



## Parasha Bereshit

October 2, 2021

Torah: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5 - 43:10

Ketuvim Slichim: John 1:1-5

*Shabbat Shalom mishpacha.* Our *parasha* today is *Bereshit*, Genesis in English. We have completed our yearly cycle and are again where baseball is first mentioned in the Bible; “in the big inning!” *Bereshit* is the first word written in the Bible and means: “In the beginning.” *Be*, pronounced beh, is a prefix meaning “in” and *reshit* means “beginning.” And, it was the big inning because at that time ADONAI created all of the heavens and the earth and later had Moses to write this down for our edification. The five books of Moses are our cycle of life, one that begins again each year. The *Torah* plus its added commentary written by Yeshua’s disciples is our complete guide to faith and practice.

During our *Simchat Torah* service, “Rejoicing in the *Torah*,” which we held this past Tuesday, we rerolled our *Torah* scroll. The first word, *Bereshit*, בְּרֵאשִׁית, has an extra-large letter *beit*. We here at *Beit Shalom* have looked at the extra-large *beit* which begins *Bereshit* in our *Torah* 17 times. We have rerolled our *Torah* 17 times. How many more times will we see that large *beit* before Yeshua returns? Not too many times, I believe, for we are in the last of the last days. This earth had a beginning and it will have an end with its end being recreated as the new heaven and earth. In our *parasha* today we read: 1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (Genesis 1:1 TLV) and soon we will see what Yochanan saw: 1 “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*,”.. (Revelation 21:1a TLV). We are commanded by Yeshua to be ready and to pray for all of these endtime events to happen: 9 “*Therefore, pray in this way: ‘Our Father in heaven, sanctified be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come*,”.. (Matthew 6:9-10a TLV). If we get too earthly minded, we begin to think that it will never happen, but it will and it is closer than many in Yeshua’s body today think.

A few weeks ago, a friend asked me a question. He asked, “Who was referred to in the plural in Genesis where it says ‘Let us create man in our image.’” This is the verse: 26 *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness!”* (Genesis 1:26 TLV). He was sincere in asking. My response was that it was the image of the Father and also the image of the Son who was with Him in the big inning, the beginning. The Son is the image of His Father. *Sha’ul* said: 15 “*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*” (Colossians 1:15 TLV). Although ADONAI is the invisible *Elohim*, the invisible G-d, He obviously has an image. And, we are created in His image, the children of our Father. Our *parasha* also says this: 1 *This is the Book of the Genealogies of Adam: When God created Adam, (**Hebrew ha’adam, חָדָם**) in the likeness of God He made him. 2 Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and called their name “Adam” when He created them.*” (Genesis 5:1-2 TLV). *Ha’adam* is “mankind.” For us who follow Yeshua, that He was in the beginning is elementary. But, for a Jew to grasp this, it is life from the dead. And, that is ADONAI’s final mission of salvation on this earth, that the people of His chosen nation would

understand this truth and trust in their *hag-go'el Yeshua*, their “kinsman redeemer.” It is also the mission which ADONAI has given to modern Messianic Judaism and to each of us who has been called into it. As a part of Messianic Judaism, we are continually contributing to the coming “salvation of all Israel.”

We celebrated a festival a few days ago, a festival which may be connected to *Bereshit* and the creation of the heavens and the earth. I am referring to *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles. We celebrated *Sukkot* on September 21<sup>st</sup> and we read *Parasha Bereshit* which tells of the creation of the heavens and the earth today, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. From the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> is twelve days. That very short time is significant, but you can only see it if you are following a *Torah* scroll. Is it possible that the juxtaposition of these two events in Scripture has spiritual significance? I believe so, but the twelve days are not significant because that number changes each year because of the Hebrew calendar’s intercalation. Next year it will be 13 and the year after that 16. The significance to me is the closeness of these two events in our biblical cycle and what each means or may mean.

A moment ago, we read from Colossians 1 about Yeshua being the image of ADONAI. The next verse says: 16 “*For by Him all things were created—in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen, whether thrones or angelic powers or rulers or authorities. All was created through Him and for Him.*” (Colossians 1:16 TLV). As a part of our statement of faith every *Shabbat* we say: 8 .... “*for us there is but one G-d, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one L-rd, the Messiah Yeshua, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*” (1Corinthians 8:6 TLV). We declare that Yeshua created everything and our very own existence is through His creative act. He is our loving Messiah with whom we can be very intimate, but He’s also the Creator of everything, a divine being of penultimate power! And, we must recognize Him as such.

Our *Shlichim* reading for today also speaks of this: 1 “*In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being.*” (John 1:1-3 TLV). Yeshua is the Word who is G-d and was with G-d in the beginning. Yeshua is personified as the Word because He spoke everything into being. We read this today: 3 “*Then God said, “Let there be light!” and there was light.*” (Genesis 1:3 TLV). *Elohim*, G-d, in this verse is Yeshua, the Son of G-d, the Word who created everything. And, Yeshua spoke light into being. Looking at this from a perspective in Hebrew, He is the *Torah* who was with G-d, the living *Torah*, the author of *Torah*. If He created everything, He also created *Torah* in the hearts of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah and the others as well as placing the *Ketuvim Shlichim* in the hearts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, *Sha'ul, Kefa, Ya'acov and Yehudah*.

But, what is the connection of Yeshua, the Word of G-d, to *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles? Going down several verses in John 1 we find the connection: 14 “*And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.*” (John 1:14 TLV). Tabernacles is translated from the Greek *skénoó* (skay-no'-o), meaning dwell as in a tent, encamp, or have a tabernacle. We understand that this means that Yeshua came to earth as a man and pitched His earthly tent, His body, among the people of Israel. But, it may also be a clue as to when He tabernacled in Israel, when he was born? Some think so. The definition of a tabernacle in biblical use is: “a fixed or movable habitation, typically of light construction.” With regard to the tabernacle being a *sukkah* used during *Sukkot*, we could also say that it is a temporary dwelling. It is only used for seven days and then it is taken down. That was also true of

Yeshua's earthly tabernacle, His body. The same is true of our bodies. They are our *sukkah*, our earthly tabernacle. Yeshua only used His for a short period, 3 ½ years. But, how may He be connected to *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles?

What I'm about to say is not doctrine. It's just a possibility. It is possible that Yeshua was born on the first day of *Sukkot*, one of the seven special festival Sabbaths. But, we do not celebrate His birth then nor do we celebrate it at any time. This is not our doctrine and we don't make any kind of observance about it during the festival. Before we talk about the evidence for His being born on *Sukkot*, I want to emphasize that we only observe what ADONAI has commanded us to observe and nothing else. *Sola scriptura*, Latin for "by Scripture alone," is our guide. If ADONAI didn't say "it's a *moed*," a festival, observe it, we don't. *Sukkot* is a *moed*, a commanded festival, and we observe it, but it is not a *moed* to observe His birth, if He was born then. Please keep this in mind as we examine some of the evidence that Yeshua might have been born on *Sukkot*.

There are three things which lead us to consider the possibility of *Sukkot* as the time of Yeshua's birth. They are 1) the time of the birth of *Yochanan Hamatabil*, John the Immerser, in relation to the time of the birth of Yeshua, 2) the time of the year that shepherds would be out with their flocks and 3) the service cycles of the priests in the Temple. If *Sukkot* was the time of Yeshua's birth, it is entirely possible that the feeding trough, the manger described as His cradle, was actually in a *sukkah* and His birth was in the fall and not the winter.

The strongest evidence that Yeshua may have been born during *Sukkot* comes from calculations about Zechariah's time of service in the Temple. By determining the times that he served in the Temple we can calculate approximately when his son John was born and then, based on this, we can determine approximately when Yeshua was born. Luke described Zechariah's service in the Temple: *23 When the days of his priestly service had been completed, he went home. 24 After these days, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant....* (Luke 1:23-24a TLV). John was conceived after Zechariah returned home from that particular time of Temple service. By knowing when Zechariah served in the Temple, we can come very close to knowing when John was born.

In the Book of Luke we can also determine the relative ages of John and his cousin Yeshua. Luke 1:24 tells us that after Elizabeth conceived, she hid herself for 5 months. Then, verse 26 tells us that one month later, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent to tell *Miryam* that she was going to become pregnant with ADONAI's Son. From these verses we learn that John would be approximately six months older than Yeshua.

From Luke, we go now to 1Chronicles 24 to get information which will help us determine when Zechariah was serving in the Temple. In 1Chronicles, we find the divisions of the *kohanim*, the priests, listed in the order in which they were to serve in the Temple. This way of organizing priests, and also the Levites, for Temple service was set up by King David at about the same time that he anointed Solomon to take his place as king. His plan was that the descendants of Aaron's two surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were to be divided into 24 divisions of priests. Each division of several thousands of priests, would serve for a full week two different times in a year. In addition, during the festivals, all 24 divisions would be on duty. Luke 1 tells us that Zechariah was a member of the division of Abijah: *5 "In the days of Herod, King of Judah, there was a kohen named Zechariah from the priestly*

*division of Abijah.*" (Luke 1:5a TLV). 1Chronicles 24: tells us that Abijah was the eighth division: *10 ...the seventh for Hakkoz, the eighth for Abijah,*.. (1Chronicles 24:10 TLV).

The 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month of *Nisan*, the Biblical New Year, was the beginning point. From that time, calculations regarding when the divisions of priests were to serve in the Temple were made. By calculation, Zechariah's division, the eighth division, would have been ministering during the 10<sup>th</sup> week of the year. Why the 10<sup>th</sup> week and not the 8<sup>th</sup>? That was because all priests served during the weeks surrounding *Pesach* and *Shavuot*, the two festivals which occurred during these first weeks of the year. These two festivals would have moved Zechariah's division's service forward two weeks.

During his service, Zechariah was burning incense at the Golden Altar of Incense in the Holy Place of the Temple: *9 According to the custom of the priestly office, it became his lot to enter the Holy Place of Adonai to burn incense* (John 1:9 TLV). Alfred Edersheim in his book, *The Temple*, gives us a description of how Zechariah received this great honor. He tells us that Zechariah was chosen by lot in the daily pre-service meeting of the priests in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Temple. He was chosen from all the priests of his course, hundreds or possibly thousands of priests. This was a once in a lifetime type of honor because there were always so many priests on duty. Zechariah was already an old man at this time. Verse 10 continues: *10 And the whole crowd of people was praying outside at the hour of incense burning* (John 10:10 TLV). The incense was burned twice daily, early in the morning and at twilight. We aren't told which time this was. The smoke of the incense was a visible representation of the prayers of the people and as the aroma was ascending to ADONAI, special prayers were also being prayed outside by the people. They were the benedictions of the *Amidah*, our ancient Standing Prayer.

The *Amidah* was prayed every day in the Temple. In one of the benedictions of this prayer, we can see a connection between John, the son who was to be born to Zechariah and the Prophet Elijah. Elijah is not mentioned in the *Amidah* by name, but he is implied. The 15<sup>th</sup> Benediction of the *Amidah* is prayer for the coming of Messiah. It was well understood in that day that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah, and that hope was also present in the daily prayers of the people. They were actively looking for Him. The people who were gathered in the Temple that day didn't know it, but the son to be born to Zechariah was to become Elijah in spirit and power. This was prophesied to Zechariah as he ministered in the Holy Place by the angel Gabriel: *17 And he (John) will go before Him (Messiah) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to the children and the disobedient ones to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready for Adonai a prepared people* (Luke 1:17-18 TLV). Yeshua later confirmed verbally that John was Elijah (Matthew 11:14).

Gabriel continued: *13 ..... "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to your son, and you will name him John"* (Luke 1:13 TLV). What was Zechariah praying? Was he praying for a son for himself at his old age or was he praying for the Messiah and His predecessor, Elijah to come? We don't know what he prayed, but we do know that this was a miraculous birth, on the order of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both old, but G-d overcame whatever aging process had taken place in their bodies. Regardless of what Zechariah was praying about, John was the answer. He was both a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth and also the forerunner of the Messiah.

If we begin at approximately ten weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan, the time when Zechariah served in the Temple, and count nine months from the time of Elizabeth's conception, the

time that Zechariah went home from his service, we arrive at Passover the next year. John may have been born during Passover. This also fits very well with Jewish tradition which teaches that Elijah will come before the Messiah. And Elijah also has a place at the *seder* table set for him each Passover as he is expected one day to appear.

Six months after John's conception, *Miryam* had her encounter with Gabriel: *26 Then in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by Adonai into a town in the Galilee named Natzeret 27 and to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Miryam* (Luke 1:26-27 TLV). Elizabeth became pregnant shortly after Zechariah served in the Temple. That was sometime in the middle of the month of *Sivan*, approximately 10 weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Nisan*. Six months later Gabriel spoke to *Miryam*. Counting forward six months from mid-*Sivan*, the time of John's conception, would take us to the time of Yeshua's conception. It would have been around the time of *Chanukkah* in the month of *Kislev*. If this is true, the festival of *Chanukkah* also bears symbolism for us for more than just the *Chanukkah* story.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> century, *Channukah* was known as the second *Sukkot*. That was because of the tradition that the eight days of *Channukah* were a gift from ADONAI to replace the eight days of *Sukkot* which could not be celebrated because of the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes and his pagan soldiers some two hundred years before Yeshua's day. If Yeshua was incarnated in *Miryam* at *Chanukkah*, the time span between *Chanukkah* and the following *Sukkot* would have been the months of her pregnancy, about 280 days, which fits within a normal pregnancy, the gestation period for a human baby.

We don't know for certain, but the possibility is that Yeshua could have tabernacled, could have been born on *Tishrei* 15, the first day of *Sukkot*. If this is true, His *b'rit milah*, his circumcision, the eighth day after His birth, would have been on *Shemini Atzeret*, the eighth day concluding festival. We don't say that it happened this way, but there are a number of things which do point to Yeshua's birth at this time.

In Luke 2, shepherds were in the fields with their flocks when an angel appeared to them. He said: *10 ..... "Do not be afraid! For behold, I proclaim Good News to you, which will be great joy to all the people. 11 A Savior is born to you today in the city of David, who is Messiah the Lord* (Luke 2:10-11 TLV). These words are very much like the ancient *rabbi*'s name for this season, *Zeman Simchateinu*, the Season of our Joy. We spoke these exact words on *Sukkot*. We also know that during this time of year that shepherds were out in the pastures with their flocks. In late December the weather would have been very cold and the flocks would already have been inside their winter quarters.

If Yeshua was born during during *Sukkot*, there is also greater significance for us in the season of *Chanukkah*, the possible time of His incarnation. *Chanukkah* is called the Festival of Lights and Yeshua called Himself "The Light of the world." Read John chapters 7 and 8. There you will find that Yeshua spoke those words about light on *Shemini Atzeret*, the eighth day assembly following *Sukkot*. *Atzeret* means "to hold back," and the *rabbis* thought that this meant that ADONAI wanted us to tarry with Him just one more day. This image of "remaining" is symbolic of eternity. On *Shemini Atzeret*, Yeshua said: *12 ..... "I am the light of the world. The one who follows Me will no longer walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12 TLV). Was this Yeshua's reference to the Festival of *Chanukkah*? Light was a powerful symbol in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, a representation of salvation and knowledge. We who have trusted Him have "seen the light" and consequently have the "light of life." It is also important to state that *Chanukkah* is not a commanded festival like

Sukkot. We enjoy celebrating it, but we don't give it the status of ADONAI's commanded *moedim*.

Returning to Genesis and Yeshua as the Creator, we see Him pictured in these prophetic words: 15 *"I will put animosity between you (**the serpent**) and the woman—between your seed and her seed. He (**Yeshua**) will crush your head, and you will crush his heel."* (Genesis 3:15 TLV). In this verse, the suffix on the word "heel" is singular, alluding to one individual, Yeshua, the seed, the descendant of the woman. We could say that *HaSatan*'s crushing of Yeshua's heel is a flesh wound, but Yeshua's bruising of *HaSatan*'s head will be a death wound. The serpent in the garden was not just an ordinary reptile. Because he was presented as an individual with intelligence, speech and awareness of G-d, he was much more than a snake. It may be that "serpent" is a title rather than a name, a title describing his nature and not his shape. As we learn later, the serpent is the Adversary, *HaSatan*, who will be crushed by Yeshua, the seed of the woman. 20 *"Now the God of shalom will soon crush satan under your (**Yeshua's**) feet."* (Romans 16:20a TLV). How did the Adversary come to be in the garden at this time following creation? Yochanan tells us: 9 *"And the great dragon was thrown down—the ancient serpent, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."* (Revelation 12:9 TLV). Before the creation of the heavens and the earth, *HaSatan* had already been thrown out of heaven.

In our message, we have connected Yeshua, the living Word, the Creator of the universe, with Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles, not only through His words in John chapters 7 and 8, but also possibly through His time of birth. Yeshua is the Creator in the beginning and the conquering king in the end and He will crush *HaSatan*'s head: <26> 10 *"And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they shall be tortured day and night forever and ever."* (Revelation 20:10 TLV). After Yeshua returns and establishes His Kingdom, it will be eternal Sukkot, a time when we will dwell with ADONAI forever. Revelation 7 gives us a picture of Sukkot in eternity: 9 *"After these things I looked, and behold, a vast multitude that no one could count—from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues—was standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’"* (Revelation 7:9-10 TLV). One day, we will all be a part of that group worshipping Yeshua with the *lulav*! This, to me, is perhaps the most important connection of Yeshua with Sukkot. He is our eternal *Sukkah*, the Tabernacle which will shelter us and nurture us for eternity. Whether Yeshua was born on Sukkot or not is a mystery. Whether Yeshua will return for us on *Rosh Hashanah* is a mystery. But, it is an absolute truth that Yeshua, the Creator of the universe, is the *Mashiach* who will bring about eternal *shalom*, the sheltering peace promised us through the picture of Sukkot. He is coming soon! *Shabbat shalom!*