

## ויגש *Vayigash* And He Approached

[Genesis 44.18](#)—47.27 / [Ezekiel 37.15](#)—28 [Matthew 23](#)—25

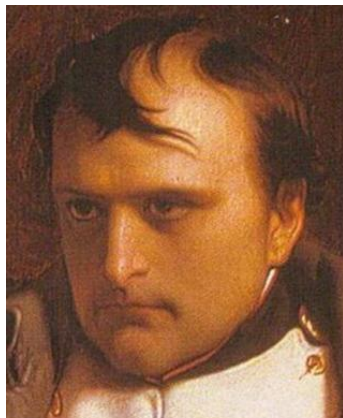
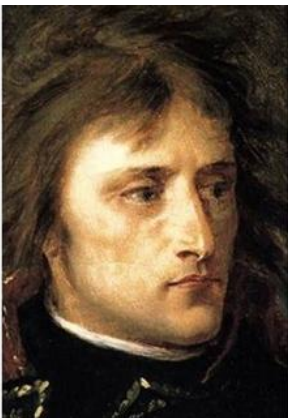
**Hidden Savior** There are many parallels between יוסף *Yosef* Joseph, the powerful ruler unrecognized by his brother Jews, and ישוע *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation, the powerful Ruler unrecognized by His brothers. Part of the reason for the difficulty in recognition is that we Gentiles have made an image of ישוע according to our own imagination.



**Jewish Expectations vs. Christian Presentation** For the last 2,000 years, Jews and Christians have disagreed about Messiah. Jewish expectations were summed up by Moses Maimonides, also known as Rambam, about 1,000 AD. In the *Mishnah Torah*, also known as the *Yad HaChazakah*, in the section of Laws and Kings, he tells how to recognize either the true Messiah or a fraud. Some of his expectations of Messiah are:

- Of the lineage of David (necessarily a descendant of Judah)
- Put Jews back under the rule of David's descendants
- Rebuild the Temple
- Return Jews from the Diaspora to ישראל *Yisra'el* Israel
- Reestablish תורה *Torah* with the importance it had in the Temple periods
- Renew the sacrifices in the Temple
- Renew the Shemita Year observance concerning loans, agriculture, etc.

Rambam said that sure signs of Messiah are fighting God's wars, rebuilding the Temple, and bringing Jews back to ישראל. Meanwhile, many Christians present their Jesus as a descendant of David, but otherwise He has replaced Jews with Christians and doesn't care about Temple, sacrifices, or תורה. Far from a תורה-observant Jewish rabbi with beard, prayer shawl, and phylactery, Gentiles depict Him as a male model or a bishop of the Catholic Church. To illustrate, can you tell which painting one is Napoleon?



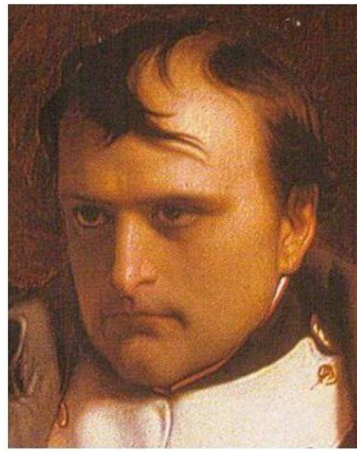
**In Their Own Images** All four are paintings of Napoleon are by four different artists. Here the paintings are put side by side with self-portraits of each artist:



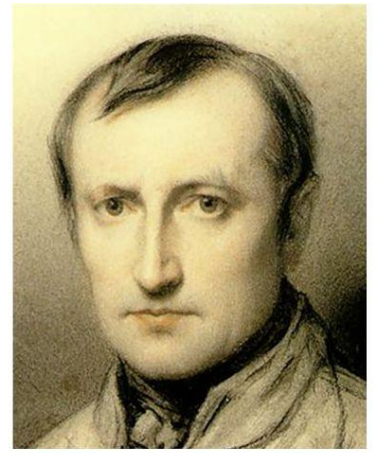
Napoleon by Gros



Gros by Gros



Napoleon by Delaroche



Delaroche by Delaroche



Napoleon by Appiani



Appiani by Appiani



Napoleon by Ingres

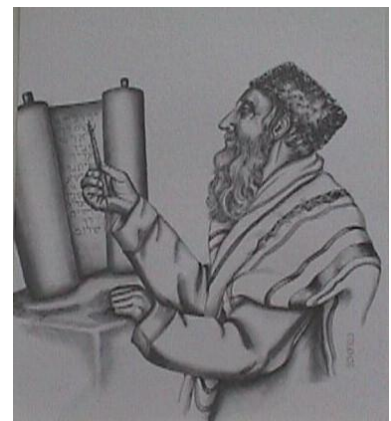


Ingres by Ingres

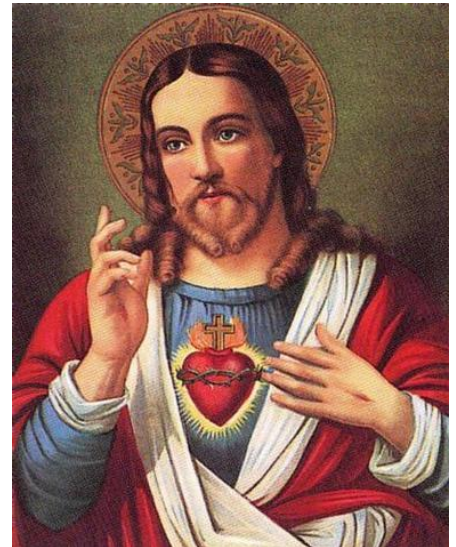
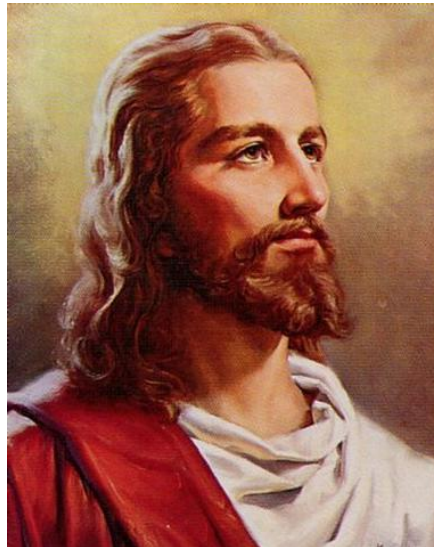


As you can see, each artist put himself into his painting of Napoleon. This is a human tendency and we do the same with **ישוע**.

Here are two ideas of what **ישוע** might have looked like. A Jewish Rabbi with a prayer shawl, phylactery, and **תורה** scroll. Both are more realistic than...



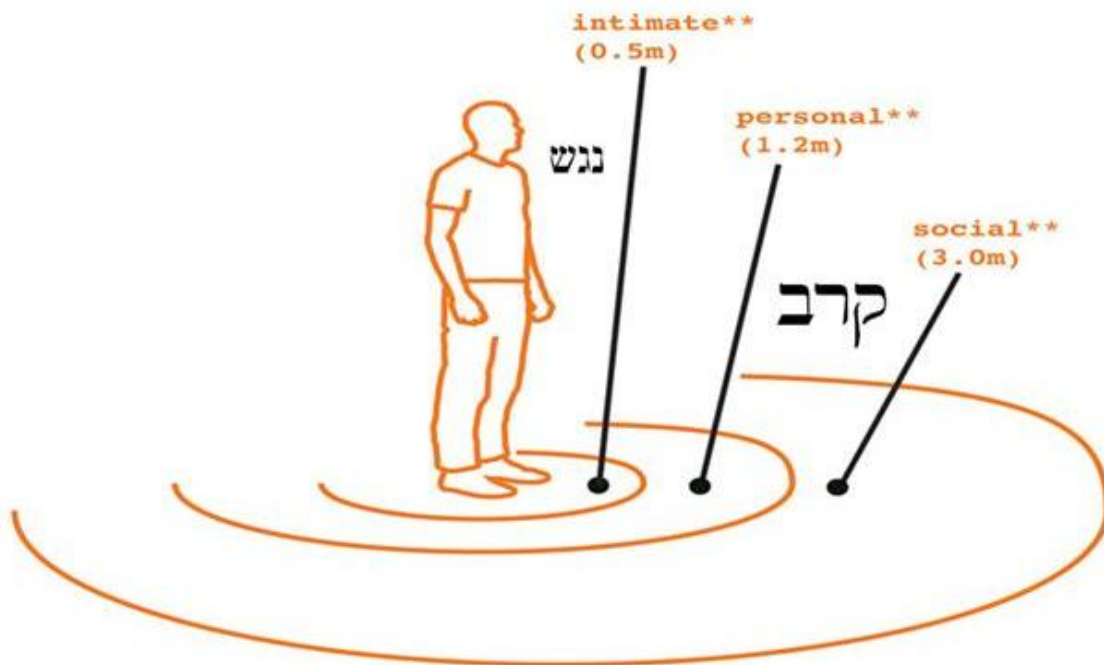




**A Greek Jesus?** These visions of ישוע are what we are used to seeing. The statue in the upper right is also a graven image, violating [Exodus 20.3](#). Our tendency is to say, “No! No! My Jesus isn’t Jewish! And He has thrown out the Torah!” And so we continue to make ישוע into our own image, the essence of idolatry.

ישוע is the King of ישראל. But Jews don’t recognize Him as that because a Gentile cannot be king. [Deuteronomy 17.15](#) says that a king of ישראל must be a Jew and not a stranger. Verses 18-19 say that the king must write his own copy of the תורה, read it every day, and keep the commandments. Christians tell Jews that Jesus has done away with the תורה. Muslims believe that when Jesus comes back, He will convert all Jews and Christians to Islam. Christians believe that when Jesus comes back, all Jews and Muslims will convert to Christianity or perish. Either way, Jews lose—no wonder Jews don’t like ישוע!

**Come Near** The last תורה portion ended with the silver cup belonging to יוסף being found in Benjamin's sack and the brothers getting dragged back to stand before יוסף. In his final test, יוסף releases all but Benjamin, the one he knows his father Jacob can't live without, to see if there has been a change in his brothers' hearts. As you read this portion, think of the parallels between יוסף, hidden from his brothers, and ישוע, hidden from his brothers. This portion begins in [Genesis 44.18](#) with Judah נגש *nagash* coming near/approaching יוסף. There's another word, as seen in [Leviticus 9.5](#) and elsewhere, translated similarly when the people קרב *qarav* come near to יהוה *YHVH* the LORD. But the two words have a different meaning:



Here you see קרב is close, in the social/personal space, but נגש is in the intimate space. When Judah נגש to יוסף, it's likely the guards brace themselves, thinking יוסף might be threatened, and יוסף probably needs to give his permission for Judah to get this close. Here are a few other times when people נגש:

- Abraham נגש to יהוה to plead for the righteous in Sodom, [Genesis 18.23](#)
- Sodomites נגש to Lot to press him to give up his guests, [Genesis 19.9](#)
- Isaac asks Jacob to נגש to make sure he is Esau for the blessing, [Genesis 27.21](#)
- Jacob, his wives, and handmaidens all bow as they נגש angry Esau, [Genesis 33.3](#)
- יוסף tells his brothers to נגש before he reveals himself to them, [Genesis 45.4](#)

Our main concern in this life is to נגש to God.

**Offer of Substitution** There are many parallels between **יוסף** and **ישוע**, but now Judah is like **ישוע**. He offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin and makes a heartfelt appeal on Jacob's behalf, whose life is tied up with Benjamin's. About 2,000 years later, **ישוע** will offer Himself as a substitution when He dies for us. Not long after that, Saul (Apostle Paul) of the tribe of Benjamin could wish that he would be accursed so that his brother Jews would be saved, [Romans 9.3](#). So Judah pleads for Benjamin, and then 2,000 years later Benjamin, who never rejects Judah, but remains together with him after the division of the kingdom as the two southern tribes, pleads for Judah.

Will we, like Paul of the tribe of Benjamin, plead with God to save our brother Jews? **ישוע** tore down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile. Judah doesn't know that **יוסף** is his brother. Do today's Benjamins (believers) know that today's Judahs (Jews) and **ישוע** are brothers?

**Brotherly Love** Judah says to **יוסף**, "Let the lad go up with his brothers," [Genesis 44.33](#). Yet Benjamin is not quite a lad. **יוסף** himself is about 39. He was sold into slavery at 17, spent about one year in Potiphar's service, then prison, lived through seven years of plenty, and now is in the second year of famine. So it's been possibly 22 years since his betrayal. That makes Benjamin at least 22 years old. **ישוע** says in [John 15.13](#) that the greatest love is to lay down one's life for his friends. Judah himself has lost two sons, [Genesis 38](#), so he knows the pain Jacob will experience by losing both sons from his beloved Rachel, **יוסף** and Benjamin. Judah bears the guilt for the first loss, since it was his idea to sell **יוסף**, [Genesis 37.26-27](#), and he would bear responsibility for the second loss, since he promised to return Benjamin to Jacob. Judah goes right up to the second-most powerful man in Egypt, not knowing it is his brother, thinking he could die for his arrogance, just as Queen Esther will fear she could die for approaching her king, [Esther 4.10-11](#). Even if **יוסף** doesn't put Judah to death, Judah is asking that his life be substituted for Benjamin's, who is a thief as far as he knows, whatever that may mean. Judah and Esther are types of **ישוע**, who offer to lay down their lives for their brothers. Judah repents of his sin and seeks to make restitution. He has proven his change of heart to a wondering **יוסף**. Now **יוסף**, who suffered at Judah's hand, is free to reveal his identity.





“**I Am Your Brother!**” [Genesis 45](#) opens with יוסף sending out his Egyptian servants so that he can reveal himself to his brothers. When he weeps, the Egyptians, even Pharaoh’s house, hear. יוסף is a type of שוע and the Egyptians are Gentiles. When שוע reveals Himself to His brother Jews, the rest of us will hear about it. If we want to understand what’s happening, we need to ask God for ears that hear and eyes that see, [Proverbs 20.12](#).

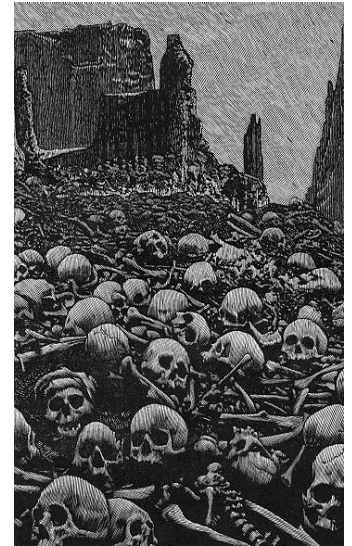
Jewish tradition says that יוסף reveals himself on the day that would become Yom Kippur. [Leviticus 16.17](#) says that on this Day of Atonement, there can be no other man in the tabernacle when the priest goes in to make atonement for ישראל. יוסף sends out the Egyptians/Gentiles when he reveals himself and explains how God sent him ahead to “make atonement” for his brothers in famine. In [Ezekiel 20.35](#), God says to ישראל that He will plead with them פנים אל-פנים *panim al-panim* face to face. This is an idiom for the Day of Atonement, the one day when the high priest is in the presence of God. Paul uses the term in [1 Corinthians 13.9-12](#), referring to seeing God clearly. יוסף tells his brothers in [Genesis 45.4](#) to נגש so he can reveal himself פנים אל-פנים.



**Seeing Clearly** For years, the brothers had no idea that יוסף was the second-most-powerful man in Egypt. The [Chumash](#) says that when the brothers hear, “I am יוסף,” they instantly understand the last 22 years. Perhaps because of their shock, יוסף says again, “I am יוסף.” His concerns about his father may have been one last test, to make sure that Jacob wasn’t in fact dead, and Judah was using sympathy for a deceased Jacob to try to free Benjamin. One day, the Jews will see שוע clearly and instantly understand the last 2,000 years. As God sends יוסף to Egypt not to condemn ישראל but to save them from the imminent famine, so [John 3.17](#) says that God sends His Son into the world not to condemn, but to save. The grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness we associate with God of the New Testament is true of God of the Old Testament. Here the Gospel is told in the story of יוסף and his brothers.

**Life from the Dead** Paul says in [Romans 11.15](#) that if the rejection of the Jews brings reconciliation to the world, then their acceptance will be life from the dead. Is it time for Gentiles to return the favor of salvation to **ישראל**? In [Genesis 45.27-28](#), Jacob hears that **יוסף** is alive, sees the wagons and supplies and food which prove the power of **יוסף** in time of famine, and his spirit is revived. “Then **ישראל** said...” Jacob’s name, Heel Grabber/Deceiver, was changed to **ישראל** Prince of God/Wrestles with God after he wrestles all night with the Angel. Since then, the name Jacob tends to refer to his earthly nature and the name **ישראל** to his spiritual nature.

When Jacob hears his son **יוסף** is alive, he revives and is called **ישראל** again. When today’s Jews hear that **ישוע** is alive and He is their Brother, they too will be revived. In [Genesis 42.36-38](#), Jacob feels that he is on the verge of death, and may well die if he loses Benjamin as well as **יוסף**. But now he is revived. In [Ezekiel 37.1-10](#), the prophecy of the valley of dry bones, God promises to revive **ישראל** after deportation. The first deportation to Babylon and the first return has already been fulfilled. Ezekiel’s prophecy includes a much greater deportation, one that has lasted nearly 2,000 years, and a much greater return. In verses 11-14, God promises Ezekiel that even though **ישראל** feels like they’re dead, they will in fact come out of their graves.



- **Saved:** “All **ישראל** will be *saved*,” [Romans 11.26](#)
- **Delivered:** “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of **יהוה** shall be *delivered*: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as **יהוה** hath said, and in the remnant whom **יהוה** shall call,” [Joel 2.32](#).
- **Holy:** “In that day shall the **צמח** *tsemach* sprout/growth/Branch of **יהוה** (**ישוע**) be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth [shall be] excellent and comely for them that are escaped of **ישראל**. And it shall come to pass, [that he that is] left in Zion, and [he that] remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called *holy*, [even] every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem,” [Isaiah 4.2-3](#)
- **Blameless:** “In those days...saith **יהוה**, *the iniquity of ישראל shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found;* for I will pardon them whom I leave as a remnant,” [Jeremiah 50.20](#)

“‘I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord **ישוע**,” [Revelation 22.20](#). In the meantime, our goal, like the lyrics from *Day by Day*, should be, “Day by day, Day by day, Oh Dear Lord, Three things I pray, To see thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly, Follow thee more nearly, Day by day.”

**Whose Messiah?** In [Ezekiel 37.16-21](#), God tells Ezekiel to take two sticks, to write Judah on one and **יוסף** on the other, representing all of **ישראל**, the ten scattered northern tribes and the two deported southern tribes, join the two sticks in his hand, and they will become one stick. God means that He promises to reunite all of **ישראל**.

Then verses 25-28 quote God as saying:

- **ישראל** shall dwell in the Land I have given **Jacob** My servant
- **They** shall live there, and **their** children for ever
- My servant David shall be **their** prince for ever
- I will make a covenant of peace with **them**
- It shall be an everlasting covenant with **them**
- I will place **them**
- I will multiply **them**
- I will set My sanctuary in the midst of **them** for evermore
- My tabernacle shall be with **them**
- I will be **their** God
- **They** shall be My people
- The heathen shall know that I יהוה do sanctify **ישראל**
- My sanctuary shall be in the midst of **them** for evermore



[Isaiah 11](#) opens with the arrival of the **נצר netser** sprout/shoot/Branch of Jesse. The next several verses describe the Messiah. In the New Testament, **ישוע** describes Himself as the Vine and His followers the branches that bear fruit. He comes from **נצרת Netsret** Nazareth and He is separate, holy, like a **נזיר Naziyr** Nazarite. [Verses 10-16](#) describe how the **גוים goyim** nations will seek this Messiah. Then God will gather all of **ישראל** from the four corners of the earth. Ephraim (**יוסף**) and Judah will be at peace.

**ישוע** is the Messiah of **ישראל**. The Church doesn't replace **ישראל**, we get to join them. And the sooner we stop making **ישוע** a Gentile, the sooner **ישראל** will recognize that **ישוע**, like **יוסף**, is their Brother.



Glossary, in order of appearance:

ויגש	<i>vayigash</i>	and he approached
יוסף	<i>Yosef</i>	Joseph
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
תורה	<i>Torah</i>	Law/Instruction
נגש	<i>nagash</i>	come near/approach (intimate space)
קרב	<i>qarav</i>	come near (personal space)
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD/God's holy Name
פנים אל-פנים	<i>panim al-panim</i>	face to face
נצר	<i>netser</i>	sprout/shoot/Branch of Jesse
נצרת	<i>Netsret</i>	Nazareth
נזיר	<i>Nazyr</i>	Nazarite
גוים	<i>goyim</i>	nations