

SAVED BY HIS LIFE

Thoughts on the Resurrection of Yeshua during Chol HaMoed Pesach

notes by Tim Hegg

As we celebrate the week of Chag HaMatzot (Feast of Unleavened Bread), our attention has been drawn particularly to the death and resurrection of our Messiah, Yeshua. Surely the unspeakable gift of salvation which He has won for us is our meditation the whole year long, but now, at this time of Passover, we rehearse a Pesach seder like that one celebrated by Yeshua in which He symbolized the sacrifice of His broken body and shed blood with the wine and matzah. Then, the next day, we begin counting the days that encompassed His resurrection from the dead, the 40+ days of His post-resurrection life on this earth, His ascension to the Father, and the sending of the Ruach on Shavuot. In all of this, we focus our attention in tangible ways on our life of faith in the risen Messiah.

Well in advance of the week of Pesach, Yeshua had announced to His disciples that He would be crucified and that He would rise from the dead on the third day:

From that time Yeshua began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (Matt 16:21; cp. 17:22–23; 20:17–19)

Yet it appears that the disciples were less than convinced that what He had said would actually come to pass. When Judas led the Temple guards to the garden to arrest Yeshua, Peter thought to stop them by using his sword and the others were willing to join him in armed combat (Matt 26:51–52; cp. Lk 22:49). Likewise, the disciples with whom Yeshua conversed on the road to Emmaus appear to have given up hope that Yeshua would rise from the dead as He said He would (Lk 24:21). In fact, Yeshua Himself specifically charged them as being foolish and lacking faith:

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! (Lk 24:25)

Note carefully that Yeshua does not upbraid them for failure to believe only His words, but also the words of Israel's prophets. This highlights the fact that the resurrection of Yeshua is of no value apart from true faith. The disciples of Yeshua were called to believe before they saw the risen Savior, and to act upon that faith. In the same way, we are called to believe that Yeshua arose from the dead and to live in accordance with that reality.

Indeed, the resurrection of Yeshua is the keystone of our faith. His resurrection not only proved that His sacrifice on behalf of sinners had been accepted by the Father, but it also validated His person, His teaching and His works. He claimed to be sent by the Father (Matt 10:4), to reveal the Father (Jn 14:9), and that He was one with the Father (Jn 10:30). He claimed to be the Messiah (cf. Matt 26:25, 64; Jn 4:25–26), to have been the One in Whom Abraham believed (Jn 8:56), and that He was able to command legions of angels (Matt 26:53). He set Himself forward as the object of true faith and that those who believed in Him would have eternal life (Jn 11:25–26). He healed the sick, made the blind to see, and raised the dead. Were His miracles done through divine power or by the agency of demons (as the Pharisees contended, [Matt 12:24])? Were His words true, is He the Messiah promised by the prophets of Israel, is it through faith in Him that a person is made righteous before the Father and promised eternal life? All of these remained questions in the minds of many people who knew Him as “Yeshua of Nazareth,” who witnessed His

earthly life in the 1st Century of our era.

But the resurrection laid all of those questions to rest for those who were granted the gift of faith. This is why the Jewish leaders of His day quickly sought to find a way to deny His resurrection, concocting the story that His body had been stolen by His disciples, those very ones who cowered in a secluded room for fear of their own lives! Yeshua's opponents knew that many had witnessed His crucifixion, and that if He had risen from the dead, then there would be no way to continue the ruse that He was an imposter and not the real Messiah. Indeed, it was Yeshua's miracles that had caused the leaders to hate Him in the first place, for the miracles could not be denied and were causing many to follow Him. But they could not keep the "stolen body" myth active for long, because He showed Himself alive for more than 40 days to the people, some of whom had seen Him with their own eyes hanging on the execution cross! So certain and numerous were the eyewitnesses that the truth of His resurrection could not be denied. John emphasizes this as he opens his first epistle:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us — what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Yeshua the Messiah. (1Jn 1:1-3)

Thus, following His resurrection, when the disciples come to finally realize that He had conquered death—that He had risen on the third day just as He said He would—that they were emboldened as never before to proclaim Him as Israel's Messiah and the Savior of the world. So we hear Peter's words in Jerusalem during the feast of Shavuot just days following Yeshua's ascension:

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Yeshua God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses....Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah — this Yeshua whom you crucified." (Acts 2:29-32, 36)

And Paul, in the opening paragraph of his epistle to the Romans, writes about Yeshua that He was:

declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead... (Rom 1:4)

But there is still more for us to consider as we celebrate the resurrection of Yeshua: we are saved not only by His death but also by His life. For even as the Israelites were brought out of Egypt so that they might worship HaShem, so we have been rescued from the slavery of sin so that we might serve God and sanctify His Name. Moreover, we have been saved not only for this life, but for eternal life—to dwell forever with Yeshua in the presence of the Father. Our salvation, then, is not simply an escape from hell, but is designed to fit us to be eternal trophies of God's grace, expressing to others His greatness and being witnesses for Yeshua, proclaiming to a watching world both in word and deed the reality of His saving power.

What, then, is the current work of our risen Messiah for us? How does His life pertain

to our salvation? The writer to the Hebrews tells explicitly what this is:

Yeshua, on the other hand, because He continues [*as a priest*] forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:24–25)

Paul likewise includes the intercessory work of the Messiah on behalf of His people as one of the essential parts of our eternal salvation:

who is the one who condemns? Messiah Yeshua is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Rom 8:34)

In John's record of the garden prayer offered by Yeshua as He anticipated His death, resurrection, and ascension, we are privileged to have the basic themes of His intercession on our behalf. We find 7 requests with which Yeshua petitions the Father:

1. vv. 1, 5 – "Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You"; "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself."
2. v. 11, – "Holy Father, keep them in Your Name, the Name which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one."
3. v. 15 – "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."
4. v. 17 – "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."
5. vv. 20–21 – "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."
6. v. 24 – Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
7. vv. 25–26 – "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

These seven requests form the general theme of Yeshua's current work on behalf of His people, and we may be assured that by His intercession, all of these things will inevitably become reality in the lives of those who are His. "For Messiah did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb 9:24)