

## The Rabbis Agree

This week in **Parashat Bo** (*Shemot / Exodus 10:1-13:16*), we read about the last plagues that God brought upon Egypt and how Pharaoh drives the Children of Israel out of the land. The Lord tells Moshe, *10:1* "... *'Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them.'*" (*NASB*) The Lord's hardening in part is for the purpose of performing these signs to deliver Israel with a mighty hand. The Scriptures say that the Lord brought the plague of locust upon Egypt (*10:3-19*), darkness upon the land (*10:22-23*), the death of the first born (*10:24-11:10*), and the Lord's Passover (*12:1-11*). Studying the Torah from a historical perspective, this point in Israel's history is the beginning of months, the beginning of the salvation of God, the beginning of a new covenant, and the beginning of a new relationship with the Lord God Almighty. The unique thing about the Passover is its connection to the beginning of months and the beginning of the salvation of God for Israel. The blood of the lamb is used as a sign upon the door posts such that the angel of death would pass over the house and the first born will not die. The Scriptures tell us that the Lord declares this to be an everlasting statute that it is to be remembered and not forgotten (*הַזֵּה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם*) (*12:17*).

This week's reading records a very important time in Israel's history regarding the deliverance of God. Based upon these Scriptures and considering the history of Israel, many questions are brought to mind, specifically, those that are related to the Messiah Yeshua and the Passover. For example, "*Why did Yeshua have to die during the Passover?*" "*Was his death a sin sacrifice during Passover?*" And, "*What is the significance of his having died during Passover?*" Let's see if we can answer these questions in this week's study.

### ספר שמות פרק יב *Shemot / Exodus 12:1-4*

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן  
בָּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֵאמֹר: ב הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה  
לָכֶם רֹאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם  
לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה: ג דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה  
וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שָׂה לְבֵית-אָבִת שָׂה  
לְבַיִת: ד וְאִם-יִמְעַט הַבַּיִת מִהְיוֹת  
מִשָּׂה וְלָקַח הוּא וְשִׁכְנוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֶל-  
בֵּיתוֹ בְּמִכְסַּת נֶפֶשׁ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוּ  
תִּכְסְּפוּ עַל-הַשָּׂה:

*12:1 Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 12:2 'This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. 12:3 'Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 12:4 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. (NASB)*

This week's reading from Midrash Rabbah provides us with a great example on the rabbinic methodology of Biblical interpretation showing us how the Apostolic Writings (NT) are consistent with the manner of interpretation taught by the sages of Israel. Many

times when anti-missionaries come they bring with them the idea that the New Testament's description of the Messiah is not consistent with the Tanach's descriptions of the Messiah, and that the rabbinic interpretation is significantly different when in reality that is not always necessarily the case. This week's reading from both the Torah and from Midrash Rabbah show one such case where the rabbis do in fact agree with the Apostolic account of the Messiah. The rabbis discuss these very important events in Israel's history from Parashat Bo, and provide for us a very intelligent answer for the anti-missionary who claims that Yeshua is not the Messiah of God.

In Midrash Rabbah on Parashat Bo the rabbis spend a good amount of time discussing the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל), "*This month will be unto you the beginning of months (Shemot / Exodus 12:1).*" *Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 1* (מדרש א רבה) has the following to say concerning the opening verse to *Shemot / Exodus 12* and the last plague, the death of the first born in Egypt.

***Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 1***

*And the Lord spoke unto Moshe ... This month will be unto you the beginning of months (Shemot / Exodus 12:1).*

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*Here is another explanation of, This month will be unto you the beginning of months. God is in a way called "first," as it says, I am the first, and I am the last (Isaiah 44:6); Zion is called "First," as it says, You throne of glory, on high from the first (the beginning), You place of our sanctuary (Jeremiah 7:12). Esau was called "first," for it says, And the first came forth ruddy (Bereshit / Genesis 25:25), and Messiah is called "first," for it says, The first (harbinger) unto Zion will I give, Behold, behold them (Isaiah 41:27). God who is called "the first," will come and build the Temple which is called "first," and will exact retribution from Esau, also called "first." Then will Messiah who is called "first" come in the first month, as it is said, This month will be unto You the beginning of months.*

**מדרש רבה שמות פרשה טו סימן א**

א ויאמר ה' אל משה החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים

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מזה לפיכך נקרא ראשון שנאמר ראש חדשים, ד"א ראשון הוא לכם כביכול הקב"ה שנקרא ראשון שנאמר (ישעיה מד) אני ראשון ואני אחרון, וציון נקרא ראשון שנאמר (ירמיה יז) כסא כבוד מרום מראשון מקום מקדשנו, ועשו נקרא ראשון שנאמר (בראשית כה) ויצא הראשון וגוי ומשיח נקרא ראשון שנאמר (ישעיה מא) ראשון לציון הנה הנם, יבא הקב"ה שנקרא ראשון ויבנה בהמ"ק בית המקדש שנקרא ראשון ויפרע מן עשו שנקרא ראשון ויבא משיח שנקרא ראשון בחדש הראשון, שנאמר החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים וגו'.

In *Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 1*, the rabbis draw a parallel to the first month as the beginning of months, to the Lord God in heaven, to Zion, to the Sanctuary, to Esau, and to the Messiah who is called first. It is interesting how the rabbis call both God and His Messiah first. This may be related to the idea that the Lord God will raise up the Messiah bringing with him the salvation of God. The Aggadic tradition taken from the midrash reveals the rabbinic understanding on the Messiah, His connection to the Lord and these events, and how He would come (his appointed time) would be at this time of the year, in the beginning of months. Why do the rabbis consider this month so significant that warrants this type of an interpretation? *Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 11* sheds some light on that question.

### ***Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 11***

*Another explanation of This month will be unto you. It is written, Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 32:12). When God chose His world, He appointed New Moons (months) and years therein, and when He chose Jacob and his sons, He appointed for them a New Moon of redemption in which Israel were redeemed from Egypt and in which they are destined to be redeemed again, as it says, As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things (Micah 7:15). In this month was Isaac born, and in this month he was bound as a sacrifice. In this month, also, Jacob received the blessings, and in this month did He hint unto Israel that it would be to them the beginning of salvation, for it says, It will be the first month of the year to you. It can be compared to a king who brought his son out of prison and commanded, celebrate for all time as a day of rejoicing the day on which my son went forth from darkness to light, from an iron yoke to life, from servitude to freedom, from bondage to redemption. Similarly, God brought Israel out of captivity, for it says, He brings out the prisoners into prosperity (Tehillim / Psalms 48:7). From darkness and the shadow of death, as it says, He brought them out of the darkness and the shadow of death (Tehillim / Psalms 55:14). From a yoke of iron to the yoke of the Torah. From slavery to freedom, as it says, You are the children of the Lord your God (Devarim / Deuteronomy 14:1). From servitude to redemption, as it says, Their redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name (Jeremiah 50:34); hence did He fix this month as a season of rejoicing for them that He had avenged them of their enemies, as it is said, Therefore will I give men for you (Isaiah 43:4).*

### **מדרש רבה שמות פרשה טו סימן יא**

יא ד"א החדש הזה לכם הה"ד (שם תהלים לג) אשרי הגוי אשר ה' אלהיו, משבחר הקב"ה בעולמו קבע בו ראשי חדשים ושנים, וכשבחר

ביעקב ובניו קבע בו ר"ח של גאולה שבו נגאלו ישראל ממצרים ובו עתי-  
דין ליגאל שנאמר (מיכה ז) כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות, ובו  
נולד יצחק ובו נעקד, ובו קבל יעקב את הברכות ובו רמז להם לישראל  
שהוא ראש להם לתשועה שנאמר ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה, משל  
למלך שהוציא את בנו מבית האסורין אמר עשו אותו יום טוב כל הימים  
שבו יצא בני מחשך לאור מעול ברזל לחיים מעבדות לחירות ומשעבוד  
לגאולה, כך הוציא הקב"ה לישראל מבית האסורין שנאמר (תהלים סח)  
מוציא אסירי" בכושרות, מחשך וצלמות, שנא' (שם תהלים קז) ויוציאם  
מחשך וצלמות, מעול ברזל לעול תורה, מעבדות לחירות שנא' (דברים  
יד) בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם, משעבוד לגאולה שנא' (ירמיה נ) גואלם חזק  
ה' צבאות שמו לכך קבע להם שמחה שהוא נפרע מאויביהם עליה' שנא'  
(ישעיה נג) ואתן אדם תחתיך.

According to *Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 15, Part 11*, the Lord God chose new moons to mark the festivals of Israel and these New Moons were chosen for the purpose of redemption. The rabbis call this month the New Moon of redemption, the proof texts given are that Isaac was born and he was also bound by Abraham as a sacrifice in this month. The midrash continues saying that Jacob received the blessings in this month, and that it was hinted at that this month would be the beginning of the salvation for Israel. A parable of a king who released his son is used to illustrate these points saying: *"It can be compared to a king who brought his son out of prison and commanded, celebrate for all time as a day of rejoicing the day on which my son went forth from darkness to light, from an iron yoke to life, from servitude to freedom, from bondage to redemption. Similarly, God brought Israel out of captivity, for it says, He brings out the prisoners into prosperity (Tehillim / Psalms 48:7). From darkness and the shadow of death, as it says, He brought them out of the darkness and the shadow of death (Tehillim / Psalms 55:14). From a yoke of iron to the yoke of the Torah. From slavery to freedom, as it says, You are the children of the Lord your God (Devarim / Deuteronomy 14:1)."* Based upon these two midrashim on *Shemot / Exodus 12:1*, is it surprising why Yeshua laid down his life during the Passover according to the Apostolic Writings?

The Scriptures, both the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings, say that all have fallen short of the Glory of God, there is no one who is righteous, and every person needs atonement before God. Studying atonement and the sacrifice according to the Torah, the Passover lamb is not defined as a sin sacrifice. The Torah describes the atonement sacrifices as being both a national and an individual basis. For example, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is the holiest day of the year, where atonement is brought on a national scale by the Cohen HaGadol. (Note Yeshua is also described as our Cohen Hagadol, *Hebrews 4:14-16*) In addition to this, *Shemot / Exodus 12:3* describes that every individual needs to participate in the Passover sacrifice, *12:3 'Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. (NASB)* Notice the way in which the verse is written, each household is to take for

himself a lamb and place the blood upon the door posts. As we read on further in the Torah, *Shemot / Exodus 12:6* states that all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter the “*Passover lamb.*” This describes an individual participation (from house to house), where in each individual case the blood is spread on the door posts to cause the angel of death to pass over.

The Sacrifices that were prescribed as part of the covenant relationship are set forth in Leviticus. According to the Torah, there are two types of sacrifices, the ones that are with blood, and those that are bloodless. These types of offerings are dependent upon the nature and purpose of the offering. The Sacrifices that were prescribed in Leviticus were also to be brought based upon certain motivations (reasons). Since the bringing of the sacrifices were motivational, the sacrifices may be further categorized in the following way: (i) burnt offerings, (ii) thank or peace-offerings, (iii) sin or trespass-offerings, and (iv) purification offerings. In the case of the sin offering, the Scriptures tell us in *Vayikra / Leviticus 4:1-2*, “*Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them,’”* If a person sins unintentionally, the idea is not so much about an accidental sin, but of a sin committed by a person who loves God. This is contrasted to one who sins presumptuously (*Bamidbar / Numbers 15:30*); there was no atonement available for the one whose heart was turned away from the Lord in presumptuous sin. If one’s heart wasn’t turned towards the Lord, then all the sacrifices offered in the world would not be approved of. The point is those who are in a covenant relationship with God, according to the Torah, when an individual sins, he is to bring a sacrifice for his sin. In a similar manner, the Lord instructed all of Israel to be active and involved in the Passover lamb, which is to be do on an individual basis, on a house by house basis.

Based upon the study thus far we can summarize the following conclusions:

### Summary

1. The beginning of months is a very special time filled with Aggadic traditions that speak of the Salvation of God.
2. The rabbis equate this time period to redemption, salvation, and the Messiah.
3. Significant events throughout biblical history are believed to have occurred at this time.
4. Setting straight one’s life or getting right with God prior to celebrating Passover was an important thing to do.

It is important to note that one would not have brought a sin offering during the Passover festival. One would have however prepared himself just prior to the Passover so that one could be joyful during this time since it is a time of remembering the freedom



from slavery and the redemption of God. If a sin sacrifice would have been an appropriate way to get right with the Lord, and fulfill one's obligation before God, a sacrifice would have been brought for both sin and purification before the start of Passover. Interestingly enough, according to the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua's death occurred just prior to the Passover. In His death He brought the Salvation of God which is marked by this particular festival in a very significant way. Based upon the rabbinic commentary, Yeshua's sacrifice is connected to the Passover for this very reason, the beginning of months is the time when the Messiah would come to save Israel bringing the redemption of God with Him. Yeshua laid down His life freely in order that the Scriptures would be fulfilled and based upon both the Bible and the Rabbis this is exactly what has happened. Yeshua chose to die, as our Passover Lamb, which is something to be remembered for all time. In Parashat Bo, the Lord brought great miracles to deliver Israel with a mighty hand; in a similar manner, the Lord Our Father in heaven performed a miracle of biblical proportions by raising Yeshua from the grave showing Him to be victorious over death. As a result, we can celebrate for all time this great day of rejoicing, the day on which the son of God went forth, freeing us from an iron yoke of sin and death, to life, from servitude to freedom, and from bondage to redemption. What a wonderful and awesome God we serve!