

What is salvation? When were you saved? How were you saved? Are you STILL saved? For many of us, we have the answers to these questions . . . at least we think we do! Many people believe they are saved. At one time in their lives, they answered an alter call and submitted their lives to God. They took the traditional plunge in the baptismal pool, and for a period, at least, tried to walk in a more 'godly' manner. Many others were baptized at birth or shortly thereafter. Some probably never answered an alter call, never had the gut feeling that they may need to change their life. They were confident that they had been saved early in life, so all's well! Then there are some who "turn their life to The Lord" on their death bed. Just before my father died, one of the hospice workers brought a local pastor to my father's bedside with hopes of being able to squeak a last minute confession out of him just to make sure he would not meet any obstacles on the way to the pearly gates.

Yes, there are a number of views of salvation, especially about how to obtain it. But what does the Bible teach about it? In this study, we will discuss the foundational scriptures from which we can form a more Biblical view on this very important subject.

As we have discussed before, and as the name of our series indicates, salvation is part of a cycle. In leading up to this particular topic, we have discussed our covenant relationship and the responsibilities that go along with it. We've discussed the fact that we must first recognize that we are in trouble - that we are in bondage, and that in order to be released from bondage, we must recognize that we need a redeemer – and not just any redeemer, a redeemer who is willing and able to redeem us. Once we find our redeemer, we can then start down the path to salvation.

But as I pointed out in the beginning of this series, salvation is just part of the cycle, it's right there in the middle – between redemption and baptism. Should it not be the last thing on the list? No, and as we'll see, it's only a step along the way to the goal of "eternal life with Messiah Yeshua".

So, what is salvation?

At the naming of John the Baptist, Zacharias made this statement:

"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, ⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of **salvation** for us In the house of His servant David, ⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, ⁷¹ That we should be **saved** from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, ⁷² To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. ⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of **salvation** to His people By the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; ⁷⁹ To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." **NKJ**
Luke 1:68-79

In his statement, Zacharias declared that the coming Messiah would be the "horn of salvation". In Biblical literature, a horn is symbolic of a ram, a strong animal. Thus, the Messiah would be the strong one who would bring salvation to the people. He said that the Messiah would save them from their enemies, and that his son, John, would announce that this salvation was imminent. So it appears that in his mind, Zacharias associated the word "salvation" with some type of deliverance, not necessarily a state of being, or even a promise of some heavenly realm, and this would be correct since in this passage the English word "salvation" is translated from the Greek word "soteria" (Strong's 4991). Strong's says that "soteria" means deliverance, preservation, and safety. This is a pretty good definition, though somewhat incomplete - as we will see.

The best way to find the Biblical definition of any word, especially a Greek word, is to determine its Hebrew counterpart. When we, by way of the Septuagint¹, look up the equivalent Hebrew word for salvation, we find the word "yeshuw'ah" (Strong's 3444). This is a feminine form of the masculine word "yeshua" (Strong's 3442) which means "he is saved" or "he is salvation". Another closely related word is "Yehoshuawa" (Strong's 3091) which means "Yah is salvation". All of these words come from the root word "yasha" (Strong's 3467) which means "to save" or "to be saved". Its primitive connotation is that of one being brought into a wide place as opposed to a narrow place, such as a place of confinement, such as a jail, as would happen when an enemy surrounds you with the intent of killing or capturing you.

A good example of this is in the Psalms where David is thanking God for delivering him out of the hands of his enemies . . .

^{NKJ} Psalm 31:8 And (*you*) have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place.

So let's look at the word "yasha".

Yasha is spelled with the three Hebrew consonants *yod* (י), *shin* (ש), and *ayin* (ע), all of which are derived from primitive script. Keeping in mind that Hebrew is an action language, if you were to look at a picture of these primitive letters, you would see a *hand*, *teeth*, and an *eye*, with each representing a certain action. The hand represents deed or action, the teeth - consuming or destruction, and finally, the eye represents looking upon something, even longingly, as in the movies where the princess glares at her knight in shining amour as he rides in from a distance on his white horse. To the Hebrew people, these letters, in this order would indicate being rescued, followed by the destruction of the one who was pursuing or holding them captive, then a devotion to the one who had delivered them. This is the Hebrew idea of salvation.

Looking at the Hebrew scriptures, we see that this is indeed the case. The very first place we see the word *yasha* is in Exodus 2:17 where Moses meets Jethro's daughter at the well.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 2:16-17** Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and **helped** (*yasha*) them, and watered their flock.

This is the first place in the Bible where we see someone being saved. Here Moses, the former prince of Egypt, comes by the well and finds some renegade shepherds giving Jethro's daughters grief while they were trying to water the flocks. Moses, in all his Charlton Heston garb, drives these men away singlehandedly. He then draws water for all the women and their flocks. All the women think he's a hero and the oldest ends up marrying him. A perfect love story.

This, of course, is at the beginning of the narrative of God delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt, which is the model we're using for this *Salvation Cycles* series. It's important that we understand *salvation* from this perspective because the Exodus story is just a type of the latter, and greater Exodus that will happen in the last days.

^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 16:14-15** " Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' ¹⁵ "but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

¹ The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Hebrews scriptures. This work was done approximately 200 AD when many of the Jewish people were living in Greek speaking Egypt.

The next place we see salvation is at the Red Sea crossing. It's important that we understand the ramifications of this scripture because its place in the narrative plays a key role in our understanding of salvation.

NKJ Exodus 14:27-31 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ So the LORD **saved** (*yasha*) Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared (*yare'*) the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.

In this case, we see that YHVH delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians single-handedly. He then destroyed them by drowning them in the sea, and as a result, the people feared God - but it was more than just fear. The word for fear is *yare'* which means *to stand in awe of*. So again, we see the three Hebrew letters played out.

The *yod* (י) - God delivered them by placing the pillar of fire between them and the Egyptians, then once they were safe, the *shin* (ש) - He killed the enemy in the sea, and finally, the *ayin* (ע) - they look longingly at him, as we see in the song of Moses and the song of Miriam.

As we rehearse the timeline of what happened here, Israel was in bondage and feared for their lives. They (obviously) remembered the covenant they were under, the covenant God had made with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thus cried out to God for redemption. He then *saved* them at the Red Sea when he destroyed their captors. This is precisely what God had told them He'd do back in Exodus 6.

But notice, Israel was not yet at the Promised Land. Before they got there they saw more mighty works of God and were introduced to His law, after which they were offered a special relationship – a marriage relationship – with Him. It's not until all this took place that they were given the Ten Commandments and the various mitzvot (laws and instructions) in Exodus 20 – 23. When they did, roughly a year after their salvation at the Red Sea, have the opportunity to enter the Promised Land, they lost heart and faith in their deliverer and refused to go in. Thus, a saved people perished in the wilderness.

So Israel was introduced to their savior before they were introduced to the Torah. In effect, they were "saved by grace, not by works". They were saved because of God's promise to Abraham, not because they were Torah observant. The *grace* YHVH bestowed on His people is often overlooked in the Tnakh². Many believe it is a New Testament concept and that *grace* opposes *law*. But the example of what happened to the Israelites, especially in this case, is a perfect example of *grace* and *law*. In other words, we receive *grace* before we receive *law* as Paul so clearly states –

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. (**NKJ Ephesians 2:8-9**)

Another familiar example of salvation is the story of David and Goliath. In this case, the young David defies the champion of the Philistines. David tells Goliath . . .

"This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ "Then all this assembly

² Tnakh is a Hebrew acronym that defines the scriptures as the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. This is the same nomenclature Yeshua used in Luke 24:44 when He showed His disciples that He was the major topic of the "Old Testament" scriptures.

shall know that the LORD does not **save** (*yasha*) with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands." (^{NKJ}1 Samuel 17:46-47)

As we know, David killed Goliath with stones, not a sword. Not long after, David was given the daughter of the king as his wife.

As a side note, the Hebrew word for stone is *eh-ven* (אבן), an *aleph*, *bet*, and *nun*. These letters could also indicate *father* (א) and *son* (בן).

Yasha is used 205 times in the Tnakh and in most cases describes a situation where someone is in need of deliverance from an enemy. Though I have not studied each occurrence, I don't believe there is a single case where the word describes a state of being where a person is not in peril. That being said, does the Old Testament use of the word in any way describe a state of bliss or comfort, free from the fear of (eternal) death? And if not, why then do we seem to think that salvation in the New Testament does?

Now that we have a clear definition of salvation from the Tnakh, we can begin to better understand Yeshua's role in our salvation? Keep in mind that those living in Yeshua's day did not have the New Testament from which they could build their theology. It was all "Old Testament", and thus they would be speaking and writing from an "Old Testament" perspective, using "Old Testament" definitions. So what is Yeshua's role? The apostle John said -

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Based on the Tnakh's definition, Yeshua should deliver us from an enemy, destroy the enemy, then WE should want to look upon Him with adoration. Zachariah understood that to be Yeshua's role. Again quoting from his prophecy at the circumcision of John the Baptist, Zachariah said Yeshua would bring about us being -

Luke 1:71 ⁷¹ . . . saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us . . .

Yeshua will deliver us from our enemies. This could have a couple of meanings, and both of them could be right. Yeshua, at His first coming, did not deliver the Jewish people from the hands of the Romans, in fact, He died at the hands of Roman soldiers; but at His resurrection, he gained power over the last enemy – death³. Thus, He now has the power to destroyed that particular enemy. But was that enough to convince His disciples that He was their messiah, and did he really save anyone at that time? It doesn't appear so because after his resurrection and multiple conversations with the risen Messiah, his disciples say "We're going fishing" (John 21:3). You see, the Hebraic understanding of *salvation* is deliverance from bondage and the freedom of the people of God, as witnessed by their last question to Him before He ascended to Heaven –

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

It was not until Pentecost that they really understood the salvation that Yeshua brought. On that day the restoration of Israel, spoken of by all the prophets, began. Not the restoration that will take place at the end of days, but the beginning stages – sort of "here now, but not yet". Peter made it a point of saying that what they were witnessing was a fulfillment of the prophecies of Joel. We tend to focus in on the passage about the giving of the Ruach, the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) but fail to pick up the context immediately before – the restoration of the people of Israel. The salvation they saw was the remnant of Israel being loosed (brought into a wide place) from the "curse of the law" found in the prophecies of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27 & 28. They were seeing the beginning of the fulfillment of multiple prophecies, especially those in Isaiah. Just read Isaiah 43. It's all about the restoration of Israel. And what does He say is His role?

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior (*yasha*). (**Isaiah 43:11**)

³ 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Yeshua will be coming back in the spirit of His father – King David. David was a mighty warrior, who in His lifetime joined Israel together and subdued all the nations around him, thus ushering in a 40+ year period of peace. The Olivet prophecy describes the horrors of the time that's known in Jewish circles as the *Birth Pains of the Messiah*. Matthew quotes Yeshua saying –

Matthew 24:30-31 ³⁰ "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The gathering of God's elect, is one of the greatest themes of the Bible. It's prophesied in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and practically all the prophets. According to the prophecies, the gathering will take place while Israel is in great distress. Thus, Yeshua will play the role of the one who delivers His people and destroys their enemies, and as we also see in the prophecies, marries the woman he just delivered. A perfect picture of the Hebrew word *yasha*. It helps us get a better understanding of His statement that . . . "*he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.*"

So what is *salvation*? It's the recognition that someone saved you from peril or imminent death, destroyed your enemy, and then YOU looking upon the one who saved you with adoration. For the remnant of Israel, the people of God, Yeshua has brought us salvation – WE'VE BEEN SAVED!, but we have yet to make it to the Promised Land, and many of us have yet to make it to Mount Sinai! You cannot lose your salvation, because Yeshua will not go back into the grave, but you can certainly miss out on the joy and reward of being a saved person if you lose adoration for and reject Him, just as the Exodus generation did.

To review, the concept of salvation is entirely Hebraic. The New Testament scriptures agree with the Old Testament concept which is based on the Hebrew word *yasha*. In its most basic form, the word indicates a person delivering another from the hands of the enemy, destroying the enemy, then the one delivered looking longingly on the one who had delivered her. Moses and King David were both examples of a savior. Of course, Yeshua is the one real Savior of Israel. He has saved those who have accepted Him as their deliver and who longingly look upon Him as their husband and who wish to please Him through obedience to His instructions.

As we continue this series, we will see the role baptism, Torah, faithfulness, and repentance play in the Cycles of Salvation.

Shalom!