

Parashat Chol HaMo'ed Pesach

פרשת כל המועד פסח

Shabbat Nisan 19, 5771, April 23, 2011

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5

What does the pagan festival of Easter have to do with the Saving Power of His Blood?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 33:12-34:26

הפטרה: Ezekiel 37:1-14

הברית: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22,

החדשה

10 *Triennial cycle: Read Parashat Ki Tisa*

In this week's reading in preparation for HaMo'ed Pesach (Passover) we read from *Shemot / Exodus 32:12-34:26*. This section begins with a conversation between Moshe and HaShem, Moshe pleaded for mercy for the Children of Yisrael and then asks to see God's face. The Lord replies by commanding Moshe to prepare two stone tablets like the previous ones he destroyed and then to obey His mitzvot (commands). Within the list of commands, we find the command to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Pesach (Passover) holiday. While reading through the portion of scripture on the Pesach (*Shemot / Exodus 34:18-22*) it is interesting to read "*u'peter khamor tifdeh vesh v'im lo tifdev va'arafto ...*" meaning "*You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring of a donkey and if you do not redeem it then you shall break its neck.*" Have you ever wondered what is the meaning of this command for the requirement to redeem the first born of a donkey and if this is not done its neck is to be broken?

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שמות 34:18-22

18 אֶת־חַג הַמִּצּוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת אֲשֶׁר
צִוִּיתֶךָ לְמוֹעֵד חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב בִּי בְחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב יֵצֵאת
19 מִמִּצְרָיִם: כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לִי וְכָל־מִקְנֶיךָ תִּזְכֹּר פֶּטֶר
20 שׂוֹר וְשֵׂה: וּפֶטֶר חֲמֹר תִּפְדֶּה בְשֵׂה וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה
וְעִרְפֹתוֹ כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּנֵיךָ תִפְדֶּה וְלֹא־יֵרָאוּ פָנַי רִיקִים:
21 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשְׁבֹּת בְּחֹדֶשׁ
22 וּבִקְצֵיר תִּשְׁבֹּת: וְחַג שִׁבְעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ בְּכוֹרֵי קִצִּיר
23 חֲמִים וְחַג הָאֶסִּיף תְּקַיֶּפֶת הַשָּׁנָה: שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים

In the Tanach (OT), there are two words that are used to describe redemption, (i) פָּדָה (padah) and (ii) גָּאֵל (goel). The first word "padah" has

Shemot / Exodus 34:18-22
34:18 'You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt. 34:19 'The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep. 34:20 'You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring from a donkey; and if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None shall appear before Me empty-handed. 34:21 'You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. 34:22 'You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. (NASB)

30 the meaning ransom or redeemed and is also used in reference as to purchase
 land. The use of this Hebrew word refers to the payment of a price or fee for the
 condition of something or someone such as in the payment for one in slavery or
 35 the death or destruction of something or someone. This word has the emphasis of
 payment of a price whether by the use of silver or gold or in this instance in our
 scripture verse (*Shemot / Exodus 34:20*) payment with one life for another. The
 second word used in the Tanach that is used for redemption is גֹּאֵל “goel.” Goel
 has the meaning redeem or to act as a kinsman. The use of this Hebrew word is
 found in the book of Ruth where Boaz acted as the kinsman redeemer to do the
 40 part of next of kin by bringing in the widow and to raise up children by the widow
 so the inheritance would not be lost out of the tribe of Yisrael (*Ruth 3:13*). Goel
 is also used in reference to redeem from bondage in *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:48-49*,
 and in redeeming a field in *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:26, 33*. Goel is used in the
 phrase “goel hadam” translated as the “avenger of blood” or “redeemer of blood”
 45 in *Bamidbar / Numbers 35:19, 21, 24, 25, and 27*. Goel is also used to redeem as
 by payment of value assessed of the consecrated things, by the owner, see *Vayikra*
/ Leviticus 27:13, 15, 19, 20, 31, and redeem with God as the subject implying
 personal relationship where this usage is chiefly used in poetic Hebrew literature
 (see *Lamentations 3:58*).

The first use of the word “goel” is found in *Bereshit / Genesis 48:15*

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15 הַבְּכוֹרִי: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכִנוּ
 אִבְתִּי לְפָנָיו אֲבָרְכֶם וַיִּצְחַק הָאֱלֹהִים הָרַעַה אֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי
 16 עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: הַמַּלְאָךְ הַנֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכַּלְדָּע יְבָרֶךְ
 אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וַיִּקְרָא בָהֶם שְׁמֵי וְשֵׁם אִבְתִּי אֲבָרְכֶם
 17 וַיִּצְחַק וַיִּדְנוּ לָרֶב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ: וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף כִּי־יֹשִׁיט

The emphasis here is not so much on payment of a price than on the fact that it
 was the Angel of the Lord who protected Yaakov (Jacob) through his various
 55 travels. The second use of the word “goel” is found is in *Shemot / Exodus 6:6*

6 אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מֵעַבְדֵי אֲתֶם וְאֶזְכַּר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי לָכֵן
 אֶמַּר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת
 7 סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֵי אֲתֶם וְנֹאֵלְתִי אֶתְכֶם
 בְּזֵרוּעַ נְמוּיָה וּבְשַׁפְטִים נְדָלִים: וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם

60 Here we have the emphasis on the payment by a price. Goel is used as an
 expression that expands on the phrase “I will rescue/deliver you from bondage”
 where the word for “rescue” is written in the Hiphil verbal form meaning to take
 away, to deliver from enemies or trouble. How is the rescue performed? It is
 performed through the payment of a price by the goel, the redeemer. The

Bereshit / Genesis 48:15-16

48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said, ‘The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 48:16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’ (NASB)

Shemot / Exodus 6:6

6:6 ‘Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. (NASB)

65 payment of the price is pictured in the exodus event by taking the lamb without spot or blemish as a sacrifice and spreading the blood of the lamb upon the door posts of the house. The redemption that is brought by the blood of the lamb is a foreshadowing of the work of the Messiah hundreds of years later.

70 In the Tanach, God calls people who are stubborn and rebellious “*stiff necked*.” It is interesting that the donkey / ass (“chamor” in Hebrew) in biblical typology is a picture of a stubborn and thick headed person. According to *Yeshaya / Isaiah 1:3* the “donkey” was smarter than Yisrael. In addition to this, in *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:21-34* in Parashat Chukat, the donkey was used by the Lord to speak to the prophet Bilam (בלעם). Now, with this information, note the construction of the Hebrew sentence in our text for this week, *Shemot / Exodus 13:13* “*But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem {it,} then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.*” (NASB) I use the colors red and blue to distinguish between the two clauses. It appears from the text that there is a parallel being drawn here between the redemption of the donkey and the first born of every man among your sons.

שמות 34:18-22

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23 חֲטָיִם וְחַג הָאֶסִּיף תִּקְוֹפֶת הַשָּׁנָה: שְׁלֹשׁ פַּעַמִּים

85 If we consider this a parallelism within verse *34:20*, then the redemption of the first offspring of the donkey is an allegory that is representative of the stubborn person. If a person is stubborn, his/her neck (the stiff neck) must be broken. The essence of what is being taught here is that either the person gets saved by the blood of the lamb or their stubbornness damns them to everlasting fire (Hell). In the context of the Exodus event, the result of this stubbornness was to be put to death without the blood of the lamb. Is your neck stiff or stubborn before God? Are you unwilling to hear of His redemption and accept His redeemer Yeshua the Messiah?

90 Based upon the Tanach the characteristics of the redeemer was that he needed to be a blood relative of the one being redeemed. The redeemer needed to be willing to redeem (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 25:7-10*). The redeemer must be capable of redeeming (he must have the financial ability to do so). The redeemer, the goel, must be free himself from the calamity from which he must free his kinsman and the redeemer must act to pay the redemption price. All of these things are found within the pages of the scriptures, Yeshua (Jesus) was our blood

100 relative. Yeshua voluntarily laid down his own life to pay the price for our sins
(*Philippians 2:5-8*). Yeshua was the only one who could pay the price for our
redemption because he was not touched or enslaved to sin and thus he was able to
pay the redemption price. This is exactly what Yeshua did, as the Lamb of God;
105 his blood redeems us before God and sets us free. Most importantly, we must
acknowledge our need for a redeemer; our stiff necks need to be broken before we
can be saved by the blood of the lamb. All of these things, redemption, salvation,
forgiveness of sins, God's saving power are found in the festival of Pesach
(Passover). How sad it is today that in Christianity Easter has been substituted for
110 Passover. Can you see how much is lost by substituting a pagan holiday whose
origins are found in the fertility religions of the ancient nations to celebrate the
resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus)?

In the Tanach (OT), God is presented as the redeemer of Yisrael
(examples are found in the Torah, *Yeshaya / Isaiah 40-66*, etc). Throughout the
Tanach, the antithesis of God's ways is found in the pagan religions of the
115 nations. The Lord declared in *Yeshaya / Isaiah 41:14* that our redeemer is the
Holy One of Yisrael. Yeshua is the Holy One of Yisrael. Redemption was
completely paid by God in the Pesach (Passover) event by the blood of the lamb.
It is by Yeshua's blood we are redeemed and set free from the bondage of sin.
This is the picture of New Testament redemption. The more we understand about
120 Pesach (Passover), the more we appreciate Yeshua (Jesus). If you do not
understand Pesach, you have a hard time really understanding what Yeshua
(Jesus) did. As we obey, observe, and celebrate the Pesach festival we are
declaring our faith, our lives, and our belief in God's Word in the Power of His
Blood and His Redemption. Truly, redemption is found in Yeshua, our Savior,
125 King, and Messiah ... Halleluiah Praise the Lord!

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130 So tell me, "What does the pagan festival of Easter have to do with the saving
power of His blood?"

What to pray: *Ask the Lord to be your redeemer. Ask God to help you to
understand who Yeshua is as your redeemer and to believe in His redemptive
power.*

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Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever