

A Miracle of Midrashic Proportions

It may be said that this week's reading for [Parashat Bereshit](#) (*Shemot / Genesis 1:1-6:8*) is the most important Parashah from all of the Parshiot found in the Torah. The reason for the significance of this portion is that we learn about the creation of the world, the creation of man and woman, the fall of man into sin through disobedience to the command of the Lord, and the mercy and grace of God to forgive man of his sins. We learn about marriage, relationship, selfishness and selflessness, the evil one who will bruise the heel of the seed of the woman and the righteous seed the Lord is planning on bringing into this world as the deliverer. Based upon these few things just mentioned, a great amount of doctrine, theology, and literatures have been developed over the centuries. The significance of this week's portion cannot be understated. One such example may be taken from the first few verses of our bible and the rabbinic commentary known as *Midrash Rabbah Bereshit* (Genesis). Based upon a particular midrash on these Scriptures, we learn how significant this week's Torah portion really is for helping us to understand the Apostolic Writings and the way in which the Messiah, the promised deliverer, could be recognized. Many sayings of the rabbis were passed down that find their basis in the Scriptures, and this week's reading interestingly enough has something to say specifically about Yeshua the Messiah Himself.

ספר בראשית פרק א *Shemot / Bereshit 1:1-5*

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ב וְהָאָרֶץ הֵיחָדָה תְּהוֹ וְבִהוּ
וְחַשְׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת
עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי-אוֹר
וַיְהִי-אוֹר: ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-
טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:
ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ
קֶרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 1:3 Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. 1:4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 1:5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (NASB)

The opening verses of the bible speak of the Lord God Almighty creating the heavens and the earth, and how the earth is תְּהוֹ וְבִהוּ (*tohu u'vohu*) void and without form. The Lord created by speaking life into existence, and He began with “light.” Note that “light” is often paralleled to righteousness, truth, and life in the Scriptures and in the Rabbinic literature. The Lord beginning His creation by creating light may suggest that in the beginning was the “*righteousness and truth*” of God. Based upon the narrative, we know that the sun, moon, and stars were not yet created, so that which gave forth light was the righteousness and truth of God's glory. As you can see, we can derive a lot of meaning from the first few verses of the Scriptures, and the rabbis did the same in their midrashic studies and interpretations of the bible. In *Midrash Rabbah Bereshit, Parashat 2, Part 4* (מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה ב סימן ד), we pick up where the rabbis

are discussing *Bereshit / Genesis 1:2*; the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Based upon this verse the rabbis developed the following commentary:

Midrash Rabbah Bereshit, Parashat 2, Part 4

R. Simeon B. Lakish applied the passage to the foreign powers. Now the earth was tohu (E.V. Uninformed) symbolizes Babylonia, I behold the earth, and, lo, it was tohu, E.V. waste (Jeremiah 4:23); And Bohu (E.V. Void) symbolizes Media, They hastened (va-yabhillu) to bring Haman (Esther 6:14). And darkness symbolizes Greece, which darkened the eyes of Israel with its decrees, ordering Israel, Write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the God of Israel. Upon the face of the deep, this wicked state, just as the great deep cannot be plumbed, so one cannot plumb the depths of iniquity of this wicked state. And the spirit of God hovered, this alludes to the spirit of Messiah, as you read, And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isaiah 11:2). In the merit of what will this spirit eventually come? For the sake of that which hovered over the face of the waters, i.e. in the merit of repentance which is likened to water, as it is written, Pour out your heart like water (Lamentations 2:19). R. Haggai said in the name of R. Pedath, A covenant was made with water that even in the hot season a breeze stirs over it

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה ב סימן ד

ד ר"ש בן לקיש פתר קריא בגליות, והארץ היתה תהו זה גלות בבל שנאמר (ירמיה ד) ראיתי את הארץ והנה תהו, ובהו זה גלות מדי (אסתר ו) ויבהילו להביא את המן, וחושך זה גלות יון שהחשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזירותיהן שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלהי ישראל, על פני תהום זה גלות ממלכת הרשעה שאין להם חקר כמו התהום מה התהום הזה אין לו חקר אף הרשעים כן, ורוח אלהים מרחפת זה רוחו של מלך המשיח, היאך מה דאת אמר (ישעיה יא) ונחה עליו רוח ה', באיזו זכות ממשמשת ובאה, המרחפת על פני המים בזכות התשובה שנמשלה כמים, שנאמר (איכה ב) שפכי כמים לבך, רבי חגי בשם רבי פדת אמר ברית כרותה למים שאפילו בשעת שרב רוחה שייפה

Note the progression here in the narrative of the midrash. The rabbis equate the word tohu (תהו) to Babylon, and vohu (ובהו) to Media and Haman. The darkness (וחושך) represents Greece which darkened the eyes of Israel by forcing Israel to declare that they have no portion in the God of Israel. The depths of the oceans represent sorrow due to the iniquity of the wicked who oppress Israel. With all of these insurmountable obstacles, the second verse in the Torah is described as having a messianic interpretation (expectation), that the spirit of the Lord hovering over the face of the waters, "*this alludes*

to the spirit of Messiah.” (זה רוחו של מלך המשיח) and the Hebrew text says specifically, “this is the spirit of the King Messiah.” The idea is that the Lord God Himself will be involved in delivering His people. Midrash Rabbah on Bereshit (Genesis) provides a significant amount of insight on the messianic nature of the King Messiah. For example, the King Messiah is the One in whom the scepter (staff) will not depart from Judah (*Bereshit / Genesis 49:10*). The rabbinic commentary states that this verse alludes to the Messiah Son of David (*Midrash Rabbah Bereshit 97, 98 parashah 8, and 99 parashah 8*). Thus, latter midrashim interpret the “King Messiah” as the Messiah Son of David, a deliverer who will come by the intervention of Lord and His Spirit.

In addition to this, the verse from *Bereshit / Genesis 49:10* translated into Aramaic reveals an ancient understanding of the Messianic King. The Aramaic Targums translate *Bereshit / Genesis 49:10* saying, “until the time when the King Messiah will come, the youngest of his sons, and because of him nations shall melt away” (לא פסקין מלכין) ושליטין מדבית יהודה וספרין מאלפי אורייתא מזרעיה עד זמן די ייתי מלכא משיחא זעיר ובנוי ובדיליה יתימסון עממייא). (Note the English translation: *49:10 ‘The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. NASB*) In each of the different Aramaic translations, the one who is coming (Shiloh, שִׁילֹה), the peaceful one, is the “king Messiah” (מלכא דמשיחא). Each of these translations say essentially the same thing עד דיייתי משיחא (Onkelos, “until Messiah comes”), עד זמן די ייתי מלכא משיחא (Pseudo-Jonathan, “until the time the King Messiah comes”), עד זמן דייתי מלכא דמשיחא (Neofiti, “until the King Messiah comes”), עד זמן דייתי מלכא דמשיחא (FTP Genesis, “until the King Messiah comes”), and עד זמן דייתי מלכא דמשיחא (FTV Genesis, “until the King Messiah comes”). As a result of the Aramaic translations, there is much to be said in the Rabbinic literature concerning the salvation and deliverance of the One the Lord will send to save His people. *Midrash Rabbah Bereshit (Genesis)* provides insights on the messianic nature of the verse related to the scepter (staff) that will not depart from Judah.

Here in *Bereshit / Genesis 1:2*, the spirit of the Lord hovering over the face of the waters is described as being the spirit of the King Messiah. Typically, throughout the Scriptures, we know that darkness represents the wicked, the unrighteous, death, and evil, etc. Both the Apostles and the rabbis alike draw out this comparison to the darkness those who do not obey the Lord, who live in sin, and who are called the unrighteous. The spirit of the Lord hovering over the face of the waters, suggests that the Lord’s spirit is functioning as a deliverer as a type of King Messiah. The very next verse (1:3) states, *Bereshit / Genesis 1:3 Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. (NASB)* The spirit of the Lord brought light by the Word of God, the Lord brought “light,” or He began by bringing His righteousness and truth into this world. This appears to be the understanding of the rabbis who developed this midrash on the Lord hovering over the face of the waters alluding to the spirit of the King Messiah. This concept of the “Spirit of the Lord” hovering over the surface of the water and “the King Messiah” is very significant in light of the gospel account of the life of Yeshua the Messiah.

According to the Apostolic Writings, the Messiah Yeshua did something very sig-

nificant, that even his disciples recognized who he is according to *Matthew 14:26-34*, *Mark 6:45-53*, and *John 6:18-21*.

Matthew 14:26-34

14:26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.' 14:28 Peter said to Him, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' 14:29 And He said, 'Come!' And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 14:30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' 14:31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' 14:32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 14:33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!' 14:34 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. (NASB)

Mark 6:45-53

6:45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. 6:46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. 6:47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. 6:48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. 6:49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 6:50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.' 6:51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 6:52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. 6:53 When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. (NASB)

John 6:18-21

6:18 The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. 6:19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. 6:20 But He said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' 6:21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. (NASB)

Here we find three gospel account of Yeshua walking on the water and the response of his disciples when they realized who it was that was walking on the sea. In [Matthew 14:26-34](#), the disciples were struggling with the boat because of the wind that was working against them. Yeshua walked out to where they were and he was going to walk past them when they saw him and were terrified. Based upon [Midrash Rabbah Genesis](#), this story might be considered one of the greatest Jewish stories of all time. The reason being, in the Hebrew language, the word “wind” may also be translated as “spirit” (רוח). The the disciples struggling against the wind being mentioned first may be to introduce and demonstrate the Messiah in a uniquely Jewish way. This is where we draw upon the rabbinic commentary, the midrashim, the popular Jewish writings and teachings that very likely were present during the first century period. These writings and teachings were conveyed through the oral traditions of the rabbis. The point is that according to [Midrash Rabbah Genesis](#), it was the spirit of the King Messiah that hovered over the waters. Keep in mind that Isaiah said the spirit of God rested upon the Messiah ([Isaiah 11:1-3](#)) and that the spirit came down from the Lord like a dove in [Matthew 3:16-17](#). The spirit of the King Messiah hovered over the water, the picture we get from the gospel account is of the Messiah “hovering” or “walking” over the water. This would have immediately brought to memory this week’s Torah portion of the spirit of the King Messiah hovering over the waters at creation. Yeshua’s walking upon the water brings us right back to a Torah perspective. The most significant aspect of this week’s portion in relation to Yeshua the Messiah walking on the water is that based upon the midrash, the Messiah would be greater than Moshe. Note that Moshe was the one who was drawn from the water, from the Nile river. The Messiah is the one who has authority over all of creation. Yeshua is greater than Moshe because He does not need to be drawn out of the water, he is over top of the water, just as His spirit was at creation. Halleluia!

The point of these things is that the rabbis are associating the movement of the Spirit of God with the coming of the Messiah. In the apostolic Writings that we just mentioned ([Matthew 3](#)) and from Isaiah, the anointed one of God would receive divine power to accomplish his mission. With regard to the creation of the world, the ancient rabbis believed the process of redemption will be brought about by the Spirit of God with a reference to the Messiah. In their interpretation of the Scriptures from [Bereshit / Genesis 1:2](#), the rabbis are drawing together various texts, Genesis, Isaiah, the midrashim, and that this Savior would be none other than the anointed one of God, the promised Messiah. Based upon the Jewish belief that God is good (also according to the Scriptures), we find the messianic concept that faith in God to deliver His people is from a past, present, and future expectation. Just as the Lord delivered His people in the past, He will also do so in the present, and we expect that He will do so again in the future. The Messiah Yeshua is that deliverer, the anointed One of God who came to save mankind from sin and death. If you believe Yeshua is the Messiah, Praise the Lord. If you do not believe He is the Messiah, know that the life and work of Yeshua according to the Apostolic Writings is in full in agreement with the Tanach (Torah, Prophets, Writings) and the ancient rabbinic thought of the Savior King Messiah!