

# THE INTERCESSORS

Drash for March 7, 2009

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For a long time now, our culture has had an interest in superheroes. In fact most cultures have had interest in humanlike beings who had superhuman abilities with which to fight evil and help normal humans with the problems of life caused by those evil forces. We can go back to the Greek gods of mythology to the not too different beings in modern movies like Watchmen. Even when our problems are caused by our own mistakes or ignorance, something in our heart longs for someone or something to set everything right and help us start over. This has been the spirit behind the election of our new president. Whether he is truly the Neo that can bring us out of the matrix of our economic mess, or a Joker that just adds to our demise, remains to be seen.

Like the Jews of ancient Rome, we are left looking for a Messiah. Those of us who have faith in the Son of God, Yeshua, believe we have found that Messiah and long for the day that He does return to begin the process of cleansing the world of its sin and leading His people to His glorious Kingdom. Yeshua is truly a superhero above any other, and unlike other superheroes, he not the product of some geek's imagination, but the true Son of the Living God who actually walked on water, healed the sick, fed the multitudes, turned water into wine, commanded the forces of nature to obey Him, brought all things into existence, came to earth as a man, died and rose three days later after conquering the forces of hell and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father to intercede for His own. Not only that but this is a small sample of what we know of a man who it is written if all was recorded that He did here, the volumes could fill an entire library, and even that is what He did during the 32 or so years that He lived as a man in Isra'el. There is much more as the Son of God that He did before that, since that, and what He will do in the future. All the gods and superheroes mankind has dreamed up combined are nothing compared to the infinite power, love, and wisdom of our Messiah, even if they were real. There are things about Him that we cannot even begin to comprehend or imagine. We have many types or shadows in Scripture of the person and function of Messiah Yeshua. The cohen gadol or high priest of the tabernacle and later the Temple was one of them.

*For every cohen gadol taken from among men is appointed to act on people's behalf with regard to things concerning God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and with those who go astray, since he too is subject to weakness. Also, because of this weakness, he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as those of the people. And no one*

*takes this honor upon himself, rather, he is called by God, just as Aharon was. [Messianic Jews/Hebrews 5:1-4]*

As awesome as our high priest, Yeshua is, there is something important for us realize about how he operates. Unlike most superheroes, He doesn't like to work alone.

*Indeed, this is what you were called to; because the Messiah too suffered, on your behalf, leaving an example so that you should follow in his steps. [1Kefa/1Peter 2:21]*

In all the miraculous things He did during His short ministry here, it was only an example of what His people could do and would do through Him and the power of His Spirit. The High Priest did not work alone, especially by the Temple times in Jerusalem, there were thousands of priests serving in the Temple at any given time, all under the authority and guidance of the High Priest. Though there were only certain people who could serve in the tabernacle of Israel, in a spiritual sense it is written in Torah and the New Covenant that God's entire Kingdom would be a Kingdom of priests.

*But you are a chosen people, the King's cohanim, a holy nation, a people for God to possess! Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. [1Kefa/1Peter 2:9]*

Those of us today who are seeking after the Kingdom of God must realize that we too, male or female, Jew or Gentile, are priests serving out High Priest in His Kingdom on earth as it exists today. There are multiple aspects of the High Priest's service that all of us need to pay attention to in order to understand how we accomplish that task of living as the priest we have already been declared to be.

*From: Sha'ul, a slave of the Messiah Yeshua, an emissary because I was called and set apart for the Good News of God. God promised this Good News in advance through his prophets in the Tanakh. It concerns his Son – he is descended from David physically; he was powerfully demonstrated to be Son of God spiritually, set apart by his having been resurrected from the dead; he is Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord. Through him we received grace and were given the work of being an emissary on his behalf promoting trust-grounded obedience among all the Gentiles, including you, who have been called by Yeshua the Messiah. To: All those in Rome whom God loves, who have been called, who have been set apart for him: Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. [Romans 1:1-7]*

*With them clothe your brother Aharon and his sons. Then anoint them, inaugurate them, and consecrate them, so that they will be able to serve me in the office of cohen. [Sh'mot/Exodus 28:41]*

The first, is that we are called out of the world to be consecrated for His service. I believe this is the purpose of the mikveh or baptism. The mikveh is a personal way of

dedicating one's life to the service of the High Priest. We seek to be cleansed of our sin so that we can pass from death to life, darkness to light, and be holy as He is holy. Let's go back to the verse above and examine the different words we see there.

I use this verse to show you three words which are similar, yet slightly different, but all relate to consecration. Anointing, or *mashach*, is a ceremonial, external, physical act of preparing a person for service to Adonai, using oil. From our description of the tabernacle, this ought to bring us back to the menorah, and the oil which is symbolic of the Ruach Ha Kodesh.

Inauguration, or *male* (*ma-lay*), is a spiritual, inner filling as described by the Hebrew. Another possible translation of this word is "fenced in", which again is reminiscent of the tabernacle complex. The cohen of God had to be prepared externally as well as internally for the service of Adonai.

Consecration, or *qadash*, sometimes translated as sanctification, means to make holy. Holiness involves setting something apart for special use or service. It is that favorite shirt that you get out and wear only for special occasions. You would never do gardening or hard labor in this shirt. To the casual observer, it may not be all that different from the rest of your wardrobe, but to you it is different, it is set apart, or what Scripture would call holy (to you). The cohen was just as human, and just as prone to sin as anyone else. However, God set them apart, and thus was considered holy. It is my understanding that the actions and lifestyle of the priests was because they were already holy, not in order to achieve holiness. Here is an example of grace in the Old Covenant. They were declared righteous by God. Living Torah including making the sacrifices and performing the other duties of the tabernacle were all part of being who God designed them to be. As they succeeded, it meant life and peace. As they failed, it sometimes meant instant death. The priests lived in grace, but that grace was not without responsibility. They were cohenim, not pagans, and not even the average Israelite. They were set apart, and to him which much was given, much was required.

Once a priest is consecrated to the service of God, the next aspect to know is the primary function of the priest. He is an intercessor. This is where we get to be superheroes too. In Colossians, we read of one such superhero.

*Epaphras sends greetings; he is one of you, a slave of the Messiah Yeshua who always agonizes in his prayer on your behalf, praying that you may stand firm, mature and fully confident, as you devote yourselves completely to God's will. [Colossians 4:12]*

We need more priests in this world like Epaphras. The words in the following Psalm are words that could be uttered by so many in our city and in our world who are desperately seeking someone to intercede on their behalf in the midst of the many foes, physical and spiritual, that they have.

*You know how I am insulted, shamed and disgraced; before you stand all my foes. Insults have broken my heart to the point that I could die. I hoped that someone would show compassion, but nobody did; and that there would be comforters, but I found none. They put poison in my food; in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their dining table before them become a snare; when they are at peace, let it become a trap; let their eyes be darkened, so that they can't see, and let their bodies always be stumbling. Pour out your fury on them, let your fierce anger overtake them. Let the place where they live be desolate, with no one to live in their tents, for persecuting someone you had already stricken, for adding to the pain of those you wounded.*  
[Tehellim/Psalm 69:19-26]

There is much to learn about the function of the priest by studying the garments of the High Priest. You will have to read my book for the full teaching, but there are two basic concepts that need to be brought out here.

*You are to make for your brother Aharon garments set apart for serving God, expressing dignity and splendor. Speak to all the craftsmen to whom I have given the spirit of wisdom, and have them make Aharon's garments to set him apart for me, so that he can serve me in the office of cohen.* [Sh'mot/Exodus 28:2-3]

The first thing at this point I want us to see is that the fashion designer for the garments had a name; Wisdom.

*Happy the person who finds wisdom, the person who acquires understanding; for her profit exceeds that of silver, gaining her is better than gold, she is more precious than pearls – nothing you want can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand, riches and honor in her left. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who grasp her; whoever holds fast to her will be made happy.* [Mishlei/Proverbs 3:13-18]

If there ever was a key to success and happiness in life, this would be it. Keep in mind this was written by the most successful and wise man who ever lived, King Shlomo/Solomon. We read in the first chapter of Mishlei that wisdom is gained through fear of God. This is a fear which acknowledges God as King and gives Him respect and honor above all things. However, this is a fear that causes a person to want to draw near to Him and live according to the laws of His Kingdom, knowing that to do otherwise is not wise. This is what defines sin, which leads to death. The priestly

garments were made by skilled craftsmen who constructed the garments out of the wisdom they had from their fear in God.

The high priest, perhaps more than anyone in all Israel knew how to fear God. In his travels with Moshe, all the miracles he saw from the hand of God, and his own error of the golden calf, Aaron learned what it was to fear God and the consequences for not doing so. This holy fear gave him access to holy wisdom, necessary to the office of the high priest, and evidenced by the holy garments which he alone had the privilege to wear. The garments were not what set Aaron apart spiritually from the people of Israel, and even the other priests. It was his wisdom. The garments were merely a visual representation of the spiritual truth which is accessible to all God's people today.

The garments were rich and beautiful. They were made for glory and honor, both for the high priest and for God. The beauty of the garments were reminiscent of the beauty of the tabernacles itself, made with the same colors, materials, and craftsmanship. One might think the garments were a smaller version of the tabernacle and housed the priest as the tabernacle housed God. One might very well be right, however the garments were not meant to put the high priest on a pedestal to be worshipped as God was. In fact, we see this was very much the opposite.

The next concept I want us to see is that the garments were garments of a servant.

*The greatest among you must be your servant, for whoever promotes himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be promoted. [Mattityahu/Matthew 23:11-12]*

This is the way of the Kingdom. It is not that God is against people being exalted, but He does not want people to exalt themselves. Pride is one of the biggest things God hates. God is the one who lifts people and nations up. He desires His people to put their trust in Him, fear Him, and He will make them prosperous and successful.

The work of the priest is a work of service. The priest serves both God and Man. He studies the Torah, and is careful to do all that is says as a service to his Creator and King. He also works to draw other people to God. By becoming a servant of all, God will reward him in the Kingdom. Even the Messiah, who came first as Messiah ben Yosef (son of Joseph) came to serve and not be served. It is through a servant's heart that God does His work in the world.

To wear the priest's garments was an honor, but that honor had responsibility. A soldier's uniform brings him honor, but can only be worn by the man who is willing to

sacrifice his life for his people. In a similar way, to him which much is given, much is required, and the job of a priest is not an easy work. It does, however, have the reward of being closer to the presence of God and the work He is doing.

Every superhero has powers. The priests of God are no exception. This is where the gifts of the Holy Spirit come in.

*Now there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. Also there are different ways of serving, but it is the same Lord being served. And there are different modes of working, but it is the same God working them all in everyone. Moreover, to each person is given the particular manifestation of the Spirit that will be for the common good. To one, through the Spirit, is given a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healing, by the one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the ability to judge between spirits; to another, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues; and to yet another, the ability to interpret tongues. One and the same Spirit is at work in all these things, distributing to each person as he chooses. For just as the body is one but has many parts; and all the parts of the body, though many, constitute one body; so it is with the Messiah. [1Corinthians 12:4-12]*

In the coming weeks I am going to examine the different gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they relate to us as the priests of God today. For now, I want us to see that we have a purpose in this world bigger than we are. Through faith in Messiah, we have been declared something that we will spend the rest of our lives learning how to live out. We will fail and His grace will have to pick us up and help us to keep going. As we do, we continually learn how to be more and more like our Messiah, the greatest superhero ever.