

Yeshua the High Priest:
From Adam to Adam; from High Priest to High Priest

*DRAFT: [to do: Introduction: /History/current/fall out/conclusion plus some Hebrews quotes, including issue of new 'priesthood' vs new
So the priest shall make atonement for him, for his sin, and he shall be forgiven. – Lev 4:26*

Who will be in the Kingdom of God? Who will be resurrected to life eternal? Who will be the judge of mankind and make this selection?

Until the arrival of Christianity as a separate religion, history and the TaNaK tell us that only the Jewish people and their proselytes really knew God (YHVH). As a people chosen by God, they were given the 10 Commandments and agreed that they would follow them, so as to be God's people and a light to all mankind.

Ex 19:5-8 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

*So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. **All the people answered together and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do.***

Even before this though there had been men and women who had found favour with God. We know Abraham was a righteous man *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."* (Rom 4:3)

Yeshua tells us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will share in the marriage supper of the Lamb and therefore have already had their names written in the book of life. We see from the transfiguration, that Moses and Elijah have been given glorified bodies (they are like Yeshua).

Whether this was a vision or reality event, the clear and simple implication is that both Moses and Elijah will be in the Coming Kingdom. Similar arguments can be made for David and some of the other Kings of Israel such as Hezekiah, and for the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Christians may ask, how can these people who lived before the time of the Messiah Yeshua be 'saved'; how can they have eternal life when they did not 'know' Yeshua (whatever that means)?

There are a number of answers given by evangelical scholars to this simple question but most appear to me to be very unsatisfactory.

If we ask observant Jewish people the same question, their answer is very simple.

They will turn to their scriptures and quote passages like Ezek 18:19-32; Lev 19:22; Ps 15:1-2 and many others.

Ezek 18:

19 "Yet you say, Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father? When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.

20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

21 "But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

22 None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live.

...

27 Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life.

28 Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

...

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.

*31 Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and **make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!** Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.

*Lev 19:22 And **the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven for the sin that he has committed.***

*Psalms 15:1-2 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? **Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart.***

*2 Chron 7:14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will **forgive their sin** and heal their land.*

We see here that repentance led to salvation:

We also see that a circumcised heart was needed.

Then John the Baptist arrived and he also brought a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:4) and “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,” (Luke 1:76-77).

However, the High Priest and the associated animal sacrifices played a part in this repentance unto salvation.

When Yeshua was resurrected, he presented himself as the perfect sacrifice, the wave sheaf offering to his Father, God Almighty and became the new and eternal High Priest. Now, the temporary atonement of animal sacrifice was no longer needed as part of ‘repentance unto salvation’, because the new High Priest, the mediator between men and God, had now paid the full penalty and could be the Advocate of the ‘righteous’ before our Father in Heaven.

This new Priesthood though also opened the path to God for those not natural born sons of Abraham. Now Gentiles could come before Yeshua with circumcised hearts and receive salvation and also enter the Kingdom of God. Gentiles no longer needed to become Jews to find salvation. But just like the natural sons of Abraham, we adopted sons are still called to have the ‘faith of Yeshua’ and walk before our Father and Our God as Yeshua did.

Thus, we see that if someone knew God and His commandments, it was possible to repent, to turn back to God, to obey and as a result, to be saved.

So what happened with the arrival of Yeshua. Did this simple message of repentance and obedience to God’s ‘laws’ (actually, they are God’s divine instructions) no longer apply? Did God change his instructions for holy living?

Didn’t Yeshua say no one could come to the Father but by him.

Did he mean by this that only those who accepted Yeshua as their Saviour could find salvation and be resurrected to eternal life in the Coming Age?

Most of evangelical Christianity appears to hold to some form of dispensationalism. That is, that God is now dealing with people in a different way to how He did in the ‘Old Testament’ times¹.

Many of us for a great many reasons find this viewpoint seriously flawed and contradictory. Rather than address all that is wrong with it, I will try and illustrate what really has changed with the coming of the Messiah and how some of the apparent contradictions can perhaps be resolved.

To repeat then, prior to the crucifixion and resurrection (and to Pentecost? – see the Wikipedia article summarised in the last footnote), a Jew, a member of God’s chosen people, could always repent and find life; find salvation. This ‘salvation’ was both being ‘saved’ from their enemies, and entering a holy ‘spiritual’ relationship with their Father. This relationship must begin in this life, but will also continue in the next; in the Coming Age.

A fundamental part of this time, after God had presented the moral code of the universe (the 10 commandments²), was the Levitical priesthood and the crucial role of the High Priest.

¹ *Dispensationism: The Church consists of only those saved from the Day of Pentecost until the time of the Rapture. It is held that the Church consists of a small number of Israelites under the election of grace in the present dispensation along with a large number of Gentiles. ... Dispensationism takes its name from the idea that biblical history is best understood in light of a series of dispensations in the Bible. The number of dispensations that are generally held is, at the very least: the dispensation of Law, the dispensation of Grace and the dispensation of the Kingdom http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationism#Historical-grammatical_interpretation*

The High Priest is a very special position or role in the life of the people of God. The High Priest was the one who would take a person's question to God; hear God's answer and then relay that 'binding' answer back to the one who asked. Thus the High Priest was a Mediator.

(Over time, the writing's of the Rabbis took on this role to a large degree in what we know today as the Mishnah.)

The High Priest was to be a 'prophet like Moses'; a man who was able to communicate directly with God and relay the Word's of the Almighty to the people.

No High Priest, since the first High Priest, Aaron has ever performed this role more perfectly than Yeshua.

It is revealing though to look briefly at the life of Aaron and how he became the first High Priest.

Aaron was Moses older brother; in fact, given the circumstances of Moses first 80 years, these brothers did not know each other well. The Hebrew Bible is full of the stories of brothers and their rivalries. We read of the rivalry between Cain and Abel; between Isaac and Ishmael; between Jacob and Esau; and between Joseph and his brothers.

In fact, the story of Aaron and Moses is really the first where brotherly rivalry is not so evident.

When Moses was questioning God on his ability to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery, what did God tell him about his brother?

But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." (Ex. 4: 13-15)

(Some of the Jewish sages argue that Moses hesitation here was why he was not given the role of High Priest.)

Based on the previous brotherly rivalries we read about, we might expect Aaron, as older brother to feel some animosity at meeting Moses, given the role God had given Moses but instead we read that God assures Moses: "*when Aaron sees you, he will rejoice*". And so he did (Ex. 4: 27).

Perhaps, this was why God choose Aaron as High Priest.

We also read in Ps 85:10-11

*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. (KJV)*

Mercy (or loving-kindness) and peace refer to Aaron. Truth and righteousness refer to Moses. Note that we read in Exodus 4:27, that when Aaron and Moses meet, Aaron kissed his brother.

That is, Aaron rejoiced in Moses greatness and as a result of Aaron's loving-kindness and his being a man of peace, God choose him as High Priest.

Aaron honoured his younger brother. Now look at Psalm 133:

*Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.*

Now consider Yeshua as High Priest. As a 'prophet like Moses' he has the authority to speak the Word's of God to the people of God; and also like Aaron, Yeshua, our older brother, rejoices when God bestows His favour on us, the younger brothers (and sisters); like Aaron, Yeshua displayed mercy or loving-kindness to his neighbours; a loving-kindness that extended to demonstrating the ultimate love for his neighbour and brother, in that he laid down his life for a friend. Yeshua clearly was, and is, a man of peace.

Who better to be the High Priest of the renewed covenant and now the High Priest at the right hand of God!³

3 These brief thoughts on the brotherhood of Aaron and Moses derived from an article by Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/9329> and from 'Judaism in Late Antiquity' by Jacob Neusner & Alan I Avery-Peck

The role of High Priest then is clearly of great significance⁴. The High Priest, a role initiated and appointed by God, was a role of bringing gifts before God to seek atonement, to seek forgiveness for the people. He was both a Mediator and Judge.

We see in Joshua, the High Priest who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, a High Priest who was also the Leader (King?) of the chosen people.

Further, the High Priest's most important day to bring the petitions of the people to God was the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), a day, once a year when he entered the Holy of Holies and sought and received forgiveness and therefore salvation for the people.

Some of the scriptures that relate to this:

Lev 4:20 " ... And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven."

High Priest as judge:

Deut 17: 8 "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose.

*9 And you shall come to the Levitical priests **and to the judge** who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision.*

10 Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you.

Breast Plate of Judgment:

Ex 28: 28 And they shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it may lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod.

29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD.

*30 And in the **breastpiece of judgment** you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly.*

The Day of Atonement:

Lev 23: 26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

27 Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD.

28 And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.

29 For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people.

30 And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people.

31 You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

32 It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.

Lev 16:29-34 "And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.

30 For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins.

31 It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever.

32 And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments.

⁴ The distinguished rank of the high priest is apparent from the fact that his sins are regarded as belonging also to the people (Lev 4: 3, 22). He was entrusted with the stewardship of the Urim and Thummim (Num. 27: 20). On the Day of Atonement he alone entered the Holy of Holies, to make atonement for his house and for the people (Lev. 14.); on that occasion he wore white linen garments instead of his ordinary and more costly vestments. He alone could offer the sacrifices for the sins of the priests, or of the people, or of himself (Lev. iv.)

33 He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

34 And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him.

Ex 30:10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall **make atonement for it once in the year** throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.

Interestingly, as I will explain in more depth later, some Jewish scholars believe that the second giving of the 10 Commandments was on the Day of Atonement⁵. Remember that these 2 'stones' were placed in the ark which resided in the centre of the Temple/Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies⁶.

Note also that Joshua as High Priest pointed to another High Priest to come.

High Priest Joshua as type of High Priest to come, the 'Branch':

Zec 3: 1-10

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?

3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.

4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, Remove the filthy garments from him. And to him he said, Behold, **I have taken your iniquity away from you**, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.

5 And I said, Let them put a clean turban on his head. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

6 And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua,

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.

8 Hear now, **O Joshua the high priest**, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.

9 For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and **I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day**.

10 In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.

Zec 6: 12 And say to him, Thus says the LORD of hosts, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.

13 It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD **and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne**. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

So to summarise the situation prior to Yeshua, God had made it clear what was required of His chosen people; he had also made it clear that if they 'fell short' (sinned), they could turn back to Him (repentance) and be saved. He had also instituted a special person, the High Priest and a special day. The Day of Atonement, on which both the sins of corporate Israel and of individuals within the House of Israel could be forgiven and 'atoned' for.

The Arrival of the Yeshua.

During the ministry of Yeshua had the situation changed?

Apparently not. Look at the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus repents of his sins, indicates that he will make restitution as required by Torah and then Yeshua answers him and states that 'Today salvation has come to this house(hold), since he also is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9).

While many will argue with the meaning of Yeshua's words here and propose that the presence of Yeshua was somehow salvation; the plain understanding seems clear, that based on the Hebrew scriptures already quoted

⁵ At the end of the Yom Kippur service, having prayed for mercy and forgiveness, Jews finally throw themselves totally on the mercy of the court. As Rabbi Greenberg puts it, "This atonement is by divine grace; it is above and beyond the individual's own effort or merit." A Christian Observes Yom Kippur by Dr Harvey Cox, Professor of divinity at Harvard Divinity School

⁶ Since the Golden Altar is Israel's heart. iudgment is made by comparing her life against the Ten Commandments that were inside the Ark.

above, Zacchaeus was now a repentant sinner, a 'lost sheep' of Israel who had been found, and thus a citizen of the coming Kingdom.

This does not preclude the need for this repentance to be accepted and atoned for at the following Day of Atonement by whoever was the High Priest in that year.

This understanding is also consistent with the whole ministry of Yeshua and his disciples before his crucifixion, where they preached repentance but not atonement through the sacrifice of his blood.

As Yeshua hung on the cross what did he say to his people, to the House of Israel? He said "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Was he condemning his people and their ways either because that rejected him or because they rejected God?

It would appear not. He was, though, at the very least, attempting to intercede on their behalf before his Father and theirs.

And then what about after his resurrection?

In Yeshua's day the estimates are, that there were around 2 million Jews in Jerusalem for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Did Yeshua show himself to all of them? No, it appears from the Gospel accounts that he was seen by some 500.

This is clearly sufficient number to establish his victory over death, but why didn't he go to Pilate and say 'Look at me. Try putting a spear through me now?'. He never sought to vindicate himself, he never sought to assert his Kingship at that time. He never tried to use his new role as High Priest to judge the people and assert his authority.

After 40 days the disciples asked if he was going to restore the Kingdom of God to Israel. He said no. Note here then that the resurrected Yeshua spends 40 days teaching them about the Coming Age, the Kingdom of God. What we don't hear declared is something along the lines of how everyone must now believe in his death to be saved and that this requires no other inward or outward actions, just faith that his death was sufficient for all.

At Yeshua's death, the curtain to Holy of Holies is torn apart. As the Book of Hebrews so clearly articulates, this signified the end of previous 'Levitical' High Priesthood and its role in atonement.

Instead a new High Priest is now installed. A new Mediator and Judge and King is now interceding on behalf of the chosen people of God.

Repentance and obedience are still needed but after his resurrection and presentation to God, Yeshua is now the High Priest and therefore the judge of all.

He has exercised this role from this day. When we choose to repent, and be obedient, Yeshua as our High Priest judges the efficacy of our conversion and our walking the narrow way – his WAY. Only through his judgment, his ok, can we come to the Father, and enter into the Coming Age – thus in this role, Yeshua is the only way to God.

In a sense nothing has changed. Since the covenant at Mt Sinai, the High Priest has been the mediator for the people of God and he still is. The new High Priest has a priesthood that has now been in operation for some 2000 years, a priesthood that is of the character of Melchizedek's; a priesthood that the Levitical priesthood was a shadow of, and a Priesthood that pointed the way to the eternal Priesthood of Yeshua.

There is now a perfect priesthood, a perfect man, who through suffering as we have suffered; being tempted as we are tempted, is able to be the perfect judge of our circumcised hearts.

Yeshua is alive!

Is it not possible that since Yeshua's installation to the role of High Priest, he has performed the role every year on the Day of Atonement for all who seek forgiveness and turn to God? Is it also quite possible that when he returns on Yom Teruah (The Day of Shouting), the whole world will have 10 days to turn and seek forgiveness so that on **that** Day of Atonement, the living who have been 'found' will take their place alongside the righteous who have been resurrected and enter into the Kingdom of God?

Ecc 12:13-14 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Is it not reasonable then, and more importantly scriptural, that since the installation of Yeshua as High Priest, those, wherever and whenever they lived, even if they had never known or met the Messiah, but have lived lives obedient to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, may have been granted salvation and enter the coming Kingdom?

Psalm 110

Psalm 110 verse 1 is the most quoted and alluded to (some 23-24 times) Old Testament scripture in the New Testament. I have in the past, seen this as most significant in terms of its clear rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity.

However, in Yeshua's day when a scripture was quoted the hearers would normally have their minds drawn to the whole portion of their Holy Scriptures and not just the one verse in isolation (see 'Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus' for more on this aspect of the times).

So instead, perhaps the significance in the number of times this Psalm is quoted **is in the whole Psalm** and its message? Let us then re-read the Psalm:

Ps 110:

1 The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!

3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.

7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

So what is the message of this Psalm? Clearly it speaks of the new High Priest, it speaks of our Messiah Yeshua but more of his role as High Priest; a role through which he is the judge of the entire earth.

So in conclusion, when we read in John 14:6: *"Yeshua said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*, I suggest that Yeshua is declaring that as High Priest, **he** is the judge, **he** is the one who now decides who will be accepted and join him at the marriage supper as his bride and join him in the Kingdom.

Let Yeshua be the judge; let him read the hearts of men; let us not place labels of acceptance and rejection on others. This is not our role but his.

Let us seek to do the will of God; we and our households but let us not condemn others who also know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (that is, the Jewish people), but who perhaps do not yet know their High Priest, the Messiah Yeshua.

Trust that he knows them who are his.

Paul Herring
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