

Joshua 5:1-15

Israel is Circumcised and Celebrates Passover

Joshua 5:1 - "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."

This verse stands in close connection with the last verse of the preceding Chapter. All the peoples of the earth were "to know the Name of the Lord" and to fear Him. A first example of this is seen in the case of the Canaanite nations.

The fear and confusion of the Canaanites allowed time for Israel to participate in these two important rituals - circumcision and Passover.

Joshua 5:2-3 - "At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins."

Rashi - "the second time": for they had already circumcised a large assembly on the night of their departure from Egypt, and this was the second time. Others say they had been circumcised during the three nights' darkness just before the first Passover.

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (**Genesis 17:10**).

Recall that God attempted to kill Moses because he had not circumcised his own son Gershom (**Exodus 4:24-26**).

"again" = *shub* - to turn back, repeat again, but also used to mean "to repent"

The doomed wilderness generation did not repent. The hope was that this new generation would respond to God in repentance if they sinned.

Why was this circumcision necessary?

Joshua 5:4-7 - "And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. And

their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way."

"till all the people" = *goy* - a term usually used to refer to Gentiles (The word *am* usually is used to mean the "people" of Israel)

The people had "turned back in their hearts to Egypt" (**Acts 7:39; Numbers 14:4**), and were bearing the reproach of their apostasy all those years, "the reproach of Egypt." Suffering under the "breach of promise" of Jehovah (**Numbers 14:34**), they appear to have omitted circumcision, the sign of the covenant, as though they were no longer the people of God. The passage of Jordan was the practical proof of Israel's restoration to Divine favor, and they were brought into covenant with Him once more.

Joshua 5:8-9 - "And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day."

"rolled away" = *galal* - to roll off, roll away, from a root for "circle" or "wheel." *Gilgal* (rolling) is taken from this word.

This was a foretaste of a final "rolling away of the reproach" by the Messiah, which was completed by the "rolling away" of the stone of His tomb at His resurrection:

- **Isaiah 25:8** - "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke (or reproach) of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it"

In the New Testament, circumcision is seen as a type of redemption identical with baptism:

- **Colossians 2:12** - "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Here at the Jordan, both come together, along with the Passover.

First Passover in the Promised Land

Joshua 5:10 - "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho."

The Manna Ceases

Joshua 5:11-12 - "And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

This is sort of obscure in the Hebrew, but it seems that the Manna ceased after the First Fruit offering Omer had been waved, when the people could then eat the new grain of the land.

Rashi - "on the morrow of the Passover": the day of the waving of the 'Omer, for first they sacrificed the 'Omer. Because they might not eat of the new grain until the First Fruit offering was offered up, **Leviticus 23:10-14**.

The Passover unleavened matzah was made with the old grain of the land which they had obtained in their conquests thus far.

The Manna came just when they needed it, and continued as long as they needed it. They would now be sustained by the direct fruit of the Promised Land itself - not only of the fields, but of the vineyards and olive yards, which they had neither sown nor planted, see **Deuteronomy 6:10**.

The Manna was a type of Christ's spiritual provision.

- **John 6:51** - "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The Captain of the Host of the Lord

Joshua 5:13-15 - "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Who is the Captain of the Lord's host?

The short answer is that this one of many "pre-incarnate" appearances of Christ.

The long answer is more complicated

Who is this Captain?

"Captain" = *Sar* - means "prince, ruler, leader, chief, chieftain, official, captain."

"hosts" - see **2 Kings 6:17** - "And Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

The same word (*sar*) is also used to identify the Messiah:

- **Isaiah 9:6** - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince (*sar*) of Peace."

- **Hebrews 2:10** - "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain (*archistrotogos*) of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

"captain" here is *archistrotogos*, the same word used in the Septuagint to translate "captain" of the Lord's host in **Joshua 5:15**.

Another version of the same word is used elsewhere to designate Christ:

- **Act 5:31** - "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince (*archēgos*) and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Rashi deduces that the "hosts" here refers to Israel itself, and that this must be Michael the Archangel, since in **Daniel 10:21** he is referred to with the same word, as Israel's "prince."

But it can't refer to a created angel. Joshua is told to take off his sandal and he bows down to worship him, as Moses was told to at the burning bush (**Exodus 3:5**).

- **Acts 7:31-33** - "When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

The Being that spoke to Moses from the burning bush identifies Himself as "the God of your fathers" but also as "the angel of the Lord":

- **Exodus 3:2-6** - "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

If this was merely an angel (i.e. a created being), Joshua would not have worshipped him.

- **Matthew 4: 10** - "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

When humans attempt to worship angels, they are rebuked:

- **Revelation 19:10** - "Then the angel told me to write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.' And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, 'See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

Later in the Exodus passage, God emphasizes His mystical name:

- **Exodus 3:14** - "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

In the New Testament, Jesus identifies Himself as that same "I Am."

- **John 8:58** - "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

The Angel of His Presence, Metatron, and Memra

Again Isaiah the Lord Himself is identified with what is probably the same being, referred to as the Angel of His Presence:

- **Isaiah 63:8-9** - "For he [the Lord] said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

"The Messiah is here meant; the Angel of the covenant, the Angel which went before the Israelites in the wilderness, (**Exodus 23:20-23**) not a created angel, or an angel by nature, but by office; being sent of God, as the word signifies, on the errand and business of salvation; called "the Angel of God's presence", or "face", *Mal'akh HaPanim* because his face was seen in him; his name, and nature, and perfections were in him; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person besides, the presence of God was always with him" - *John Gill's Exposition*

The Septuagint translators of this Isaiah passage, wary of giving an angel the status of deity, added "Not an elder or an angel, but the Lord Himself saved them..."

Many times God "appeared" to Abram/Abraham (**Genesis 12:7**) and others, and this was probably as the Angel of the Lord. Possibly this also the Angel Jacob wrestled with (**Genesis 32:24-30**), and the angel who confronted Balaam (**Numbers 22:31**).

The Angel of Yahweh or the Angel of Elohim was regarded by ancient Jewish commentators as equated with the Shechinah, the indwelling of God in the world, i.e., the only Mediator between God and the world, who bears in Jewish mysticism the name Metatron. The early Church regarded Him as the Logos, the second person of the Deity; and only a few of the fathers, such as Augustine and Jerome, considered him a created angel.

In gematria - the Jewish number/letter mysticism - Metatron is numerically the same as Shaddai, which signifies almighty or all-sufficient, and is an epithet of the divine Being; he is said to have a "Name like his Master." And Metatron seems to be a corruption of the word "mediator": The Zohar (Gen. fol. 124. 4.), says this is the Angel that is the Redeemer of the world, and the keeper of the children of men.

In the same way, the Angel of His Presence and Metatron are equated with the Memra or Word /Logos.

The Rabbis say that this "angel of his presence" means the "Angel of the Covenant and the Prince of the Countenance." In Hebrew the phrase is *Sar ha-Panim*, literally 'the Prince of the faces' or 'countenance.' Rabbi David Qimhi says of **Malachi 3:1**, the Lord who will "suddenly come to his temple," that "this Lord is the Messiah-King, and he is the Lord of the Covenant."

Jesus, Joshua, Yeshua

The Jewish prayerbook, the Sidûr ha-Shalem, contains, in the New Year prayers in connection with the sounding of the shofar, there is a remarkable prayer which speaks of "Jesus, the Prince of the Countenance."

"May it be Thy will that the blast from this horn should carry to the tabernacle of God by the instrumentality of our delegate *Tartiel*, whose name Elijah -- may his memory be blessed -- has given to him, and through Jesus (*Yeshua*, Savior) the Prince of the Countenance and the Prince Metatron, and may grace be our part. Be Thou blessed, Lord of grace."

Tartiel = *tartei El*, or "God's other form" in which he reveals himself.

Stockholm's chief Rabbi, Professor Gottlieb Klein, wrote in 1898 that in Judaism Metatron is often identified with the Word or Logos, and he shows that there are five such intermediaries in the rabbinical writings:

1. Metatron,

2. The Word of Yahweh, Mimra/Memra,
3. God's hovering glory, the Shechina,
4. God's Holy Spirit, Rûah ha-Qôdesh, and
5. the Voice from Heaven, Bat Qôl. (lit. 'daughter of a voice')

When Israel's Ark of the Covenant was being built, tradition says the angels received the commission to build in Heaven an abode for "the youth whose name is Metatron, in which dwelling he will bring the souls of the Just to God to atone for Israel during the Captivity."

Appearance to Gideon of The Angel of the Lord

In **Judges 6** there is an account of how the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon. We read that "The LORD turned to him and said," and "The LORD answered him," identifying the angel with "the LORD." Gideon exclaims, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" (vv 14,16 and 22). But what, in the opinion of the Rabbis, is so exceptional in this angel of the LORD?

When the most famous Rabbi of the Middle Ages, Rashi, considered this issue he referred to the words of **Exodus 23:20-21**: "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way... Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him... since my name is in him."

Rashi suggests that the words at the end of the verse "my name is in him" mean "He and I have the same name."

"And our Rabbis have said," he continues, "that this is Metatron, whose name is the same as the name of the LORD. The numeric value of 'Metatron' corresponds to that of 'Shaddai', the name of the Almighty."

It was of him Moses was speaking when he said, in **Exodus 33:15**: "If your presence (Heb.'face') does not go with us do not send us up from here." Ramban sees here and in the preceding verses Metatron and the Angel of the Covenant. Early in the rabbinical writings we find the simple statement that Metatron is also the Prince of the Countenance.

The Mimra/Memra (Logos or Word) concept associated with God and his manifestations appears 596 times in the Targums -- but not once in the Talmud (possibly because the rise of Christianity pushed them to de-emphasize these alternate forms of God's identity).

In **Genesis 16:13** Hagar speaks with the "angel of the LORD" and "calls him the LORD's Mimra" (Yer.); In **Genesis 22**, where Abraham speaks with the angel of the LORD, who is given the name "the LORD's Mimra", and in v.8 "The LORD's Mimra himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering" (Yer.); In **Genesis 28:20** Jacob makes a vow and says, "If the LORD's Mimra will be with me... then the LORD's Mimra will be my God." (Targum Onqelos)

These identities all seem to be equated.

It's not so clear cut, however. Metatron is also later equated with Enoch after he is taken up to heaven, and with the "Son of Man."

'Metatron' comes from the Greek *meta thronon*, that is, 'the one who sits on the throne'. Targum Jonathan on **Genesis 5:24** in which we read of the translation of Enoch (how he walked with God and then "was no more"), says that "He ascended to heaven and God called him by the name Metatron, the Great Scribe."

"Metatron is the nearest person to God, serving him; on the one hand his confidant and delegate, on the other hand the representative of Israel before God... Metatron is also known as Sar ha-Panîm, the 'Prince of the Countenance' or just as 'the Prince', and he sits in God's innermost chamber (penim). The numeric value of 'Metatron' is the same as that of Shaddai, 'the Almighty'. He is therefore the delegate of the Almighty. Shaddai (10+4+300) = 314 and Metatron (50+6+200+9+9+40) = 314."

- The above is from a paper by Stockholm's chief Rabbi, Professor Gottlieb Klein, 1898

(See <http://www.ristosantala.com/rsla/OT/OT11.html>)

The Suffering Servant

- **Isaiah 50:10** - "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

Many of the rabbis explain that the "servant" here is Isaiah himself. But Christ is meant. The Zohar (Zohar in Exod. fol. 54. 3.) says this is "Metatron," a name of the Messiah-like figure, the "Son of Man" in the books of Enoch; the angel that led the people of Israel through the wilderness, who is also a heavenly priest.

I believe all these differing titles, terms and identities - increasingly focused on in the literature in the few centuries before Christ - were preparing the people for Jesus' arrival. Most of the pseudepigrapha stories were well known in Jesus' day. By lining up, comparing and focusing these sometimes widely differing aspects of Jesus' mission and essence, a clearer picture was developing about who the Messiah would be, as their yearning for the coming Messiah increased.