage where the word "proskuneo" is found in the Greek text. In Mark 5:6-8, it is written,

*When he saw Yeshua from afar, he ran and "bowed down" ("proskuneo") to him, and crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have I to do with you, Yeshua, you Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, don't torment me.' For he said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'" (HNV)*

Notice that here we have the same word "proskuneo" that is usually translated as "worshiped". In this verse several translations have chosen not to use the word "worship". Thus it seems as though many of them did not believe that the unclean spirits in the possessed man were worshiping Yeshua. The question then remains why they have translated the word one way in some instances and another way in other places.

The unclean spirit acknowledged Yeshua as the *Son of the Most High God*, not as the Most High himself. Earlier we mentioned that the Hebraic concept of the word "son" does not necessarily mean reproduction, but rather that the one called "son" has been raised by him to be his follower and was given power to be his representative. We have also seen that the expression "Son of Elohim" means the Messiah, the anointed king. By bowing down, the evil spirit acknowledged the authority that Yeshua had received from the Most High.

In John 9:35-38 it is written,

*"It came to the ears of Jesus that they had put him out, and meeting him he said, Have you faith in the **Son of man**? He said in answer, And who is he, Lord? Say, so that I may have faith in him. Jesus said to him, You have seen him; it is he who is talking to you. And he said, Lord, I have faith. And he gave him **worship** ("proskuneo")." (BBE)*

According to this version of the text, Yeshua asked the man who had been blind if he believed in the "Son of man", which in Hebrew is "ben Adam" and means "Adam's son", "the son of humankind", "human being" or simply "man". The word "Adam" comes from "adamah" which means "earth". At the many occasions where Yeshua called himself "ben Adam" he was identifying himself with the first Adam who was taken from the earth and

who had been created in Elohim's image. In the same way that Adam was taken from the earth by a supernatural act, so the Son of Man was taken from the earth, since his mother's body came from the earth. And, in the same way that the first man was created in Elohim's image and likeness, without sin, so "the last Adam", who is "the second Adam",<sup>[2]</sup> was created without sin in the image and likeness of Elohim. The difference between them was the first man fell and the second man did not.

Another difference between them was that the first man, in contrast to the second man, was created according to the master plan that the Eternal had within himself from all eternity of the coming Messiah (Romans 5:14b<sup>[3]</sup>). In Jewish literature, this master plan of the entire creation, including man, is called "Adam hakadmon" – "the earlier/primary Adam". The second man was himself the master plan that had now come down from heaven and become flesh (John 1:14; 3:13<sup>[4]</sup>, 31; 17:5; 1 Corinthians 15:47).

However, concerning the text in John 9, there are different versions of the Greek manuscripts and some of them say "Son of man" while others say "Son of God". Some English Bible translations go by the Textus Receptus and translate "Son of God" while other go by other manuscripts that have "Son of man". There is therefore confusion concerning what was written in the original. If we go to the Aramaic text we find the expression "Son of God". I personally believe that this is the correct version and that Yeshua in this case did not say "ben Adam" about himself, but "ben Elohim".

The expression "God the Son" does not appear anywhere in Scripture.

The Hebraic understanding of the expression "Son of Elohim" differs greatly from the Christian understanding of the "Son of God" or "God the Son". Adam was called Elohim's Son in Luke 3:38 and Israel was called the firstborn son of Elohim in Exodus 4:22. It is therefore important that we do not look at texts that speak of Yeshua as Elohim's Son, from the perspective of Church history and interpret them from a post-biblical point of view. Those who bowed before Yeshua when they received the revelation that He was Elohim's Son did not do so from a perspective of the Christian trinity doctrine, but from a Jewish perspective. From a Hebraic perspective we can then conclude that they did not *worship* him, but they did the same thing that earlier Jews did before King David and other dignitaries (1 Chronicles 29:20).

This man knelt out of honor and respect before the promised Son of David, Messiah the King, who was chosen and called to be the Son of Elohim and had finally come (1 Chronicles 22:10; 28:6; Luke 1:35).

Let us look at another passage. In the Greek version of Hebrews 1:6 we find that the Hebrew word "hishtachavah" found in Psalm 97 was quoted and translated into Greek as "proskuneo". In Hebrews 1:6, it is written,

*"Again, when he brings in the **firstborn** into the world he says, 'Let all the angels of God **worship** ('proskuneo/hishtachavah') him.'" (HNV)*

Psalm 97 speaks of when the Eternal will come and restore his righteousness in all the earth with fire and flashes of lightning that causes his enemies to be consumed, the earth to shake, the mountains to melt, and all people to see his glory. This is very clearly a prophecy about the Messiah's second coming. In this context it is written in verse 7 that all elohim, i.e. angels<sup>[5]</sup> will bow before Him in reverence.

In this Psalm it says that the Eternal is the one who will receive this honor from the angels. However, in the book of Hebrews this same quote is used about the Messiah. Many use this text as evidence to claim that the Messiah is the Eternal. It is easy to interpret this and other similar passages in that way. However, if we know the principle

of agents that we talked about in chapter 5, it is not difficult to understand these passages from another point of view.

Notice that the expression "firstborn" is used about the Son. It is important to understand that the term "firstborn" does not necessarily have to mean the son who was born first. King David was called "firstborn" in Psalm 89:27 even though he was the eighth son born to his family. It is written,

*"will also appoint him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."* (HNV)

King David was, therefore, made firstborn – the highest among the kings of the earth. Here David is a prophetic picture of the Son of David, the Messiah, who was chosen to be the firstborn, i.e. the one who was predestined to be the highest among the kings of the earth.

The firstborn son of the family was appointed by the father to be his representative and the leader of the family. The father could choose a son other than the one who was born first for this assignment (1 Chronicles 26:10). The birthright of the firstborn also included the assignment of being the priest of the family since the firstborn were originally appointed to be priests (Exodus 19:22; Numbers 3:12). When the Messiah is called the "firstborn", the emphasis is not on whether he was created or born, but that he was given the right to rule and perform the ministry of a priest. The position of the firstborn according to the Scriptures does not primarily have to do with birth but with the right to take the leadership position over the other siblings, as it is written in Genesis 27:29a,

*"Let peoples serve you, nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, let your mother's sons bow down to you."* (HNV)

The same concept is found in Colossians 1:15 where it is written,

*"who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."* (HNV)

The 1965 Bible in Basic English (BBE), have translated this as "coming into existence before all living things". The Analytical-Literal Translation inserts a similar thought. It seems as though they had not understood the Hebraic perception of the term "firstborn" but have simply understood it as the Messiah being the first in time. Thus it did not suit them to translate it as *"the firstborn of all creation"* because some might misunderstand the passage and believe that the Messiah was the first to be created. Therefore they added the word "before" thus injecting into the passage the doctrine of the Messiah being the firstborn *before* all creation, as if the Eternal could have reproduced himself. This doctrine is far removed from the Hebraic concept of the "firstborn" as a title given to the one who receives the power to rule in his father's name as a representative and messenger. Yeshua *is* appointed as creation's firstborn, i.e. the highest over all creation who has received the authority to rule over all (Matthew 28:18).

Let us look again at Hebrews 1:6. In the same chapter it already mentions that Yeshua inherited the name "Son of Elohim" (v. 4-5). This happened when he was raised from the dead (Acts 13:32-33; Romans 1:4). As mentioned earlier, being a son entails representation and authority. The name i.e., the position that Yeshua inherited – to be Elohim's Firstborn Son – was higher than the angels. However, not until he was raised from the dead was Yeshua appointed to his position that is much higher than the angels, as we also can see in Hebrews 2:5-9, where it is written,

*"For he didn't subject the world to come, whereof we speak, to angels. But one has somewhere testified, saying,*

*'What is man, that you think of him? Or the **son of man** ("ben Adam"), that you care for him? You made him a little **lower than the angels**; you crowned him with glory and honor. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.'*

*For in that he subjected all things to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we don't see all things subjected to him, yet. But **we see him** who has been made a little lower than the angels, Yeshua, because of the suffering of death **crowned with glory and honor**, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for everyone."* (HNV)

The Hebrew text of Psalm 8:6 that the author of Hebrews is quoting, and which is translated "you made him a little lower than the angels"[6] can be translated word for word like this,

*"And you made him to lack a little [in comparison] to elohim."*

The text in Psalms mentions first a man and then a son of man. It is primarily talking about the first Adam and his descendants under whose feet everything was placed (Genesis 1:26). It also speaks, in its prophetic dimension, about the Son of Man, the last and second man, under whose feet everything would be laid, even the angels.

Notice that the title "ben Adam" that is in this text speaks of a being who first was lower in rank than the angels. When Yeshua uses this title about himself, it means that he presents himself as a man (1 Timothy 2:5). He was truly a complete man, in everything like his brothers, but without sin (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15).

Only after the resurrection did he receive another status as immortal and could then bodily contain the fullness of the Eternal (Colossians 2:9). That is why he is presented in Daniel 7:13, Revelation 1:13, and 14:14 in his glorified state as one *like* a son of man. In his immortal state he is much more than a man, but he is still like a son of man.

The text in Hebrews teaches us that it was only by suffering death that the last Adam could be given the honor of being exalted above the angels. As mentioned earlier, to begin with, Yeshua was lower in rank than the angels. Before the resurrection he was *lower than the angels*. However, because he was faithful to suffer death, the Eternal exalted him above all the angels and over all creation. He then inherited the name that is much higher than the angels', namely, the right to be the Firstborn Son who fully represents the Father. This lines up with Ephesians 1:20-23 where it is written,

*"which he worked in Messiah, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far **above all** rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but **also in that which is to come. He put all things in subjection under his feet**, and gave him to be **head over all things** for the assembly, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."* (HNV)

When Hebrews 1:6 says that the firstborn comes into the world "*again*", it is not with the same rank that he had when he was here the first time, but in his glorified and exalted state. Because of that state, the angels will fall down in reverence acknowledging the exalted position that He has received from the Father.

Because of the fact that he will come as a representative of the Eternal, it is the Eternal who comes through him, and so Psalm 97 will be fulfilled that speaks about the Eternal coming to the earth to reign and that the angels will fall down ("hishtachavah") before Him. And that is not all! When Yeshua was clothed in immortality and received a transformed body, he was able to bodily contain all the fullness of the Eternal (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). At that time there will be no great difference between the Father and the Son

since the Son comes in the Father's Name and the Father dwells with all his fullness in the Son's body.

Shortly before he left us after being here the first time, he said that he would not come back to Yerushalayim until the Jews who live there say to him, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Eternal!" (Matthew 23:39). That day is near, blessed be the wonderful Name of the Eternal!

### **The Use of the Greek Word "Proskuneo" in Relation to other Men**

In Matthew chapter 18, Yeshua tells a parable about a man who had borrowed money and who fell down before the man he was indebted to. The Greek text has the word "proskuneo" in verse 26, where it is written,

*"The servant therefore fell down and **knelt** ("proskuneo") before him, saying, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay you all!'"* (HNV)

This text is evidence that the word "proskuneo" does not have to mean worship of the Almighty, since in this case a man knelt ("proskuneo") before another man like himself.

In Revelation 3:9 it is written,

*"Behold, I give of the synagogue of satan, of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but lie. Behold, I will make them to come and **worship** ("proskuneo") before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."* (HNV)

Here Yeshua said that he would cause these deceivers to fall down before the feet of the "angel" that was in the assembly in the city Philadelphia. The Greek word used here is "proskuneo". If Yeshua had considered this word to mean "worship," he would not have caused these men to fall down before the feet of a messenger in one of the assemblies.

This teaches us that the word "proskuneo" in the Greek version of the Apostolic Writings does not necessarily mean "worship," but can also mean "bow in reverence." In the same way as the term "hishtachavah" is used in the Hebrew texts, the word "proskuneo" is used both to express worship before the Most High and to bow in reverence before the Son of Elohim and other men of high position.

### **The Use of the Greek Word "Proskuneo" in Relation to the Most High**

Just like the Hebrew word "hishtachavah," the Greek word "proskuneo" does not only mean the physical act of bowing in reverence before a worthy person, but its meaning includes the entire sacrificial ministry before the Eternal as well. We can see this in the conversation between Yeshua and the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, where the Greek text uses the word "proskuneo."

In John 4:20-24 it is written,

*"Our fathers **worshiped** ("proskuneo") in this mountain, and you [Jews] say that in Yerushalayim is the place where people ought to **worship** ("proskuneo").' Yeshua said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, nor in Yerushalayim, will you **worship** ("proskuneo") the Father. You [Samaritans] **worship** ("proskuneo") that which you don't know. We [Jews] **worship** ("proskuneo") that which we know; for salvation is from the Yehudim. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will **worship** ("proskuneo") the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father*

*seeks such to be his worshippers ("proskuneo"). God is spirit, and those who worship ("proskuneo") him must worship in spirit and truth."* (HNV)

The first thing we learn from this text is that the word "hishtachavah/proskuneo" here represents the entire sacrificial ministry before the Eternal. The Samaritans claimed that one ought to sacrifice to the Eternal on Mount Gerizim (Deuteronomy 11:29), but the Jews teach that one ought only to sacrifice in the temple in Yerushalayim (Deuteronomy 12:5-6).

The second thing we learn from the Messiah's teaching to the Samaritan woman is that the Jews in the temple worship the Eternal according to the correct revelation, which brings salvation, in contrast to the mixed religion that the Samaritans practiced.

The third thing is that from the time that the Messiah came, a temple ministry in a new dimension at the heavenly tabernacle became possible. This text does not support the un-biblical teaching that the temple ministry in Yerushalayim was done away with by the Messiah.

The fourth thing we learn from this conversation is that the Father seeks those who are willing to minister in this spiritual dimension of the heavenly sacrificial ministry in the true tabernacle, which does not exist in the physical world but in the spiritual world. From the time of Yeshua's resurrection, He took up his High Priestly ministry in the heavenly tabernacle according to the order of Malki Tzedek. Thereafter his followers were also clothed in their priestly garments and were able to minister under Him in spirit and truth.

Yeshua is ministering now in the heavenly tabernacle by offering himself up for the twelve tribes of Israel and praying for them before the Eternal (Exodus 28:12, 29). He is also praying for the gentiles who, through the Jewish message of salvation, have come to faith and have received him and the Spirit (John 17:20-21; Romans 8:34).

Yeshua is the first worshiper in the heavenly tabernacle and he is praying before the Father. Never once did the people of Israel come to the temple to sacrifice to the High Priest. The High Priest, however, helped them to sacrifice to the Eternal. So then, if Yeshua ministers as the heavenly High Priest, how could it be right for us to sacrifice to him? He is the one who encourages us to pray to the Father and He also urges us to worship the Father. How could he be the object of our prayers and worship? If we listen to and obey His voice, we will neither pray to Him nor give our worship to Him. There is no text in the Scriptures giving us the right to ask the Son for anything. He is the way to the Father, but he is not the end goal. He is the door to the Father, but he is not the Father. He is the mediator, but He is not the second party. He is the worshiper, but he is not the object of worship. It is the Father, not the Son, who is seeking worshipers. Let us obey Yeshua's teaching and example and worship the Father.

## **Worship in Heaven**

The Father gave Yeshua the revelation that is described in the Book of Revelation. Thereafter Yeshua passed it on to an angel, who then passed it on to Yochanan who in turn wrote down a great deal of what he saw and heard so that the rest of us could partake of it (Revelation 1:1-2). In this revelation we see a glimpse of what it is like in heaven. By studying it, we get an indication of what the heavenly temple ministry is like. So, what is it really like? Does the Son receive the same worship as the Father does in Heaven? The book of Revelation gives us the answer.

In Revelation 4:10-11, it is written,

*"the twenty-four Zakenim **fall down** ("pipto") before **him who sits on the throne**, and **worship** ("proskuneo") him who lives forever and ever, and throw their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are **you, our Lord and God**, the Holy One, to receive the glory, the honor, and the power, for you created all things, and because of your desire they existed, and were created!'"*

Here Yochanan is taken up in the spirit and sees how the twenty-four elders fall down and perform an outward act of reverence, which can rightly be called worship, before Him who sits on the throne and who is described as Lord and God, in Hebrew "YHWH Elohim". The word "proskuneo," which corresponds with the Hebrew word "hishtachavah," is used here together with another word, "pipto,"<sup>[7]</sup> which means "fall down" and which represents the Hebrew word "nafal,"<sup>[8]</sup> to describe what these elders did before the Most High. Notice that two words are used.

Let us proceed to the next chapter to see what happens when the Lamb enters the scenario and is given a special scroll from Him who sits on the throne.

In Revelation 5:8-14, it is written,

*"Now when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders **fell down** ("pipto") before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song, saying, 'You are worthy to take the book, and to open its seals: for you were killed, and bought us for God with your blood, out of every tribe, language, people, and nation, and made them kings and priests to our God, and they reign on earth.'*

*I saw, and I heard something like a voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who has been killed to receive the power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing!'*

*I heard every created thing which is in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb be the blessing, the honor, the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever! Amen!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen!' The elders **fell down** ("pipto") and **worshiped** ("proskuneo") (WEB) him who lives forever and ever." (Textus Receptus)*

The Lamb becomes the object of attention and is pronounced as the one worthy to open the scroll because he was slaughtered and with his blood he bought men to be kings and priests for Elohim. Notice that when the four creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb, both the words "pipto/nafal" and "proskuneo/ hishtachavah" are not used, but only the first of the two. The angels did not fall down before the Lamb.

Let us look at another example. In Revelation 7:10-12, it is written,

*"They cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation be to **our God, who sits on the throne**, and to the Lamb!' All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they **fell** ("pipto") on their faces before his throne, and **worshiped** ("proskuneo") **God**, saying, 'Amein! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to **our God** forever and ever! Amein.'" (HNV)*

Notice that salvation is declared as belonging both to Elohim, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. However, when it talks about them falling down and worshipping, the Lamb is not included but only Elohim. In chapter 5, the angels did not fall down before the Lamb. It is the same in this case as they do so only before Elohim whom they call "our Elohim, who sits on the throne" who is presented as someone other than the Lamb.

We can see yet another example in Revelation 11:15-18, where it is written,

*"The seventh angel sounded, and great voices in heaven followed, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Messiah. He will reign forever and ever!' The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God's throne, fell ("pipto") on their faces and worshiped ("proskuneo") God, saying: "We give you thanks, Lord God, Shaddai, the one who is and who was; because **you have taken your great power, and reigned**. The nations were angry, and your wrath came, as did the time for the dead to be judged, and to give your bondservants the prophets, their reward, as well as to the holy ones, and those who fear your name, to the small and the great; and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (HNV)*

Here it is talking about the Messiah's second coming when the Eternal will give Him the rulership over the earth since the Messiah is the Eternal's agent. Once again we see the words "pipto" and "proskuneo" when it is talking about Elohim as the object of worship. These two words are not referring the Messiah in this text.

In Revelation 15:3-4 we read the following,

*"They sang the song of Moshe, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvelous are your works, **Lord God, Almighty**; Righteous and true are your ways, you King of the nations. Who wouldn't fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy. For all the nations will come and **worship** ("proskuneo") **before you**. For your righteous acts have been revealed." (HNV)*

Note that this song is both Moshe's and the Lamb's. One Swedish translation has incorporated a unique phrase and has re-phrased the verse by saying "the song to the Lamb". Not a single one out of thirty other translations has done this. This committee of translators could evidently not fit this verse into their theological system and therefore they chose to rewrite the text in order to make it fit.

This is the song of both Moshe and the Lamb. What does this song declare? It declares that all nations will come and worship before the Lord God Almighty. The Lamb, therefore, sings the same song as Moshe, the song about all coming to worship before the Eternal. It is evident that the Lamb is not the object of the worship mentioned here.

The final example is found in Revelations 19:4, where it is written,

*"The twenty-four Zakenim and the four living creatures fell down and **worshiped** ("proskuneo") **God who sits on the throne**, saying, 'Amein! Halleluyah!'" (HNV)*

The four creatures bow down in reverent worship before Elohim who sits on the throne. Once again, the Lamb is not the object of worship.

The only example of someone bowing before the Lamb is found in chapter 5 where the Lamb is acknowledged as worthy to open the scroll that releases the Eternal's judgment over the world. However, in this case the word "proskuneo/hishtachavah" is not used but only "pipto/nafal". Throughout the entire revelation found in this book about the heavenly ministry, the fact that the word "proskuneo/hishtachavah" is not used about the Lamb stands out distinctly.

Is this not proof that the Messiah does not receive the same reverence in heaven as the One who sits on the throne?

Certainly, the four creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb and acknowledged his worthiness. All the millions of angels certainly acknowledged that the Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy *to receive the power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing*. However, it does not say in the book of Revelation that the angels fell down before the Lamb. Neither does it say anywhere else that the Lamb is the

object of "proskuneo/hishtachavah". In regards to the heavenly ministry, this word seems to be reserved for Him who sits on the throne and who has created everything.

When Yochanan at a couple of occasions fell down ("proskuneo/hishtachavah") before an angel who was declaring the revelation that the Father had given Yeshua, he was rebuked and told that "proskuneo/hishtachavah" is only to be given to Elohim (Revelation 19:10, 22:19). In the heavenly dimension, therefore, only Elohim is the object of this form of reverence. Not even the Lamb received it, only the Father. In heaven, only the Father receives worship, no one else.

This does not discount the fact that the Lamb is given praise and honor. He said on one occasion that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 5:23). If you bow in reverence before the Son and honor Him as the one the Father made him and acknowledge the honor that He rightfully earned by suffering death, then the Father is honored through Him (John 14:13; Phil. 2:11)

### Cases Where "Proskuneo" is Prohibited

In this book we will not deal with prohibitions concerning worship of pagan gods (Exodus 20:3-5). Neither will we talk about the worship of demons, the beast, the anti-messiah, or his image (Revelation 9:20; 13:4, 15).

Instead we will look at some texts in the Apostolic Writings where men are prohibited from "proskuneo". We have already mentioned a bit about how Yochanan was hindered from falling down before the angel according to Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9, where it is written,

*I fell down ("pipto") before his feet to worship ("proskuneo") him. He said to me, 'Look! Don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers who hold the testimony of Yeshua. Worship ("proskuneo") God, for the testimony of Yeshua is the Spirit of Prophecy.'...*

*Now I, Yochanan, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw, I fell down ("pipto") to worship ("proskuneo") before the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. He said to me, 'See you don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship ("proskuneo") God.'"* (HNV)

Evidently Yochanan went too far in expressing his reverence before the heavenly messenger who showed him all these things. Note that both the word "pipto/nafal" and "proskuneo/hishtachavah" are used to describe what Yochanan did. He went too far.

It is interesting to compare this with Revelation 3:9, where Yeshua expressly says that false people will come to "fall down" before the feet of the leaders of the assembly. The remarkable thing is that the word "proskuneo/hishtachavah" is used there and not "pipto/nafal". This is the only place in the book of Revelation where anyone other than the one who sits on the throne is the object of the type of reverence called "proskuneo/hishtachavah".

The conclusion that we can draw from this is that this word can be understood in various ways and that it ought to be interpreted from its context.

A similar prohibition against worshiping anyone other than Elohim is found in Matthew 4 where the enemy came to tempt Yeshua at a time when he was weak. It says in verses 8-11,

*"Again, the devil took him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. He said to him, 'I will give you all of these things, if you will **fall down** ("pipto") and **worship** ("proskuneo") me.' Then Yeshua said to him, 'Get behind me, satan! For it is written, "**You shall worship** ("proskuneo") **the Lord your God**, and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him."* (HNV)

In this passage we see that satan offered Yeshua power over this world's system if he was willing to bow down before him and give him reverence. Satan is a rebellious angel and therefore he wanted get the power over Yeshua by receiving this type of worship. If Yeshua had submitted to satan, he would have been rebellious toward his Father and committed the same sin the first Adam committed, who was offered something very similar, if not the same thing. Yeshua quoted the commandments that the Eternal gave in the Torah in Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. There we find the word "yareh",<sup>[9]</sup> which means "fear", and not the word "hishtachavah".

There are several historical sources which claim that Matityahu (Matthew) wrote in Hebrew.<sup>[10]</sup> Therefore it is likely that the original manuscript would have the word "yareh" in it from the Hebrew passage that Yeshua very likely quoted to satan. It is interesting to see, however, that both the Aramaic and the Greek translations of Matthew use the word that means to "bow down in reverence" in the place where it is written "fear" in the Torah. This teaches us that there is a connection between the worship that is given to the Eternal and the fear, or great respect that is shown him. One who bows down before the Eternal does so with fear of His mighty greatness and sanctity. He is the Most High and as such He is worthy to be feared and served. No one else is worthy of being the object of such fear as He is.

We can learn yet another thing from this text in Matthew 4, where Yeshua tells satan to leave him since one may only worship and serve the Eternal. If Yeshua was the Eternal himself in the flesh, why did he command satan to leave him? Would he not instead have commanded satan to bow down and worship Him? Instead of taking the Eternal's place, Yeshua refers to Him and says that no one has the right to fear, worship, and serve anyone other than YHWH Elohim.

We will conclude with one final example of erroneous worship. When the Apostle Kefa was sent to the gentile Cornelius to preach the message of salvation, he was received with great respect. This respect was expressed in such a way that it could be misinterpreted as false worship.

In Acts 10:25-26 it is written,

*"When it happened that Kefa entered, Cornelius met him, **fell down** ("pipto") at his feet, and **worshiped** ("proskuneo") him. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up! I myself am also a man.'" (HNV)*

From Kefa's reply, we see that Cornelius was about to give him something that no man had the right to receive. We saw the same type of answer in the angel's reply to Yochanan when he fell down before him. The angel said, "*I am a fellow bondservant with you*". Therefore, those who serve the Eternal do not have the right to receive the type of reverence that is shown to the One they are serving.

Naturally, Yochanan did not acknowledge the angel as the Most High, and neither did Cornelius with Kefa. They knew very well that they were not standing before the Eternal, but before His representatives. Therefore it was completely in order for them to express their reverence and respect before these messengers. However, in both cases they crossed the line of what was appropriate. There is, therefore, a limit as to how much reverence can be shown to those in the Eternal's service. The Eternal does not give the

honor that belongs to Him to anyone else (Isaiah 42:8). Neither does He allow anyone to worship anything created as though it was the Creator, for that would be, as we said earlier, the first step of apostasy (Romans 1:25).

## Conclusion

If we summarize what we have looked at in this chapter, we can come to the conclusion that the Greek word "proskuneo" has very nearly the same meaning as the Hebrew word "hishtachavah" has in the Tanach (OT) and it is used in a similar way in the Greek translations of the Apostolic Writings (NT). This means that the word can mean worship of the Eternal, both as sacrificial ministry and as an expression of great reverence by bowing down before Him in fear and trembling, acknowledging His exalted position over everything created. The word can, therefore, also entail the outward evidence of an inner respect for the servants that the Eternal sends out to represent Him. However, it could also be a strong sign of reverence before other people in high positions.

When Avraham, Lot, Bilam, and Yehoshua fell down to the ground before angels, it did not mean that they worshiped these angels. However, when Yochanan fell down before the feet of the angel on Patmos, he was told to rise up because he had gone too far. What was the difference in these scenarios? The external act was exactly the same. The difference lay in the motive of the heart. It is therefore the heart that determines whether the act is true reverence or false worship before a servant of the Eternal.

When Yosef's brothers bowed to the ground before him, when David bowed to the ground before King Shaul and his son Yonatan, and when the people bowed to the ground before King David, it was not a matter of worship of these people or of acknowledging them as gods. Neither did the debtor worship the lender in Matthew 18, nor did the liars worship the leaders of the assembly in Revelations 3. However, when Cornelius fell down before Kefa he was told to stand up because he had gone too far. What was the difference between the one act and the other? The outward acts were exactly the same. The difference lay in the motives of their hearts. Outwardly it may look like worship, but it is still the heart which determines in what position one puts the person being honored when falling down before him.

Was Yeshua worshiped by the wise men from Babylon, the man born blind who was healed, the demon possessed man, or the disciples in the boat? Did they worship him after the resurrection and will the angels worship him when he once again appears in the world?

I leave it to the reader to determine whether it is so.

The fact remains, however, that from the Scriptures, one cannot prove that Yeshua received the same level of worship as the Father, not even in the clearest revelation that we have of heavenly ministry.

Arguments founded on texts saying that Yeshua was worshiped, and therefore he must be the Eternal, fail at a closer study of the Scriptures.

*To be continued.*

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[1] Strong G4352 προσκυνέω proskuneō, pros-koo-neh'-o, From G4314 and probably a derivative of G2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, that is, (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore): - worship.

[2] 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47

[3] The Greek word "tupos", which is used in Romans 5:14b and is translated as "foreshadow", can also be understood as "likeness", (Acts 7:43; John 20:25 "print"). Two different translations that I have of the Aramaic text, both of the Spanish and the English, say that Adam was the likeness of the one who was to come.

[4] Certain translations end this verse with "who came down from heaven" which is an erroneous translation. It should say, "who is in heaven". The Son of Man was in the bosom of the Father as well while he walked on the earth, as it is also written in John 1:18, "the one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (HNV). The oldest Greek manuscripts of John 1:18 say, "only begotten God", but the yet older Syrian text says "Son" which agrees better with the rest of John's gospel and the doctrine of the whole Scriptures. This is evidently one of several texts that have been manipulated.

[5] This is the way the word is translated in the Septuagint. In many translations the word "elohim" has been translated "gods."

[6] The Greek translation of Hebrews follows the Septuagint.

[7] Strong G4098 *πίπτω, πέτω* pīptō petō, *pip'-to, pet'-o*. The first is a reduplicated and contracted form of the second (which occurs only as an alternate in certain tenses); probably akin to G4072 through the idea of *alighting*; to *fall* (literally or figuratively): - fail, fall (down), light on.

[8] Strong H5307 *נָפַל*, *naw-fal'*. A primitive root; to *fall*, in a great variety of applications (intransitively or causatively, literally or figuratively): - be accepted, cast (down, self, [lots], out), cease, die, divide (by lot), (let) fail, (cause to, let, make, ready to) fall (away, down, -en, -ing), fell (-ing), fugitive, have [inheritance], inferior, be judged [by mistake for H6419], lay (along), (cause to) lie down, light (down), be (X hast) lost, lying, overthrow, overwhelm, perish, present (-ed, -ing), (make to) rot, slay, smite out, X surely, throw down.

[9] Strong H3372 *יָרֵא*, *yaw-ray'*. A primitive root; to *fear*; morally to *revere*; causatively to *frighten*: - affright, be (make) afraid, dread (-ful), (put in) fear (-ful, -fully, -ing). (be had in) reverence (-end), X see, terrible (act, -ness, thing).

[10] Papias (150-170), Ireneus (170), Origen (c:a 210), Eusebius (c:a 315), Epiphanius (370), Jerome (382) and Ishodad (850).