

## New Beginnings 2

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New Years Day this past Monday was a day that many in the world saw as a moment in time for new beginnings. They made resolutions to do things and to make changes in their lives that they largely will not keep because they will rely on their own power and will to accomplish them. Yet, the idea of their being new beginnings at a point in time is biblical, and is spoken of throughout Scripture.

Consider the earliest one that the Bible describes; Genesis 1:1 (CJB) tells us:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

It was not the “beginning” of beginnings, because angelic beings, and who knows what else, existed before God created the heavens and the earth. We know from Nehemiah 9:6 that the angels themselves had a beginning, so it is probably accurate to say that the Genesis creation was a first “new beginning.”

Now, there would probably not have been a need for any subsequent new beginnings had Adam not disobeyed God and eaten of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. But he did, and that caused all of creation (including man) to fall from grace and essentially to die spiritually. God could have left it at that, but, in his compassion, he devised a way that man could, over time, return to his former relationship with Him by proving that he could consistently do the opposite of that which caused his fall. Disobedience caused his fall so, in His wisdom, God prescribed that obedience would be man’s path back to eternal life with Him.

Now I can feel the dander rising from some of you who are saying to yourselves: “Eternal life through obedience?” “Rabbi Rudolph must be losing it! He’s preaching salvation by works of the Law!” Well, in a way I am, but not the way you may be thinking - not just any works of the law, but works that God specifically designated for each covenant, and that changed with each covenant. We of Ohev Yisrael are in the New Covenant, are believers in Messiah Yeshua, and we know that there is no salvation other than through Him. Acts 4:12 (NKJ) assures us of that when it says:

*“There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom we must be saved!”*

Also, Romans 10:8 (NKJ) tells us:

*“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart ” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord [Yeshua] and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

And Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJ) tells us:

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

Ephesians says, “*not of works,*” yet we read in Matthew 19:16-17(CJB):

*“A man approached Yeshua and said, “Rabbi, what good thing should I do in order to have eternal life?” He said to him, “Why are you asking me about good? There is One who is good! But if you want to obtain eternal life, observe the mitzvot.””*

Whoa! Hold on now! “The *Mitzvot*” that Yeshua referred to were the commandments dictated to Moses – the “Law!” Why is Yeshua advising the man that if he wants eternal life he must observe the Law? Isn’t observing the Law works? Let’s skip to verse 21 for the answer:

*“Yeshua said to him, ‘If you are serious about reaching the goal, go and sell your possessions, give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me!’”*

Yeshua knew that the man’s money and possessions were idols to him, and that he would not keep God’s commandments if it meant giving them up. Yeshua also knew that the man was not going to follow Him, even to gain eternal life, because he (the man) could not bring himself to do the works that required that he part with his wealth.

Do you see it now? “Following Yeshua and performing works are related and cannot be separated; giving up what one must in order to follow Yeshua is an act of works because it a willful decision. James 2:14 (NKJ) says it this way:

*“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”*

So, in the New Covenant where we find ourselves, the works that will save us are to turn away from sin, give up what we must of the world, and follow Yeshua. But they are not the same works that were required of Adam, nor of Abraham, nor of the Israelites under Moses. Yeshua had not yet been born, so their “new beginnings” had entirely to do with – repenting of sin, giving up worldly ways, turning to God, and in the case of the Israelites who received God’s covenant at Mt Sinai, obeying the commandments given through Moses.

Israel’s foundational new beginning was being led out of Egypt, and then receiving its Covenant at Mount Sinai. Our foundational new beginning is the New Covenant that was prophesied by Jeremiah; we are told of it in Jeremiah 31:30(31)-33(34) (CJB):

*“Here, the days are coming,” says ADONAI, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra’el and with the house of Y’hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt;*

*because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says ADONAI. "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, [saying] 'Know ADONAI'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more."*

Almost as a continuation of the Jeremiah prophecy, we read in Ezekiel 36:26-28:

*"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit inside you; I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them. You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors. You will be my people, and I will be your God."*

Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that there would be a new beginning for Israel that would involve a New Covenant and the Holy Spirit working within us. Neither of them said how or when this would come about, and although Jeremiah prophesied that God would forgive us and "remember our sins no more," he did not disclose that God would achieve it by sending his son Yeshua to be our Messiah and by sacrificing Himself in our behalf.

Nevertheless, there are other Scriptures that were understood by the Israelites as prophetic of a coming Messiah; we know this because by the time Yeshua was born, all of Israel was expecting a Messiah and looking for him. Here are two prophecies that unquestionably influenced Israel to be on the lookout for a Messiah; first Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (CJB):

*"ADONAI will raise up for you a prophet like me from among yourselves, from your own kinsmen. You are to pay attention to him, just as when you were assembled at Horev and requested ADONAI your God, 'Don't let me hear the voice of ADONAI my God any more, or let me see this great fire ever again; if I do, I will die!' On that occasion ADONAI said to me, 'They are right in what they are saying. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I order him. Whoever doesn't listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me.'" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19 CJB)*

And then of course the well-known prophecy of Isaiah 53 that speaks not only of a suffering Messiah, but of a Messiah that will sacrifice Himself for the sins of others. I will read it to you in its entirety:

*"Who believes our report? To whom is the arm of ADONAI revealed? For before him he grew up like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He was not well-formed or especially handsome; we saw him, but his appearance did not attract us. People despised and avoided him, a man of pains, well acquainted with illness. Like someone from whom people turn their faces, he was despised; we did not value him. In fact, it was our diseases he bore, our pains from which he suffered; yet we regarded him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God. But he was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins;*

*the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises we are healed. We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on him the guilt of all of us. Though mistreated, he was submissive- he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to be slaughtered, like a sheep silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth. After forcible arrest and sentencing, he was taken away; and none of his generation protested his being cut off from the land of the living for the crimes of my people, who deserved the punishment themselves. He was given a grave among the wicked; in his death he was with a rich man. Although he had done no violence and had said nothing deceptive, yet it pleased ADONAI to crush him with illness, to see if he would present himself as a guilt offering. If he does, he will see his offspring; and he will prolong his days; and at his hand ADONAI's desire will be accomplished. After this ordeal, he will see satisfaction. By his knowing [pain and sacrifice], my righteous servant makes many righteous; it is for their sins that he suffers. Therefore I will assign him a share with the great, he will divide the spoil with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and being counted among the sinners, while actually bearing the sin of many and interceding for the offenders.”*

The offenders are us!

There are other prophetic Scriptures as well, such as the graphic description of Yeshua's crucifixion in Psalms 22 and the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14(CJB):

*“Therefore Adonai himself will give you people a sign: the young woman [Virgin] will become pregnant, bear a son and name him 'Immanu El [God is with us].”*

So, the foundational “new beginning” for us, is the New Covenant that was ushered in by Yeshua's birth, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection here on earth, followed by the “Counselor” (the Holy Spirit) that Yeshua said he would send us. We read Yeshua's words in John 16:5-7 (CJB):

*“But now I am going to the One who sent me. 'Not one of you is asking me, 'Where are you going?' Instead, because I have said these things to you, you are overcome with grief. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I don't go away, the comforting Counselor [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. However, if I do go, I will send him to you.”*

And send Him to us he did, for He came in power on that very next *Shavuot* that is today commonly referred to as “Pentecost.” Interestingly and not a coincidence, *Shavuot* is a celebration of firstfruits of the Spring harvest, which is a new beginning for the agricultural year.

I began this message with a reminder that we are fresh into a new year that many look forward to as a new beginning. Although there is only one New Year's Day on our secular calendar, there are at least two New Year's Days on Jewish calendars – one biblical and one rabbinical. Referring to the month of *Nisan*, Exodus 12:2 (CJB) commands us:

*“You are to begin your calendar with this month; it will be the first month of the year for you.”*

And Leviticus 23:24 (CJB) commands us to”

*“Tell the people of Isra'el, 'In the seventh month, the first of the month is to be for you a day of complete rest for remembering, a holy convocation announced with blasts on the shofar.*

Although Scripture does not define this latter day as the beginning of a new year, the Jewish community worldwide calls it *Rosh HaShanah*, which means “head of the year,” because it ushers in an annual season of introspection and repentance that is followed ten days later by the Yom Kippur sacrifice for the covering-over of our sins committed during the prior year. Prior to the New Covenant, that sacrifice and the daily Temple sacrifices were the only new beginnings available, and the closest that Israelites and Gentiles within the Jewish community could come to being cleansed of their sins. But that all changed with the sacrifice and resurrection of Yeshua, for we read in 1 Peter 1:3-4:

*“Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope, to an inheritance that cannot decay, spoil or fade, kept safe for you in heaven.”*

Being born again in Yeshua is truly the newest beginning we can have, for it does more than cover over our sins, it totally wipes them out. We read in Hebrews 10:10-14:

*“It is in connection with this will that we have been separated for God and made holy, once and for all, through the offering of Yeshua the Messiah's body. Now every cohen stands every day doing his service, offering over and over the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this one, after he had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, sat down at the right hand of God, from then on to wait until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for God and made holy.”*

So, Yeshua’s sacrifice does much more than cover our sins over; if we repent of our sins and receive his sacrifice as our own, it totally wipes our sins away, giving us an entirely fresh slate – the newest beginning that we could possibly have. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*“.. if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation- the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new!”*

And along with this new beginning comes eternal life, for we read in John 3:16 (NKJ):

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

That this new birth gives us eternal life is wonderful but, even more wonderful, is that our eternal life will be in the presence of and in fellowship with God. We will (in essence) have returned to

how it was between God and man in the Garden of Eden, but this time our fellowship with God will be in heaven.

If there is anyone here that has not yet experienced God's offer of a new beginning you can have it right now. Also, there may be some here who have experienced the new birth but need a re-charge of the Spirit. In Yeshua, whenever we come to Him with a repentant heart we are forgiven and blessed with a new beginning. He says to us in Matthew 11:28-39:

*“Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

We will close our service now, but the elders will remain up front to pray with anyone who would like to receive Yeshua for the first time, or to pray for a revival of your spirit, for healing, or for any other need.