

Nachshon's Leap

Thought for the Week:

Chassidic discourse teaches that the Spirit of Messiah is more exalted than that of Moses. Whereas Moses is depicted being drawn out from the water and dividing the sea, walking through the water, Messiah is depicted above the water. In the beginning of Genesis it says, "and the spirit of God hovered was hovering over the face of the water." The Sages teach, "This is the Spirit of Messiah." In the gospels, Messiah walks over the surface of the water.

Commentary:

In the traditional Jewish telling of the crossing of the Red Sea, Nachshon ben Amminadab, the prince over the tribe of Judah, plays an important role. Who is Nachshon? His name is mentioned six times in the Torah. To believers his name is familiar from the genealogies of the Master in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Nachshon was one of the ancestors of Yeshua. The Torah refers to him as the prince over the tribe of Judah.

In the Talmud, Nachshon is remembered as the first to go down into the Red Sea. According to the traditional telling, Moses bade the Israelites step into the sea, but they were unwilling to do so until Nachshon sprang forward and plunged into the water. He struggled under the waves and was near to drowning. As the water washed over him, the LORD instructed Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand so that the water might split. Nachshon then led the Israelites to safety on the other side.

The story of Nachshon can teach us about Messiah. The Torah calls Nachshon the prince (*nasi*) over the tribe of Judah. The word "Prince" (*nasi*) is twice translated in the Greek (LXX) version of the Bible with the Greek word *archegos*: forerunner, leader, trailblazer, captain, pioneer, prince, head. In the Talmud's story, Nachshon was a trailblazer who led the way into the sea. He ushered Israel to safety by taking the proverbial leap of faith. He was the *archegos* of the people.

Archegos is a word used by the Apostles to describe Yeshua. Peter refers to Yeshua as the "*archegos* of life" (Acts 3:15) and "the one whom God exalted to His right hand as an *archegos* and a Savior" (Acts 5:31). The writer of the book of Hebrews refers to Messiah as the "*archegos* of their salvation through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10) and the "*archegos* and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2). He is the *archegos* of life in that He was the first to pass from death to life. In that sense, the Red Sea can be likened unto the grave. Just as Nachshon led Israel through the sea to safety on the other side, Messiah leads the way through the grave to safety on the other side through His resurrection. Like Nachshon struggling beneath the waves, He preceded us as the *archegos* of salvation. And just as Nachshon demonstrated saving faith for all Israel by taking that first leap of faith, Messiah is the *archegos* and perfecter of our faith.