

Passover, Rabbinic thought, and the Messiah

This weeks reading is for *Pesach / Passover (Shemot / Exodus 33:12-34:26)* and is taken from Parashat Ki Tisa (*Exodus 30:11-34:35*). In the scriptures we read that Joshua would not depart from the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting, אהל מועד) and Moshe speaks to the Lord God requesting that His presence come with the Children of Israel (*33:12-17*). Moshe asks to see God's Glory (*33:18*) and the Lord tells Moshe that he cannot see His face or he would die (*33:20*). The Lord requests that Moshe come to the mountain in the morning, and then He will show Moshe His glory where He declares that the Lord God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, and having grace forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin for thousands (*34:6-7*). Essentially, the Lord tells Moshe that he cannot see His face, but he can remain in His shadow when He passes by. The Scriptures say in *Shemot / Exodus 34:27 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'* (NASB) The Lord has revealed to us His glory and he has made a covenant with us in His son, a covenant cut in the blood of the Messiah Yeshua. While studying these things, it is interesting that the man responsible for constructing the Tabernacle, his name means "in the shadow of God" (Bezalel). When studying the Torah, there are many "types and shadows" of future things, of the Messiah, and of the heavenly tabernacle, etc. Did you know that found within the rabbinic commentary, there are many parallels within rabbinic thought that speak of "types and shadows" and the Messiah?

ספר ויקרא פרק לה

ל ויאמר משה אל-בני ישראל ראו קרא יהוה בשם בצלאל בן-אורי בן-חור למטה יהודה: לא וימלא אתו רוח אלהים בכחמה בתבונה ויבדעת ובכל-מלאכה: לב ולחשב מחשבת לעשות בזהב ובכסף ובנחשת: לג ובחרשת אבן למלאות ובחרשת עץ לעשות בכל-מלאכת מחשבת: לד ולהורות נתן בלבם הוא ואהליאב בן-אחיסמך למטה-דן: לה מלא אתם חכמת-לב לעשות כל-מלאכת חרש | וחשב ורקם בתכלת ובארגמן ובתולעת השני ובשש וארג עשי כל-מלאכה וחשבי מחשבת:

Vayikra / Leviticus 35:30-35

35:30 Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, 'See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 35:31 'And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; 35:32 to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, 35:33 and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. 35:34 'He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. 35:35 'He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs. (NASB)

The name "Bezalel" (בצלאל) appears to be the composition of two Hebrew words "in the shadow" (בצל) of "God" (אל). According to the Scriptures, in the ge-

neological lists, Bezalel is described as the son of Uri (*Shemot / Exodus 31:1*), the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah (*1 Chronicles 2:18-20, 2:50*). The Scriptures describe him as being a highly gifted workman, showing great skill and originality in engraving precious metals and stones and in wood-carving. He was also a master-workman, having many apprentices under him whom he instructed in the arts (see *Shemot / Exodus 35:30-35*). According to the narrative in the book of Exodus, he was called and empowered by the Spirit of God to direct the construction of the tent of meeting and its sacred furniture. His tasks also included the construction of the priestly garments and the oil of incense for the services. According to Midrash Rabba Exodus, Parashat Ki Tisa (מדרש רבה שמות), the Rabbis pick up on this gifted man and speak extensively on who he was and what it meant when God said *“I have called by name Bezalel.”* Midrash Tehillim Exodus, Parsha 40, Part 3 says the following:

Midrash Rabbah Exodus, Parsha 40, Part 3

“Another explanation of See, I have called by name Bezalel. Thus it is written, Whatsoever comes into being, the name thereof was given long ago (Ecclesiastes 6:10). The Holy One blessed be He, said, I have already named him whom I have appointed from the very first (beginning?) to construct the Tabernacle.” ג ד"א ראה קראתי בשם) בצלאל, ה"ד (קהלת ז) מה שהיה כבר נקרא שמו אמר הקב"ה מי שהיה תקנתיו מראש שיעשה המשכן כבר קראתי לו שם

It is interesting that the midrash opens on Bezalel being called out by God and states *מה שהיה כבר נקרא שמו אמר הקב"ה מי שהתקנתיו מראש שיעשה המשכן כבר קראתי לו שם* *“whoever exists the Lord said I have called him by his name, I have installed/appointed from the head (from the first or beginning) so that he will make/build my tabernacle, I have already called him by name.”* The Lord had a plan for how his Tabernacle would be constructed and this was from the beginning, or from before the creation, indicated by the midrash that all who exist are called by name by God. The midrash asks *“What is the meaning of ‘And it is foreknown what man is’ (Ecclesiastes 6:10)?”* What is the significance of the Lord having *“the foreknowledge of?”* Note what the Apostle Paul said to the Ephesians in *Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 1:5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (NIV)* Note how Paul says the Lord had plans from the beginning (*2 Timothy 1:9*) and He chose us from before creation (*Ephesians 1:4*), a concept that was accepted in rabbinic thought. It is interesting to consider based on the words from the Scriptures and the midrash, that the Lord has prepared for His people a way of living and worshiping Him beforehand so that they could walk in His ways which is pleasing to Him. Note also how the Scriptures speak of Yeshua the Messiah, He was slain from the foundation of the world. This *“from the foundation of the world”* or *“from the beginning”* are Hebraic ways of saying God has a plan and He has prepared something before hand. This illustrates God’s sovereignty,

power, and authority over all. This is written frequently in the apostolic Writings (see *Matthew 13:35, Luke 11:50, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 4:3, Hebrews 9:26, 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8*).

Midrash Rabbah Exodus, Parsha 40, Part 4 continues discussing the name of Bezalel in the following way:

Midrash Rabbah Exodus, Parsha 40, Part 4

“Another explanation of See, I have called by name Bezalel. He was one of seven men who were called by various names. Some were called four names, like Elijah; Bezalel and Joshua were called four names, Moshe seven, Mordecai two, Daniel five, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah four.” (ד"א ראה קראתי בשם, זה אחד משבעה בני אדם) שנקראו להם שמות, יש שנקראו לו ארבעה זה אליהו, בצלאל ו', ויהושע ו', ומשה ז', מרדכי ב', דניאל ה', חנניה מישאל ועזריה ד')

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“... Bezalel was the name applied to him by his people, but God called him five endearing names on account of his work for the Tabernacle. Reaiah -- because God pointed him out to Moshe and all the Israelites, saying, From the creation have I singled him out to construct the tabernacle. Shobal -- because he constructed a dovecote (house) for God, that is the Tabernacle, which stood high like a dovecote (house); for R. Judah b. Simon said, The Lord had the Tabernacle put up like a dovecote (house). Jahath -- because he imposed His fear of God upon Israel; and Ahumai -- because he welded (ihah) Israel and God together, making them all brothers (ahin) to God. Another explanation of Ahumai is, because he placed the fear of God (emah) over Israel. He was called Lhad because he gave glory (hod) and splendor to Israel, for the Tabernacle was their glory...” (בצלאל מה שקרא לו)

אומתו שלו והקב"ה קרא לו חמשה שמות של חבה על שם המשכן, ראייה, שהראהו הקב"ה למשה ולכל ישראל ואמר להם מן בראשית התקנתיו לעשות המשכן, ושובל שהעמיד שובך לאלהים זה המשכן שהיה עומד כשובך, א"ר יהודה ב"ר סימון העמיד הקב"ה משכן כשובך, יחת שנתן חתיתו על ישראל, אחומי שאיחה את ישראל להקדוש ברוך הוא ועשאן כאחים למקום, ד"א אחומי שנתן אימתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא על יש"ר (ראל, להד שנתן הוד והדר על ישראל שהיה המשכן הדרן)

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“... No tribe was greater than Judah and non more lowly than Dan, which descended from one of the maidservants, and of whom it says, And the sons of Dan, Hushim (Bereshit / Genesis 46:23).” (ואין לך) ירוד משבט דן שהיה מן הלחינות ומה כתיב בו (בראשית מו) ובני דן (חושים)

To summarize the rabbis comment on Bezalel, he was from the Tribe of Judah. He was known by the people by one name (Bezalel) but God had given him five other names each which represent the work that he had performed in constructing the Tabernacle, (i) Reaiah (רֵאִיָּה) - God had known him from the beginning of time, (ii) Shobal (שׁוֹבַל) - because he constructed a house (Tabernacle), (iii) Jahath (יָחַת) - because he imposed His fear of God upon Israel, (iv) Ahumai (אֲחֻמַּי) - he brought Israel and God together, making them all brothers to God, and (v) Lhad (לְהָד) - He placed the glory of God upon His people Israel. Essentially, the one who was chosen to construct the Tabernacle, was known by God from since the foundation of the world, he will impose the fear of God upon His people Israel, he will bring Israel, the people, and God together and make them brothers to our Father in heaven, and he will place the glory of God upon his people. Is this not an amazing picture of the one God has chosen to draw men to Himself Yeshua the Messiah? The preeminence, preexistence, foreknowledge of the Messiah was generally understood by the Hebraic mind to be something God has and was going to accomplish. According to the Pesikta Rabbati (פְּסִיקְתָּא רַבְתִּי), an excerpt taken from the book *“Everyman’s Talmud”* has the following to say regarding the Messiah:

“Seven things were created before the world was created: Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden (i.e. Paradise), Gehinnom, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah’ (Pes. 54a). In a later work there is the observation: From the beginning of the creation of the world king Messiah was born, for he entered the mind (of God) before even the world was created.” (Pesikta Rab. 152b). (EVERYMAN’S TALMUD, Cohen, A., Everyman’s Talmud. New York: Schocken Books, 1949, p. 347)

The point of this study is that it is important to remember who Yeshua the Messiah is during Passover, this great time of deliverance and salvation that God has provided for His people. Note that the Apostolic Writings are consistent with the rabbinic thought process. We read of the Creator’s plan of the first preeminent one, predetermined, and first of over all. Yeshua was the first born of Mary (*Matthew 1:23-25*), the first begotten of God the Father (*Hebrews 1:6*), the first of every creature (*Colossians 1:15*), the first begotten from the dead (*Revelation 1:5*), the first born of many brethren (*Romans 8:29*), the first fruits of the resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:20-23*), the beginning of the creation of God (*Revelation 3:14*), and the preeminent One (*Colossians 1:18*). We have been made holy in Yeshua (*Hebrews 10:10*) and it is because of Yeshua the Messiah that God’s glory rests upon us (*1 Peter 4:14*). Yeshua is indeed the Holy One of God and is sanctified by the Father and it is in and through Him we are sanctified. The Passover represents our salvation and deliverance by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Yeshua the Messiah. This Passover, let’s celebrate our salvation and justification that we have by trusting in the sacrificial blood of the Lamb of God (*2 Corinthians 5:21, Revelation 7:14*).