



October 2011
Yom Kippur 5772
Erev Yom Kippur
10/7/11

Greetings in our High Priest,

A Mysterious Priest

The word for priest in Hebrew is "*cohen*." Long before there were Catholic or Episcopal priests, there were Jewish priests: *cohanim* (pronounced *ko-ha-NEEM*). In fact, the central figure of the great Day of Atonement in Bible times was a Jewish priest. Since Yom Kippur falls on October 8, 2011, we have chosen to share about the priesthood this month. It is important to note that even before the Jewish priests, there was another priest, of somewhat mysterious origin, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. His name was Melchizedek (*Malki-Tzedek*), meaning "king of righteousness," and he appeared 422 years before the law was given.

We read in Genesis 14:17-18 that this *Malki-Tzedek* was both a king and a priest. He is called "the priest of the most High God." Abram (before his name was changed to Abraham) paid tithes to this cohen of God *HaElyon*. *Malki-Tzedek* served Abram bread and wine. He was without father and mother, indicating a type of priest who did not inherit the priesthood from his parents. He did not come from a priestly line. The Book of Hebrews in the *Brit Hadasha* has much more to say about *Malki-Tzedek* than the Torah, using phrases such as "*having neither beginning of days nor end of life,*" "*made like the Son of God,*" and "*remains a priest continually.*" This priest was a Bible "type" of a Priest to come, who would have an eternal priesthood, and be both king and priest.

The Father as Cohen

There was another priesthood in Israel before the giving of the law. The head of the family, the father, discharged the priestly functions connected with the service of God. We read about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob building altars as they traveled, especially in the places where the Lord had appeared to them. For example, in Genesis 35:1-2 God instructs Jacob to go up to Bethel and make an altar there to Him, and Jacob exhorts his household and all who are with him: "*Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.*"

After the Exodus from Egypt, the priestly authority culminated in the person of Moses—at the request of the people themselves (Ex. 20:19). Since Moses could not possibly fulfill the position of priest by himself, as soon as the covenant was concluded, he was permitted to transfer the priestly office to his brother Aaron. Aaron was then ordained, along with his four sons, as a hereditary priesthood. Aaron, as the head of his family, became the "High Priest," the *Cohen Gadol*.

The Aaronic Priesthood

When God chose Aaron and his sons after him as *cohanim* they were to be set apart with the express purpose of ministering to God (Ex. 28:1). They were chosen to be the mediator between God and man. They wore special holy garments, which included: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. On the shoulders of the ephod were two onyx stones, each engraved with the names of six of the tribes of Israel. The breastplate, *choshen* in Hebrew (pronounced *KHO-shen*), attached to the ephod, also had stones on it: twelve of them, each one bearing the name of one of the

tribes. The *Cohen Gadol* carried the children of Israel on his heart, as well as on his shoulders, as he interceded for them before the Lord.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons to minister to the Lord as *cohanim* included daily offerings to Him: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually, one in the morning and one in the evening. God instructed and promised: *"This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory"* (Ex. 29:42-43).

Blood Sacrifices and Atonement

The children of Israel also brought offerings to the Lord, following His instructions. Their offering of the herd or the flock was to be without blemish, offered of their own free will. The offerer had to make a personal identification with the offering since it would die in his stead: *"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting"* (Lev. 1:4-5).

The blood of sacrificed animals, applied to the altar of the *mishkan* (tabernacle) and later, the holy Temple, was God's commanded way of obtaining forgiveness of sin. Why blood? Perhaps it was God's way of showing man how serious sin is to Him. The life of the flesh is in the blood. The children were not to eat blood, but to value it as a way to restoring their relationship with a holy God. God made this clear to His children: *"...I have given it [the blood] to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul"* (Lev 17:11).

The ancient rabbis mentioned that the animal sacrifices—the vicarious death of an animal for a man—would cease with the coming of the Messiah, "because He would perform in the most perfect manner all that the sacrifices had been designed to accomplish." If they were right, and Messiah has come, there would be no blood sacrifices for sin in Judaism today. There are not. Messiah has indeed come!

The Cohen Gadol on Yom Kippur

Once per year, on the Day of Atonement, actually plural, *Yom HaKippurim*, the *Cohen Gadol* performed his most holy function: making atonement for the sin of an entire people. It was on this day that he was most recognizable as **הַכֹּהֵן הַמְּשִׁיחַ** *HaCohen HaMashiach*, the "Anointed Priest"—a type of the coming Messiah—because of his role of reconciling man and God.

However, the *Cohen Gadol* was fully human and prone to sin like any other man. Hence, he had to make atonement for himself before he could make atonement for the children of Israel. The very detailed yearly procedure on the tenth day of the seventh month is summarized in Leviticus 16:32-34: *"And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year."*

The *Cohen Gadol* could only come into the Holiest Place, the *Kodesh HaKodashim*, inside the veil (*parochet*) before the mercy seat which was on the ark, on this one day a year. The penalty for entering at any other time was death. Even on *Yom HaKippurim*, death was possible if the High Priest did not perform his multiple, detailed duties in the exact, prescribed manner (i.e. See Lev. 16:13.). This included a ceremony involving incense from a golden censer, as well as the sprinkling of blood once upon the ark cover and seven times before the ark cover—a total of eight sprinklings instead of

the usual seven. The High Priest had to perform all the duties by himself. *"There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel."* (Lev. 16:17) Surely the children of Israel must have waited in suspense, with apprehension, for the reappearance of their *Cohen Gadol*. Their fate was locked with his. They knew that if they heard the sound of the bells on the hem of his priestly garments, that all was well—that atonement had been made for their sins.

The Parochet

The veil, *parochet* in Hebrew (pronounced *par-O-khet*) played a very significant role on *Yom HaKippurim*. We find it described for the first time in Exodus 26:31-35. It was a thick veil (a hand's breadth in width), woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, and had an artistic design of cherubim. The veil divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy, the Holy of Holies or **קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים**. The veil was a divider, a separator. The Hebrew word *parochet* comes from the root **פָּרַךְ** meaning "to break apart," "to fracture." The veil was a constant reminder that between God and man there was a fracture, an estrangement. The cause: sin. Sin separated man from the Personal Presence of God—manifested in the Holy of Holies, God's earthly throne room. But when the *Cohen Gadol*, within the veil, standing in a cloud of incense, sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat, the sins of Israel were covered for another year.

It is highly significant, that at the moment of Yeshua's death on the tree, the *parochet* in the Temple in Jerusalem supernaturally split in two: *"And Yeshua cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom..."* (Matt. 27:50-51).

Yeshua, the Messiah, as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant *Cohen Gadol*, made a way for all of us to enter the very presence of God—within the veil! The entire Book of Hebrews is a fascinating explanation of our New Covenant High Priest. Concerning the *parochet*: *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Yeshua, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Malki-Tzedek"* (Heb. 6:19-20).

Better than Levitical Priests

Aaron and his sons were imperfect. The job of the *Cohen Gadol* was never finished. He had to go through the *Yom Kippur* ritual year after year, offering sacrifices for his own sins and the sins of his people. God had a plan to perfect the priesthood, once for all time. He did that by sending His Son to be both the Perfect High Priest and the Perfect eternal sacrifice for sin: *"This is the kind of cohen gadol that meets our need — holy, without evil, without stain, set apart from sinners and raised higher than the heavens; one who does not have the daily necessity, like the other cohanim g'dolim, of offering up sacrifices first for their own sins and only then for those of the people; because he offered one sacrifice, once and for all, by offering up himself. For the Torah appoints as cohanim g'dolim men who have weakness; but the text which speaks about the swearing of the oath, a text written later than the Torah, appoints a Son who has been brought to the goal forever"* (Heb. 7:26-28 JNT).

Not only was Yeshua, our High Priest, better than the Levitical Priests. His sacrifice was a better sacrifice: *"But the Messiah appeared as cohen gadol of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which is not man-made (that is, it is not of this created world), he entered the Holiest Place once and for all. And he entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus setting people free forever"* (Heb. 9:11-12 JNT).

In her book **We Have a Great High Priest** by Ruth Specter Lascelle, there is a chart comparing the Levitical Priests and Yeshua, our Great High Priest. This comparison highlights the fact that the law is a *"shadow of the good things to come"* (Heb. 10:1). In other words, the *Cohen Gadol* of the Torah is a "type," a "picture," of a future reality: a perfect High Priest, the Son of God. Some comparisons follow:

Levitical Priests

1. Many priests - successors
2. Continual offering
3. Sinful
4. Past Aaronic order
5. Final death
6. Had no power in themselves
7. Were not kings
8. Lacked full sympathy
9. Standing, work never done
10. Sin not put away
11. Ministered in earthly Holy Place
12. Offered animal sacrifices
13. Human weakness led to sin
14. Made a priest without an oath
15. Carried blood of the sacrifice into
Hoiest on earth
16. Ministered only to a nation
17. Ministry temporary and changeable

Our Great High Priest

1. One Priest - no successor
2. Once and for all
3. Sinless
4. Present Malki-Tzedekan order
5. Lives forever
6. Has all authority
7. Messiah born King
8. Touched with feeling our infirmities
9. Finished work, sat down
10. Propitiation made once and for all
11. Ministers in heavenly Holy of Holies
12. Offered Himself
13. Human weakness did not overcome Him
14. Made a Priest by God's oath
15. By His own blood He entered Hoiest in
Heaven
16. Ministers to all believers
17. Ministry, forever and changeless

Priestly Intercession

The sons of Aaron burned fragrant incense before the LORD on a daily basis. While the cohen burned the incense in the Holy Place, the worshippers in the outer court offered up prayers to God. The incense, also a crucial part of the Yom Kippur ritual, symbolized the intercession of the priests on behalf of the Israelites. The Scriptures tell us that the smell of the incense was pleasing to the LORD.

We have a High Priest in Heaven who is interceding for us right now: "*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*" (Heb. 7:25). We, in turn, are called to be intercessors as part of the New Covenant "*royal priesthood*" (I Peter 2:9). We encourage you, on this Yom Kippur, to fulfill your calling as priest / intercessor, by interceding for the children of Israel—the Jewish people. Most of them will be fasting from sundown Oct. 7 to sundown Oct 8, hoping that through fasting, praying and giving charity, their sins will be forgiven. But this is not God's chosen way! Without blood, there is no atonement. There have been no temple sacrifices for over nineteen hundred years.

It is recorded in Jewish sources that 40 years before the destruction of the Temple (approx. 30 AD, the year of Yeshua's death), the sacrifices lost their power, and the gates of the Hoiest of Holies opened by themselves. There was a scarlet cord tied to the door of the Temple that would turn white if God accepted the death of the "Scapegoat" as atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel. IT CEASED TURNING WHITE around the time of Yeshua's death. He had made the final atonement!

Pray that the eyes of Jewish people worldwide are opened to the truth of Yeshua's atonement as they fast and pray this Yom Kippur. May He appear to them in their synagogues as Israel's Great High Priest. May His atoning blood cleanse them, save them, deliver them, protect them, and restore them to intimacy with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

The bells are ringing! Our High Priest lives!!

Love in Yeshua, Neil & Janie

P.S. A tiny golden bell with a loop for sewing to clothing was discovered in Israel this summer just south of the Temple Mount. It is believed that this bell is from the robe of a *Cohen Gadol*.

P.P.S. We will produce six new TV programs this month, including one on Yeshua our *Cohen Gadol*.