



Message 10-20-18
Lech Lecha-Go Forth Yourself
Genesis 12:1-17:27
Isaiah 40:27-41:16
Hebrews 7:1-10

Introduction

Four kings battle five kings, and in the process capture Lot. When Abram hears of this, he raises up 318 warriors and rescues Lot. In gratitude, King Melchizedek of Salem – later Jerusalem – blesses Abram in the name of the Almighty.

Genesis 14:18-20

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (ESV)

In the midst of the land of Canaan, we find a righteous man who is a priest of the Almighty and the king of Salem, believed to be the forerunner of Jerusalem.

Who Was Melchizedek?

By [Menachem Posner](#)

Question: In this week's Torah portion, after Abraham's victorious return from battle, we read: "*Melchizedek the king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he was a priest to the Most High God. And [Melchizedek] blessed him, and he said, "Blessed be Abram to the Most High God—Who possesses heaven and earth—and blessed be the Most High God, Who has delivered your adversaries into your hand."* And [Abram] gave him a tithe from all."¹

Who was this Melchizedek? What sort of priest was he, and why did Abraham give him a tithe?

Response: Taken alone, this tiny anecdote does indeed seem strange. The Torah tells us nothing else about this man and his relationship to Abraham.

The ancient *Targumim* (Aramaic interpretive translations) identify Melchizedek as Shem—son of Noah. Shem was one of the links in the chain who transmitted the G-dly traditions that originated with Adam. These traditions were carefully handed down from generation to generation, and Shem—who headed an academy—was a key conductor of

these teachings. The Midrash tells us that he was so perfect and so spiritually advanced that he was born circumcised.²

So why did the priesthood pass from him to Abraham's children?

The Talmud explains that this happened as a result of his having blessed Abraham before blessing G-d in the verses above. This is reflected in the only other place in Scripture where Melchizedek is mentioned: in [Psalms 110:4](#), where we read, ". . . you are a priest forever because of the speech of Melchizedek." Because of Melchizedek's ill-chosen speech, the priesthood was taken from him and given to the seed of Abraham forever.³

FOOTNOTES

[1. Genesis 14:18-20.](#)

[2. Bereishit Rabbah 43:6.](#)

[3. Talmud, Nedarim 32b.](#)

At first glance it seems problematic to say that the priesthood was taken from the progeny of Shem and given to the seed of Abraham, as Abraham himself was a grandson of Shem.

Tosafot offers two possible explanations: a. The priesthood was taken from the entire clan of Shem and became the exclusive privilege of Abraham's seed. b. Natural progression would have conferred Shem's status on his firstborn descendants—not Abraham. Thus, it was only because of this encounter that the priesthood was given to Abraham specifically.

RaN explains that the intent of the Talmud here is that the priesthood of Abraham's seed was now only by merit of the righteous Abraham and not due to their relation to Shem—which is why they are the only descendants of Shem deemed worthy of honor.

All of this is purely speculation, but it is one way of understanding who Melchizedek was and why he is mentioned in this passage and two others.

Psalm 110:4 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. (ESV)

Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Messiah did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Yeshua offered

up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (ESV)

Hebrews 7:11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹² For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the Torah as well. ¹³ **For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.** ¹⁴ **For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.** ¹⁵ **This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,** ¹⁶ **who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.** ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 7:11 ESV)

The reason Melchizedek is mentioned in Genesis is to show us that there is another priesthood that is older than that of the Aaronic priesthood. The reason this is shown to us is to help us understand that there is a greater priesthood than that of Aaron and the Levites because the Cohen HaGadol-the High Priest was Yeshua. Why Yeshua – because He is the Son of the Almighty, firstborn before creation as He has been with the Father from the beginning but brought forth as the living Word of the Father through whom everything there is was created. Melchizedek shows us an early picture of Messiah's calling by the Father. Melchizedek is king of Salem and a High Priest of the Father, and how would he know about God unless he had previous knowledge, such as Shem would have had from his father Noah. Shem and Japheth, most likely, carried on the faith of Noah and taught it to their descendants. Shem lived in Canaan but was a light in the darkness sharing the Almighty with those who lived in the land of Canaan the same as all those who have come after, down to our day, doing our best to share the truth of redemption through Messiah Yeshua.

Isaiah 41:8-10

8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; ¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (ESV)

Abraham was the grandson of Shem who carried on the covenant of the priesthood that had been Melchizedek's and now had been passed to Abraham. The Rabbinic

stories are just that – stories. Take them or leave them, but there might be some truth in some of them as to the lineage of Melchizedek and why we see him mentioned in the Bible. The Bible is not a haphazard book. Everything in there was placed there by the people the Almighty used to put His teachings into the Bible. The Aaronic priesthood was for Israel until the High Priest that the Father chose returns to take up His rightful place on the throne given to Him by His Father from the very beginning. Yeshua comes as Melchizedek in that He will be King and Priest of the Father. Where Melchizedek was an earthly king, our final king will be one who was both man and God being He was born of a human mother, Miriam, and the Almighty, His Father. To Yeshua the Father has given everything, and Yeshua in turn gives it back to His Father. He will give the throne back to the Father when all His enemies have been subdued and placed at His feet.

When will that day be? The only one who knows is the Father as the Son waits by His side to return to bring mankind under the rule of Torah and the kingdom of the Most High God.

Hebrews 7:1-10

1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. ⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! ⁵ And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸ In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. (ESV)

Why did Abraham give Melchizedek a tenth of what he had taken when he defeated the kings who had taken his nephew Lot captive? In the Torah, as given by Moses, the Levites who had been set apart to serve the Holy One of Israel, their inheritance was to serve Him. They were to receive a tithe of ten percent from all of Israel. In turn, they were to give a tithe to the priests who would give a tithe to the Holy One of Israel. There are those who say we do not have to give tithes today because we are not living in the land of Israel or there is no functioning Temple with priest and Levites. That may be true, but if you belong to a body of believers, you have a place to meet, and have a leader who teaches you Torah and about Messiah Yeshua, then you have a Biblical obligation to help support your leader and help to keep your meeting places there for you to be able to meet and

fellowship, praise the Almighty and His Son, and show the love of your Creator as He showed it to us through the sacrifice of His Son in order to redeem mankind so they will be able to enter into the final phase of His plan – eternity, to be with Him and Yeshua forever.

Torah Man says, “The Messiah reveals the love of the Almighty at its best and the sin of men at its worst.”

Blessings in Messiah Yeshua,

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