

# Ponderings in Hebrews

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## Hebrews 4

By Paul Cohen, Messianic Bible Teacher.

Brit Chadashah (Sydney)

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Brit Chadashah; P.O. Box 304; Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia

Email: [bc@celebratemessiah.com.au](mailto:bc@celebratemessiah.com.au)

# Pondering Hebrews 4:14-16

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<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Yeshua the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

These verses are the start of a new segment in the Book of Hebrews, which includes verse 4:14 all the way to 7:28. The author talks about the priestly ministry of Yeshua. He also tells us that Yeshua the Messiah is a better high priest than Aaron, Israel's first high priest (Leviticus 8; Exodus 30:30). He is better for three reasons 1) Yeshua is the **Son of God**, 2) Yeshua is **sinless**, and 3) He has **gone through the heavens**.

**1) The sonship:** this key concept is very important for the author writes about it in various chapters. As we have been reading Hebrews we have noted that the revelation of the Son was better than the message via angels (Hebrews 1:2); that the Son is better than angels (Hebrews 1:5) and that the Son has a better position than Moses, the servant of God (Hebrews 3:6). Now in relation to Aaron, the Son has a better ministry because of the nearness to God, because He is the Son of God. Therefore Yeshua received the title Great High Priest. This title is only used here and is a unique designation for Him.

**2) He is without sin:** this statement should be seen in the light of the ministry that is described in this segment. Most of it relates to Yom Kippur (*the Day of Atonement*) (Leviticus 16). It was on this day that the former high priest, in the line of Aaron, would come into the presence of God, inside the Holy of Holies. Aaron, and later his successors, went in twice on that day, firstly for himself (Leviticus 16:11-14) and then he went again into God's presence for the whole house of Israel (Leviticus 16:15-19). Aaron and his sons were sinners, who needed cleansing for themselves, before any atonement for Israel could be brought.

Not so with Yeshua. As we read His life story in the Gospels, you will not find any sin recorded against Him. This is contrary to our lives. We are all sinners who sinned, and yet Yeshua did not sin, though He, like you and me, was tempted. We are commonly tempted in three ways "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world*" (1 John 2:16). These are things to watch out for as we live our lives.

When we compare Yeshua to Aaron and his sons, we see that Aaron fell with the golden calf incident (Exodus 32) and that two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, fell when they came in with strange or unauthorised fire before God (Leviticus 10). Yeshua, in contrast, is the **merciful** and **faithful** high priest in things pertaining to God (Hebrews 2:17). Yeshua in contrast did not fall into sin. Yet He is able to sympathise with us, for in His humanity He both suffered and was tempted like us.

**3) Who has passed through the heavens:** I tend to think that these are the lower heavens, and these were a barrier, much like the first veil in the tabernacle (cf. Hebrews 9:3). This

curtain kept the common people from the presence of God. But Messiah has passed, not only through the lower heavens, but is now seated *in* the highest heavens (Hebrews 8:1; 12:2) and He is exalted above the heavens (Hebrews 7:26).

In light of this the author tells us hold fast our profession of our faith, so that we do not drift away slowly (Hebrews 2:1), nor fall away (Hebrews 6:6), for this is the only place where we can find mercy and grace in time of our need (Hebrews 4:16). What is our faith? There is One Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), who is our Only Saviour (Isaiah 43:3 & 11), who gave us His Son (Romans 8:32). His Son is the Saviour and our High Priest. He saved us by His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), so that none of us can boast (1 Corinthians 1:27-29), therefore let us hold fast to our faith.

In light of all of this, we can hold fast to our confession (Hebrews 4:14), and we can come boldly unto the throne of grace. What a difference, when compared to the Levitical priest, who came near in fear and trepidation. We do not enter in our own strength, righteousness or in our own confidence. We come in to the throne room because we have a great high priest, Yeshua, who brought a better sacrifice, His own blood (Hebrews 9).

The throne of grace is God's throne (1 Samuel 4:4) in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:17-22). This throne is the Atonement Cover *הַכַּפֹּרֶת* (*ha-kapporet*), often translated as the mercy seat. Here is where we may **obtain mercy** (meaning *not getting* what we deserve) **and find grace** (meaning *getting* that which we don't deserve), in our time of need.

The Midrash *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (read on Rosh Hashanah) has the following quote.

*“When the Holy One blessed be He, ascends His throne on the New Year. He first sits on the Throne of Judgement. But when Israel, assembled in the synagogue, sounds the Shofar (Psalms.47:6) He rises from the Throne of Judgement and ascends the Throne of Mercy.”*

This was mentioned for God is both merciful and just. In light of the finished work of Yeshua, we see mercy and judgment reconciled into one **throne of grace**. As the sons of Korah expressed it *“Mercy and truth have come together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”* (Psalms 85:10 - Hebrew text verse 11).