

## The Hebrew Corner

There are stories of fierce battles and wars in the Tanach. One intriguing battle, described in Genesis 14, involves Abraham, who at that time was known by his birth name Abram. Abram and Lot, his nephew, had travelled together for many years, but then had settled in an area west of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan. Because of strife between the servants of Abram and Lot, they agreed to separate, with Lot choosing to live in an area farther east, closer to the Jordan River, and near to the city of Sodom, while Abram dwelled to the west in the land of Canaan. Lot was caught up in a conflict between 4 regional kings led by Chedolaomer, and 5 opposing kingdoms, which included Sodom. The kingdoms led by Chedolaomer were victorious in the battle of Siddim, and looted Sodom, taking Lot and other people of Sodom captive. Abram was given the news by one that had escaped from the battle. Abram, in turn, organized his servants, totaling 318, into a fighting force, and armed them. He then led his servants to battle, where he chased the enemy to Hobah, on the left side of Damascus. He took back Lot, the people who were taken captive, and the goods that were stolen from Sodom. When he came to the valley of Shaveh, he was met by a man described as follows (Genesis 14:18-20):

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

Melchizedek in Hebrew is melki-tsedeq (מלכי־צדק), mehl-kee-TSEH-

dehk), which means righteousness is my king. He was also named the King of Salem, or in Hebrew, melek shalem (מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם, MEH-lehk shah-LAYM), or peaceful king. Salem may be an ancient name for Jerusalem. In this passage he is identified as a priest of the most high God, which indicates that God ordained him as a priest, long before he designated Levi to be the tribe from whom priests would come. Most high God in Hebrew is el-alyon (אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן, ehl ahl-YOHN), el being a shortened form of elohim. The bringing of bread and wine, or in Hebrew lechem et yayin (לֶחֶם אֶת יַיִן, LEH-chem AYT YAY-yihn) was the apparent start of the Jewish tradition of thanking God for the bread and the fruit of the vine after meals. This is also a foreshadowing of the final farewell supper of Jesus with his disciples in Jerusalem, prior to his crucifixion. This also the first mention in the Tanach of the giving of tithes. Tithe in Hebrew is maaser (מַעֲשֵׂר, mah-ah-SAYR), which also means tenth part, as eser (עֶשֶׂר, EH-sehr) is the Hebrew for the number ten.

In Psalm 110, we see a second reference to this priest-king (Psalm 110:1-4):

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

The Hebrew phrase translated as “The Lord said unto my Lord is naum adonai lahdonay (נָאֻם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי, nah-OOM adonai lah-doh-

NAHY), which may be more precisely translated as, declares the LORD unto my Lord. (Adonai is substituted for the covenant name of God.) The idea here is that God is making an official declaration, as opposed to simple conversation with David's Lord. The passage is clearly a prophecy concerning Yeshua, who God is declaring to be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

The book of Hebrews gives an extended discussion of the connection between Melchizedek and Yeshua. Presented here is a portion of this discussion (Hebrew 7:21-22):

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by

him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.”

There are a series of points made in this passage:

1. Perfection did not come from the Levitical priesthood. Something more was needed.
2. The change of the priesthood required a change in the law also.
3. Moses never mentioned a priest coming from the tribe of Judah, but Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.
4. The superiority of Melchisedek was at least in part due to his his life having no end.
5. Levitical priests were not ordained by an oath of God, but God made an eternal oath when he made Jesus a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
6. The law did not make things perfect, but bringing in a better hope, Yeshua, did, which allows us to have a close relationship to God.

I hope and pray that you will experience a close and loving relationship with God, made possible by Jesus, our Yeshua, our high priest forever. I wish you and your family a blessed month.