

## ***Introduction to Parsha #21: Ki Tisa<sup>1</sup>***

READINGS: ***Torah Ki Tisa<sup>2</sup>***: Exodus 30:11 - 34:35  
***Haftarah***: I Kings 18:1-39  
***B'rit Chadasha***: I Corinthians 8:4-13



***It will be for a Man a kofer for his nefesh ....***

[Exodus 33:19]

**This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Avot*, the Prayer of the Fathers**

***Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor*** – And the Holy One released substantive revelation to Moshe, saying ... ***Ki tisa et-rosh b'nei-Yisra'el*** – if/as/when/to the extent you lift up the heads of b'nei Yisrael .... Exodus 30:11a.

Torah' 21<sup>st</sup> parsha, *Ki Tisa*, is all about KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY. Our Bridegroom-King has shown us marvelous, world-changing things; but there is a 'catch'. From him to which much is given, much is required. We have been incredibly blessed – now we have to learn to be accountable for enthusiastically embracing, honorably processing, faithfully stewarding, and generously sharing everything that we have heard, seen, tasted, and experienced.

### ***Kingdom Accountability 101***

The Holy One intends for us to make graceful transitions between the vastly different realms and levels of holiness in which He calls us to operate. It is wonderful for us to spend time with Him in the Beauty Realm, surrounded by the level of *kedusha* that causes the four living creatures to cry '*Holy, Holy, Holy!*' But our visits to the King's Courts and Chambers are intended to be only the beginning of an even greater adventure – one that requires us to live beautiful lives of selfless

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<sup>2</sup> Two fundamental assumptions of Hebrew tradition are that [a] the traditional division of the Torah into the 54 parashot we read was guided and directed by the Holy One, and [b] the name chosen by the sages for each parashot constitutes a capsulized statement expressing the fundamental theme expressed by the reading as a whole.

service, modeling the ways of our King, in each *ha-aretz* sphere of influence He assigns us. After being enraptured, inspired, and empowered in the *King's courts and chambers* we are expected to maintain the shalom, majesty, honor, humility, and graciousness that filled us there even when we re-enter the darkness-infested realm of day-to-day earth-life in which we have to deal with people and situations that are maddeningly *chol* [KJV 'mundane'] and *tamei* [KJV 'unclean']. The goal of the process is for us to learn to transition seamlessly between the upper and lower realms, never losing our shalom or our mission-focus in the process. Like the angels on the famous staircase in Ya'akov's Genesis 28 vision at *Beit-El*, we need to become Masters of both Ascent into the Heavens and Descent into the earth. There is to be no 'jumping of turnstiles'. We all need to know the value of, and be willing to traffic responsibly in - the currency, vocabulary, and *avodah* protocols of - each Realm we encounter.

Our first examples of what 'not-to-do' will be Aharon, Hur, and the seventy elders of B'nei Yisrael; then will come Moshe. Oh Beloved ... buckle your seatbelts! Watch ... tremble ... and LEARN!

### ***Learning to Deal Responsibly with 'Realm Differential' and Culture Shock***

The atmosphere of the Beauty Realm is permeated by *bayit shalom* – *i.e.* the wholeness, wellness, health, security, safety, confidence, gladness, and goodwill of that realm's Most Excellent Host and His Most Excellent servants. In the Heavens songs of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise fill the air. Acts of humility, meekness, gentleness, and self-denial are constantly manifesting. Hearts overflow with joy, with hope, and love. Wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the reverent adulation of the Holy One are evident in everything one sees.

Alas, it is decidedly *not so* in the lower realm known as earth. Human beings have fallen from their former estate, have become blind to the Majesty of the King, and have become horribly corrupted by that which is *chol* [KJV 'mundane'] and by that which is *tamei* [KJV 'unclean'].

What does the Hebrew word *chol* really mean? It means controlled by *fleshly-appetites, emotions, and sentimentality*, and therefore *obsessed with the kind of vain imaginations that are generated by the fallen man's ethno-centricity, class envy, 'social justice' fixation, moral-shaming addiction, and its ideological, philosophical, political, economic, pseudo-scientific, institutional, educational, and religious idols.*

What does the Hebrew term *tamei* really mean? It means *compromised by/infected with toxic negativity, and therefore releasing a flood of anxiety, confusion, distraction, division, despair, fragmentation, and decomposition.*

As a result of the proliferation of the *chol* and the *tamei* in the *ha-aretz* realm, the atmosphere in that realm veritably reeks of vain imaginations, fleshly lusts, vile passions, perverse behaviors, profane speech, blasphemous worship of physical form and pseudo-intellectual ideation, futile thinking. Even the brightest humans tend to operate with horribly debased minds. They are filled with all unrighteousness, sexual deviance, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness. They are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, dishonoring of parents, elders, and forebears, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, and unmerciful. Not only do they constantly indulge in such revolting and destructive forms of perversion, they approve and celebrate those practices and those who indulge in them as they do. See Romans 1:21-32 for far more detail about this.

The great ‘atmosphere differential’ between the Beauty Realm of our King and the Corruption-Infested Realm of Fallen Man tends to make the kind of ‘realm travel’ to which the Holy One has called us extremely challenging. Moshe will find this out this week in parsha *Ki Tisa* – when he descends out of the Fiery Cloud of the Manifest Presence of the Holy One to find *B’nei Yisrael* gorging itself on full-on *Burning Man/Mardi Gras*-level degradation in front of a golden calf idol. He will not handle the transition well at all – THIS time. He rants, he rages; he casts blame; he accuses; he judges. Vigilantes are called forth; blood is shed indiscriminately. Bodies are mangled. Lives are destroyed. Widows and orphans proliferate. Fortunately, Moshe will learn a valuable lesson. The next time he makes a descent from the *ha-shamayim* realm to the *ha-aretz realm*, his attitude and approach – not to mention his impact - will be totally different. He will finally succumb to the Heavenly revelation of *mercy triumphing over judgment*. He will understand that it is the kindness of the Holy One – not the fiery wrath and judgmentalism of man – that leads men to repentance. His face will shine. His tone will be gentle. His words will be full of both wisdom and love. Selah! May we soon learn the secrets of such a descent into the *chol* and *tamei* realm as well – and may we cause as little damage to the people and families we are called to serve as possible in the interim.

Ah, but we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let’s go back and focus on Moshe, and what is going on with him up at the *kadosh kadoshim* level – *i.e.* the ultimate level of ulsing holiness energy – that a fallen man can experience on earth.

***Behold! Moshe Is Modeling For us  
What It is Like to Be Seated with Messiah in Heavenly Places***

Having been whisked away by *chariots of fire*, Moshe is soaring to spiritual heights that no man - except perhaps Chanoch [*i.e.* 'Enoch'] - has ever before experienced. He is *with the Master* in some place beyond the invisible veil that separates Heaven from Earth and Time from Eternity. He is breathing the rarified air of the upper levels of the King's Beauty Realm. He is being shown Eternal Realities. He is in a place where Lamb slain before the foundation of the world lives and rules. He is in a place where *cherubim* and *serafim* worship before a Heavenly altar and angelic legions minister before and unto the Most High God. He is touring a grand series of celestial courts far beyond the vision of ordinary men. He is not just being entertained with visions. He is being lovingly and methodically taught the Holy One's plan of how the Eternal Realities of the Heavenly Realm are to be *recreated on earth*, out of earthly materials – in the midst of the camp of the rag-tag bunch of slaves who wait back at Sinai.

***The Great Challenges – And Even Greater Lessons – of Ki Tisa***

The week of *Ki Tisa* is strategically designed to present a series of great personal and prophetic challenges. It is, after all, *the week each year when we revisit the greatest national sin scenario of all time – the sin of the golden calf*. But Torah is not a book of law – it is a love story; and love stories are about redemption, not condemnation. No love story is complete without some great – indeed seemingly insurmountable - obstacle the lovers must overcome. Fear not – overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles is exactly what the Covenant and the Kingdom are all about. The week will therefore not end with a thick blanket of despair. It will end instead with an amazing display of Divine mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation. And if that were not enough, before it is over we will all get to be as flies on the wall of the cleft-of-the-Rock and experience a visitation of the Bridegroom in all His Glory. Now *that* is the redemptive power of our God!

*Ki Tisa* is designed to lead us into some critical and essential *revelations* about the relentlessly *merciful, forgiving, and covenant-faithful* nature of the Holy One our God on the one hand, and about the unshakable, unbreakable commitment He has made to bring forth a glorious *Covenant nation* out of the hot mess of filthy rags, wounded hearts, fragmented minds, and sullied souls that we presently are. He is absolutely committed to take the self-centered shrew He redeemed from bondage to the perverse ways of this world's nations, cultures, religions, institutions, and ethnicity-centered mindsets and patiently, gently, and lovingly transform her into a Glorious Bride. And this week we find out that absolutely nothing we can do can make this Great King change His Mind. He knew exactly what He was getting

into when He called us. He knows how far we have fallen from the Avrahamic model while in bondage. He knows how long our journey back to the Genesis 12:2-3 vision of '***I will make of you a Great nation***' and '***in you all the families of the earth will be blessed***' will take to come to fruition. He knows the trauma we have experienced. He knows the lies we have accepted as gospel truth. He knows the perversions – of *thought, worldview, cynicism, sarcasm, profanity, rhetoric, behavior, response/reaction, ideology, philosophy, self-righteous hypocrisy, idolatry, ethnic pride, paranoia, rage, and hate* - to which we have been exposed. He knows that we actually now think of those things as 'normal', or even pleasant, to us; and are totally unfamiliar with His Ways of life, health, and peace. He knows the abject shallowness of the level at which we know Him, and therefore fully understands both the fecklessness of our love for Him as a Persona and the fragility of our individual and collective commitment to His Will, Ways, and Words. He knows how many thousand times we will *break faith with Him*, and how many million ways we will *breach His Covenant* and trample it underfoot, *soiling and disgracing ourselves horribly* in the process. He knows that we are so sick of mind, emotion, appetite, pseudo-intellect and soul that we don't even know we need healing. He knows we have to be healed before we can become whole; and He knows what it is going to take for us to realize we are sick to the point we will actually desire to be healed. But, praise our King, He is willing to see His glorious vision for us through, no matter what we throw at Him. He is looking forward to the challenge. He is 100% committed to work through all these things with us. He knows that His Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline, must – and will - start with us. Keep that in mind as you read each download of wisdom, and each offsetting narrative of folly, in parsha *Ki Tisa*.

### ***An Appointed Time For Us To Lift Our Heads***

*Ki* is the Hebrew preposition usually translated as 'if' or 'when'. It also means 'as', 'when' and 'to the extent'. *Tisa* is the second person imperative form of the Hebrew verb *nasa*<sup>3</sup>, meaning 'lift up ...'. Put these two words together and the phrase means '***if/when/as/to the extent you lift up ...***' Get prepared to do some *lifting* this week. Every one of us is going to be called to *lift something up*. It is a part of our destiny. So:

[1] will what we will lift up this week will be what the Holy One wants lifted up ... or what the fleshly mind of our old, fallen man wants lifted up;

[2] will we do our lifting *at the time appointed by the Holy One* for it ... or at the time some other man – or our flesh – chooses for it; and

[3] whatever we lift up, and whenever we choose to do the lifting, how will the process impact our respective relationships *with our Divine Bridegroom* and

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<sup>3</sup> *Nasa* is *nun, sin, alef*. It is Strong's Hebrew word # 5375.

*with our brothers and sisters in the Redeemed Community?*

This week the Holy One has some serious *Bride-testing* in store for us. He wants us to test just *how well we have – or have not - been listening* to what He has been telling us about our bridal privileges and responsibilities. He wants to test *how much of our hearts have been captured by His demonstrations and declarations of love on the one hand - and how much of our hearts are still mired in the muddy waters of Egyptian bondage on the other hand*. He wants to test to what extent we have *caught a vision higher and more grand than escape from Egypt*, and to what extent we are *still looking through painted Egyptian eye shadows for a man to hail as a hero in place of Pharaoh, for an idol of our own making to dance in front of in place of Amon and Re, and for an excuse to throw a leaks-and-onions party in the name of a form of shallow freedom totally devoid of destiny*. Oh Beloved, can you *hear the beating of the Bridegroom's heart?*

***The Sh'ma-People the Holy One is Calling Forth Must Learn to Respond to Both the Voice and the Heartbeat of the Bridegroom-King***

We had better be prepared to function as *sh'ma* people this week. We had better have our spiritual ears so finely tuned to the Voice of our Bridegroom that we can instantly recognize the 'voice of another' as exactly that. And we had better be 100% resolved in our hearts to refuse to *sh'ma* any and all 'other voices' that speak to us - no matter how logical or how pleasing to the senses those voices may seem or sound. Is your heart pure? Are your hands clean? Are your eyes focused on things that are above? Is your spirit alive with destiny, purpose, and mission? Is your mind fixed on the prophetic declarations the Divine Bridegroom spoke over us on the day we all heard His Glorious Voice speaking ten words of abundant life over us punctuated by thunder and lightnings and smoke?

We are called to bring the majesty of our King into a world overrun with vulgarity. We are called to introduce the Beautiful Visions, Beautiful Perspectives, Beautiful Words, Beautiful Artistry, Artisanhip, and Avodah, Beautiful Reactions, Responses, and Behaviors, and Beautiful *Chen* [grace], *Shalom*, and *Ahav* [substantive manifestations selfless, patient, redemptive, and restorative covenant love] of the Holy One's Beauty Realm into a world where ugliness, short-sightedness, overreaction, narcissism, jealousy, impatience and hate run amok. We are called to bring hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless, water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, healing to the broken-hearted, freedom to the captives, release to the prisoners, and light to those engulfed by darkness. We are called to make seamless transitions from the Beauty Realm to the fleshly realm, and back again. We are called to make responsible re-entries in each realm. And what is more, we are being trained by the Master how to 'stick the landing' instead of coming in like a wrecking ball, declaring a holy war, and causing a Holocaust.

## *Setting the Stage*

As our parsha begins it looks like everything is just about as WONDERFUL for the people in the Camp of the Redeemed as it is for Moshe. The  *betrothal ceremony* we as the covenant people recently experienced [Exodus 19:1 – 20:21] was absolutely glorious. Our Beloved spread an immense consuming cloud over *Har Sineh* [Mt. Sinai] to serve as our *chuppah*. The great *shofar* [ram's horn] of Heaven sounded and we began our *magnificent ascent* of the smoking mountain to meet with the One to Whom we had agreed to be betrothed. And what happened then upon this Glorious Mountain was ... well, it was *the stuff dreams are made of*. We saw *shooting flames (tongues) of fire* issue forth from the Great Cloud above us like lightning bolts. We all finally heard with our own ears the Voice about which Moshe had been telling us for so long. Every one of us saw *tongues of fire*. The most beautiful Voice in the Universe then proclaimed over us *the ten most basic principles of the covenant* that He was calling us to *sh'mar*. Then *our spiritual DNA was changed forever* as words from the Throne of Heaven *pierced the air* and *forever implanted themselves into our individual and collective souls*.

### **1. In The Kingdom Priority Matrix, Relationship Always Comes-First**

The primary seed of truth that the Holy One sowed into our souls with the words He spoke to us under the Chuppah was the seed of *the truth of RELATIONSHIP*. Our Divine Bridegroom declared us to be not mere citizens of His creation but *intimate companions* with whom He desires to be very closely associated *in every way* – spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, economically and historically – and *at every moment*. As He delights to proclaim over and over throughout Scripture ***He is our God – and we are His people***. Exodus 6:7, 8:23, Leviticus 26:12, Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 34:30, 36:28, 37:23 and see Zechariah 13:9 and Hebrews 8:10. Note the repetition of personal *possessive pronouns* – He is OUR God; we are HIS people. This is Covenant Principle #1 - the foundational truth of the Covenant. *We really are our Beloveds, and He really is ours*. Song of Songs 6:3.

The Holy One started laying the foundation of this bedrock truth by advising us that relationship between Himself and mankind is based upon *yada* – *intimate knowledge* gained through *personal encounter and experience*. He personally breathed life into Adam. Then He personally molded and shaped Chava [Eve]. Then He walked in the Garden with them. Then He personally interacted with and took pleasure in the company of Hevel [Abel]. He even personally interacted with and tried to counsel and console Kayin [Cain]. Then He walked with Hanoach [Enoch], and took him. Then He appeared and spoke to Noach [Noah], and Avram [Abram], and Sarai, and Rivkah [Rebecca] and Yitzchak [Isaac] and Ya'akov [Jacob] and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*. *Personal encounter is His passion. Intimate, experiential knowledge is His forte*. Interaction with us is *the Longing His Heart*. It is just Who

He Is – and why He made mankind in His ‘own image’ – as a *counterpart to* and *companion for* Himself.

Through what happened at Sinai that seed of that truth has now been implanted in each of us. We have been prophetically empowered *to pursue and constantly build upon and deepen the relationship*. Our task is to gradually come to *see ourselves in light of the truth* that our essential purpose on earth is not only to glorify the Holy One BUT TO INTERACT WITH AND ENJOY AND BE ENJOYED BY HIM FOREVER. We came to realize to our amazement that the betrothal covenant that the Holy One contracted with us on Mt. Sinai is not at its essence a matter of ‘*law giving*’ as we thought previously *but* is instead the *birthing in our spirits of the capacity to enjoy a living, breathing relationship with the Creator* based upon the *reality* that the covenant partner of Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov and Yosef is now our God and our covenant partner every bit as much as He was theirs.

The Holy One branded us as His very own special treasure people – and assured us that we would never have to do anything to either *win His favor* or *earn His love* – because, long, long before we ever got to this mountain - through no effort of our own - we had somehow without even knowing it *captured His Heart with one glance of our eyes*. The Bridegroom-King then took the relationship 1000 cubits deeper, inviting us into a *p’nei al-p’nei* [face to Face] level of intimacy with Him – *i.e. a baring-our-souls and surrendering-our-wills and being-loved-by-Him-all-the-more-for-it-despite-our-imperfections-and-blemishes* level of intimacy with Him. He gave us an open invitation us to dine with Him in His private chambers, to consult with Him in His private office, to rejoice with Him in His private reflections, and to weep with Him over His deepest burdens. He invited us to let Him teach us to see our fellow men through His perfect blend of wisdom and compassion, and to learn to love others by watching Him love them and to learn to steward the wonders of Creation with His tender touch by being with Him to watch what He is doing. He invited us to let Him teach us to place values and priorities upon things and ideas according to His eternal perspective instead of through our limited vision and corrupted passions. He threw open the doors of Heaven for us to enjoy an “I will always, always, always love you” and “I will never, never, never leave or forsake you” and “I will always seek the best for you” and “I will always believe the best of you” and “I will always bring out the best in you” relationship with Him. The *p’nei-al-p’nei* relationship with the Creator of the Universe is indeed the stuff dreams are made of.

## 2. *The Exclusivity Calling*

The Holy One has also made it clear however that in order for the relationship we are called to have with our Him to be as incredibly deep and fulfilling as it is designed to be it absolutely has to be an EXCLUSIVE relationship – like unto

betrothal and marriage. He called us to be unto our Beloved *a garden for His delight alone* - a 'locked garden', His alone to *tend*, His alone to *nurture*, and His alone to *enjoy*. He called us to *allow no other courtiers*, to *acclaim no other heroes*, and to *pursue no other lovers*. As Moshe and Yeshua would both later explain it we are to **love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength**. Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27.

### 3. **The Intermediation Protocol**

What the Holy One called forth from us was of course *far, far more intimacy than our fractured, fragmented souls could initially handle*. We freaked. We went into sensory overload. We retreated in fear and embarrassment. We asked Moshe to be for us an intermediary – someone who would converse and interact with the Holy One *for us*, as our proxy and ambassador. **Exodus 19:18-19**. That is why as *Ki Tisa* begins Moshe is up on the mountain receiving from the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven on our behalf much more specific revelation about the betrothal period to come. He is there as our emissary. He is not there as an independent actor. He represents US. But now from the shortsighted and immature perspective of the people in the Camp it looks like Moshe has 'wandered off the reservation'. He physically disappeared from our view in a ball of Divine Fire weeks ago, and he has not been seen or heard from since. The seeming silence from Heaven – who only speaks to us now through Moshe, who has disappeared - is *uncomfortable* and *unnerving*. We needed some *space*, for sure – but not THIS MUCH space!

We the modern readers of Torah know – though those in the camp of the Redeemed alive at the time did not - that Heaven is not being silent at all. We know that what is actually happening up in the area of the mountain's summit in the great Divine Fireball is that the Holy One is downloading into Moshe amazing revelation after amazing revelation for us – including stunning things which will later be incorporated into the Torah as the '*Mish'kan Discourse*'. We know that as *Ki Tisa* opens the Holy One is showing Moshe, our chosen representative, many of the same eternal redemptive realities of Heaven that He would later show Daniel [**Daniel 7:1-14**] and John the Revelator [**Revelation 4 & 5**]. We know that what Moshe is receiving he will later write down in words for all of us – and for our children and children's children - to read and study and meditate upon throughout our generations. We know this because we are privileged to read and study and meditate upon these very revelations every year about this time.

### ***Transcending Spheres of Influence; Transitioning Between Levels of Holiness***

About halfway into our studies this week the *Mish'kan Discourse* – *i.e. the Holy One's Inspiring Description of the Beauty Realm in which He wants us to establish our center of gravity* - will come to an abrupt conclusion. The Holy One will

deliver the tablets of testimony into Moshe's Hands, and send Moshe back to his other sphere of influence –the Camp of the Redeemed. Moshe will make a hasty exit from the *Beauty Realm of the King* - where the atmosphere is filled with the sweet scent of the tree of life - and will re-enter the '*fleshly realm*' - where the atmosphere reeks with the stench of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and where folly, over-reaction, and outrage all run rampant.

The *Beauty Realm*, where Moshe has been spending glorious face-to-Face time with the Creator of the Universe, is a domain of breath-taking majesty, humble holiness, gentle wisdom, irrepressible joy, long-term perspective, and sweet, sweet shalom that transcends human understanding. Imagine having to leave that realm to rejoin ordinary 'life among men', where the unclean and profane are the order of the day, where base emotions like anger, outrage, disgust, and vengeance are celebrated as if they were meritorious, where philosophy, ideology, pseudo-science, and man-made religion masquerade as virtue, and where judgmental opinions strut around like peacocks and charge at anyone who disagrees with them like enraged bulls. Just remember the law of gravity ... *what goes up, must come down. Alas, it is not how high one flies, but with what level of gentleness, patience, and grace one lands the craft and delivers the cargo, that determines the success or failure of the journey!*

Alas, Moshe is not exactly going to 'stick' the landing. First timers seldom do. What Torah actually says happened upon Moshe's return may challenge what you think you know about this event. Prepare to be shocked. It will not be pretty. The Levite in Moshe will not respond well to what he sees when he steps out of the realm of divinely inspired Beauty, Holiness, and Truth, back into an earthy cesspool of humanly engineered filth, folly, and false religion. Much as he did forty years ago in Egypt, when he saw an Egyptian taskmaster really acting out, he will wind up surrendering his *shalom* for a penny's worth of outrage. The question subsequently posed to Moshe by two Hebrews arguing amongst themselves - *Do you intend to kill us as you killed the Egyptian?*<sup>4</sup> – will finally be answered ... in the affirmative. The prophet will trade every ounce of joy, delight, and wisdom the Holy One has poured into him for the last 6½ weeks for a short-lived adrenalin rush of 'moral' indignation. There will be shouting. There will be outrage. The most precious thing on earth – a set of stone tablets inscribed by the Finger of the Creator, designed to guide mankind into the Great Plan of Redemption, Restoration, and Kingdom Building, will be thrown to the ground in anger. But that will just be the beginning of Moshe's 'day of rage'. Having forgotten while in the Beauty Realm how easily even the best men on earth get caught up in self-righteousness, self-indulgence, and folly, the prophet will tear through the Camp

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 2:14.

like a wrecking ball. A call to holy war will bring forth an army of vigilantes. At his command his tribesmen, the Levi'im, will draw their swords, assume the role of judge, jury, and executioner, run like wild banshees through the camp, and *kill, kill, kill!* What is worse, Moshe will insist that the Holy One – our Bridegroom-King, Who redeemed us from Egypt and brought us to Himself on eagles' wings - told him to do these things! Try as you might to find any such instruction from the Holy One in the narrative, you will not find any such thing. But Moshe, in his indignation, will misremember what the Holy One really said, and will actually believe that the Holocaust he has wrought was exactly what the Holy One wanted him to do. Oh what a mess we make when we react to sin with outrage instead of wisdom and understanding, patience, and a redemptive plan.

At Moshe's command brother will turn on brother, and kinsman will viciously attack kinsman. Blood and gore, shock and awe, and a *tsunami* of collateral damage will be the result. Swords will slash. Men will die by the thousands. Women will watch in horror as they are made widows. Children will scream as the sword renders them fatherless. The entire camp will smell of death. Post-traumatic stress disorder will become the new normal.

Thank Heaven the Great Love Story of Torah will not end with this debacle! Thank Heaven the Holy One intends us to learn a better way to transition from the Holy Realm back to ordinary life – a calmer, wiser one that does not tend to make our name a stench upon the earth. Despite this Holocaust –and any other that the diseased minds of angry men can engineer - the Creator's great dream of redemption for mankind and restoration for Creation will survive. His plan for us to build a Kingdom-Of-Heaven-Scented Society on earth will go forward. And somehow our Bridegroom-King will find a way to work this, as He works all things, together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His Purpose. It is just Who He is. It is just what He does. *Selah! Give thanks to the Holy One for He is good, and HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER.*

### ***A Dark Shadow in the Shape of a Calf***

We will read this week a sordid narrative of exactly *how* our ancestors got distracted from their mission and from the Beauty and Majesty of the Bridegroom, and *why* they got distracted so quickly and so thoroughly, and what horrible consequences they suffered as a result. Our ancestors did not handle the season of prophetic disconnection well at all. But be encouraged. The study of Torah is not really about our ancestors, is it? Torah is never really about our ancestors. It is really about US. What our study is designed to determine therefore is whether we will fare better in regard to the tests of the season of prophetic disconnection than our ancestors did. Am I and my household prepared for this kind of test? Are YOU

and YOURS?

Fortunately, this parsha is not by any means all *bad news*. Indeed, the most significant theological *revelation we will receive this week is not going to be the bad news of how sinful and absolutely un-bridelike we are*. It will instead be the good news of *how wonderful and infinitely Bridegroom-like the Holy One is*. For it is this week more than any other in which we will be shown that the Holy One our Betrothed is a God of mercy and forgiveness and unswerving commitment to covenant as well as a righteous judge<sup>5</sup>. Ah, but that revelation is several days of study away. Let's see what treasures our Covenant Partner in Heaven has in store for us *in the meantime!*

But in the Camp of the Redeemed in the year of the Exodus the seeming disconnection from prophetic revelation was causing vain imaginations to run rampant. The after-effects of Adam and Chava's ingestion of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil were wreaking havoc on the fragile souls and fractured psyches of the newly-freed slave population. And because this is happening back in the Camp all too soon the great prophetic download that Moshe is receiving for us is going to be rudely interrupted – and the earthly Tabernacle's building indefinitely postponed – *until what is happening back in the camp is dealt with*.

### ***What is Going On in the Camp of the Redeemed?***

Back in the camp, *Man hu* ['manna'] is still falling every morning<sup>6</sup>. Water is still flowing from the Rock. The great pillar of fire and cloud of the Holy One still rests on the summit of the mountain providing us a constant reminder that we are right where our Covenant Partner wills for us to be. But all is not as serene and blissful as we might imagine from the above. Alas, all is not well in the camp of the Redeemed. Memory of what happened recently at this mountain - and what the Holy One did and did not say when Heaven thundered gloriously in our hearing - is beginning to get confused. It is as if some sinister force has crept into the camp and whispered in everyone's ear simultaneously: "*Did the Holy One truly say ... ?*" And this sinister force is definitely having its effect. And as He did in the Garden, the Holy One is, in His infinite wisdom, and as part of His grand redemptive plan for mankind and creation, letting the scenario play itself out. What might we see if *we opened our spiritual eyes, and looked a little closer?*

If we looked a little closer we might see that some in the camp of the Redeemed are *beginning to grow restless*. The initial excitement of the dramatic community-

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<sup>5</sup> The groundwork for this revelation was laid in the last two *parshot*, in which the idea of "atonement" [Hebrew *k'far*] for sin was introduced in connection with the description of the furnishings and ceremonies of the *Mish'kan*.

<sup>6</sup> Except on the Sabbath, of course.

wide revelatory experience we all enjoyed at this mountain on the day of our betrothal has begun to wear off. Seeds of doubt, boredom, and guilt over ‘bailing out’ on the Holy One in fear – not to mention disturbing feelings of *prophetic disconnection* - have begun to grow. The mundane affairs of life have begun to *distract us from our new Bridal calling in life*. Some of us who not long ago cried out passionately with one voice ‘*na’aseh v’nish’ma*’ [i.e. *we will build (your words into our lives), and we will let your words change us from the inside out*] are now beginning to feel both *estranged from the Divine Bridegroom* to whom we recently pledged our troth and *disengaged from the Divine Mission* to which that Bridegroom called us. And perhaps worst of all, sin is crouching at the door to one of our most influential leaders’ tent. Aharon – the very man who the Holy One has told Moshe to anoint to serve as our *High Priest* [translate that “#1 Friend of the Bride’] – is about to receive a visit from some men who want to install him instead as Moshe’ successor in the role as ‘*prophet of the Most High God*’ [translate that ‘Friend of the Bridegroom’.] Flattered by the attention and desiring to do something dramatic to please the people, Aharon is about to issue a call for everyone in the camp to *bring him their pieces of gold jewelry*. Alas, great numbers of people in the redeemed community at Sinai, unwilling to wait for the Holy One to return Moshe to them to give them directions from His Throne, will rush to comply with Aharon’s demand for gold. In light of all the Holy One has done for us we are by and large a *giving people* – and a people who want to do great things for others. In our enthusiasm to be givers and doers of great things however we are oft-times gullible if not downright vain. We are easily tempted to act independently of the Holy One, and instead of *sh’ma-ing* His voice [i.e. welcoming His words, becoming pregnant with them, and letting the growing Lifeforce within us which results from the union of *His words* and *our wills* change us from the inside out], and *doing what we see our Father doing* we instead heed the voice of things that sound religious and rush off to give our gold at the *wrong time*, to all *the wrong men*, for all the *wrong projects*, for all the *wrong reasons*.

Aharon will then call for a fire to be built, and the gold jewelry collected by Aharon from us will be thrown in a cauldron and melted down. A mold will be hastily designed and hollowed out in the shape of an *egel* [calf]. The molten gold will be poured into, and will quickly conform to the calf-shape of, the mold. The molten metal will cool and harden, forming the image of a golden calf.

### ***A Few Careless Words Off the Top of Someone’s Head Start a Great Stampede Toward a Dark Abyss***

Someone – perhaps Aharon - will cry out passionately, in a voice that sounds spiritual and authoritative: *This, Israel, is your god, who brought you out of Egypt*. This statement will constitute *utter nonsense*, of course. But that will not matter to the restless masses. They will, without even stopping to compare this bold

statement by a man with the revelation they all received directly from the Holy One on day of our betrothal ceremony, succumb to the energy and excitement of the speaker, take up the cry as their own, and rush headlong into the sensual allure of the convenient deception. As *lambs rushing to the slaughter*. And then one spiritual-sounding but totally off-base declaration will lead to another. Aharon will declare: ‘*Tomorrow - a festival ... unto the Holy One!*’ It sounds *so right*, doesn’t it? But it is anything but. Men do not have the right to just decide to have a festival unto the Holy One on a given day. We are supposed to be a *sh’ma*-people – a people that responds to His Voice; not a people who makes it up on the fly. And the thing about festivals of the Holy One – the thing that makes them festivals of the Holy One - is that they are called *by HIM*, not by men. So if a festival – or a gathering – or a holiday – or a meeting – is not called by Him, well ... whatever it may be, it most definitely is NOT is a festival unto the Holy One.

### ***Stampede!***

Caught up in the energy and excitement we quickly forgot all about our Divine Bridegroom and His covenant. We bowed down before Aharon’s *calf-idol*. We offered animal sacrifices to a piece of molten metal. We began to dance and shout and sing in religious fervor to our hearts’ delight. From there we got caught up in a feeding frenzy of the flesh masquerading as spiritual ‘freedom’. We quickly lost touch with every element of spiritual truth we had learned from the Holy One. We hastened off to engage in all kinds of disgusting acts of spiritual debauchery – probably under the ancient equivalent of ‘*forsake not the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is.*’ And we did every one of these things in the name of our newfound ‘*spiritual liberty*’ - and under the watchful eye of our charismatic new self-appointed apostle/prophet, Aharon.

It was *not pretty*. Such things – which seem to be repeated every generation - never are. What we chose to do in our season of prophetic disconnection will result in the deaths of 3,000 of the precious souls the Holy One had redeemed from Egypt with a strong right Hand and an outstretched Arm. Because of voracious appetite for a form of religion brothers of ours whom the Holy One had brought to Sinai on ‘eagle’s wings’, and betrothed to Himself with the *Ten Glorious Words of Bridal Empowerment* which most of the world thinks of as the ‘*Ten Commandments*’, will perish. Alas, when this dark urge strikes us, what Pharaoh’s hard-charging army of chariots, hordes of screaming Amalekites, and spies from Midyan could not succeed in doing to us we suddenly become very capable of doing *to ourselves*.

### ***Lessons We All Need to Learn About the Dark Side of Spirituality***

There are some important lessons in this for us today - if we but have ears to hear and eyes to see. We should know by now that the reason that the *Holy Spirit* included the narrative of the traumatic events of *calf-sin* in the Torah is not so that

we can sit in the seat of the scornful and judge the Redeemed Community for its sin. We should know by now that we are *not one bit better, not one IQ point smarter, and not one fraction more spiritual* than those who participated in the sickening debacle.

So what exactly are we to make of the *calf-sin* narrative? How are we supposed to respond? Again the Holy One has brought us to the threshold of a life-changing revelation. The narrative of the horrendous failures of the fledgling redeemed nation of the Holy One – and its leaders – at the time of *the calf-sin* is not given to teach us about *THEM*. It is given to teach us about US. The narrative is not really about the failures of Aharon, or Hur, or the hundreds of thousands of people who collected the gold and worshipped the calf-god several millennia ago. The narrative is about the *naivete* – and selfishness, and downright *evil* – that resides in your heart ... and in mine. The narrative of *Ki Tisa* is about you and me learning hard lessons about *dealing with seasons of prophetic disconnect*. It is about each of us learning to face - and overcome - our ‘old man’s’ innate desires to appoint a charismatic leader, to have him inspire us with his words and his vision, and to have him lead us in entertaining activities that make us feel religious and important.

You see, Dear Reader, coming to grips with the problems underlying the *chet ha-egel* is one of the most essential aspects of becoming the *sh'ma* people – the kingdom of priests and holy nation – which the Holy One has called forth from all the nations and is training us to be.

### ***Coming to Grips with the Real Problem of the Fallen Human Mind That Keeps Reproducing the Calf-sin in Every Generation***

Just a few weeks ago as we stood under the Chuppah of the Holy One’s *Radiant Cloud* every man, woman and child in the camp of the Redeemed heard the Voice of our Divine Bridegroom say:

***Anochi Adonai loheicha***

*I the Holy One am to be [recognized and known by you] as your God”*

***asher hotzeticha me'erezt Mitzrayim mibeit avadim***

*It is I Who have brought to pass your coming out  
from the land of Egypt, the slavehouse.*

***Lo yihyeh lecha elohim acherim al-panai***

*You will not set before your faces any opposing/competing “gods”.*

***Lo ta'aseh-lecha fesel v'chol-temunah ...***

*You will not build/create any images or likenesses according to your imaginations ...*

### ***Lo-tishtachaveh lahem v'lo ta'ovdem***

*You will not bow down to [such images or likenesses] or worship or serve them ...*

In those first few words He spoke to us on the mountain the Holy One was telling us that hereafter *the sole focus of our lives, including 100% of our creative energies, is to be upon Him, our God.* He was instructing us – and prophetically empowering us - to *channel all our desires and aspirations, as well as all our human drives to acquire, to achieve, to accomplish and to build, into the specific pursuits and endeavors for which He created, redeemed, and called us.* He was impressing upon us that we have been brought here at such a time as this to serve a *noble purpose.* He was prophetically declaring and releasing over us *a grand destiny.* A large part of the purpose and the destiny the Holy One declared over us has to do with what we focus our creative energies upon, and what we *build* out of the raw materials of our lives.

### ***Harnessing the Innate Drive to Build Something Transcendent***

The Holy One created mankind *b'tzelem Elohim* - in the image/shadow of God. Since the Holy One is by His nature amazingly creative, an integral part of the *b'tzelem Elohim* package is an innate desire *to create* something. The Holy One is a Creator. The human, made in the Holy One's image, desires to create as well. The heart of the human being desires to do more than just exist. Having tasted the *neshamah* of his Creator, he desires to use his life-force to make something transcendent – something that will [a] express something of his or her personality, [b] have an affirming and empowering impact on others, and [c] last much longer than his own natural lifetime.

The Hebrew verb that describes the outworking of this innate drive to create/build is *asah*<sup>7</sup>. This verb paints the Hebraic picture of *the application of creative energy to bring about a constructive or aesthetically pleasing result.* The verb *asah* describes what a potter does with a lump of clay, what a carpenter does with a piece of wood, what a blade smith does with a piece of metal, etc. In English we usually translate *asah* as to *make*, to *build*, or to *do*. Those translations are accurate as far as they go, but they are also inadequate, as they leave out the artistic, creative element that is the essence of the Hebrew verb. To *asah* is not to perform a tedious chore. Yeshua referred to it as an 'easy yoke'. To *asah* is merely to *express one's essential self artistically by an interactive, intelligent, process involving making, shaping, forming, fashioning raw materials.* To *asah* is to *take a concept or idea that one has pictured in one's heart and mind and to bring that concept or idea into the realm of the visible, the tangible, the practical, and the substantive.*

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<sup>7</sup> *Asah* is *ayin, sin, hey*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #6213.

## ***Putting Our Innate Drive to Asah To Work in the Divine Plan***

The Holy One has a Divine Plan to harness and give direction and meaning to our innate drive to *asah*. His plan is to employ our drive to *asah* in His Divine program of restoring the world. What exactly has the Holy One called and empowered us to *asah* – i.e. to apply creative energy to, and reduce to physical form - in order to participate in His program of *restoration*? The answer is radical. He has called and empowered us to *asah the Words He spoke on Sinai!* What we are to build, create, form, shape, and leave on earth as a legacy, for the world to see, are lives structured upon and lived according to the Holy One’s wonderful *Torah*. What does this mean, you ask? How can we *asah words*, you wonder? Think of Yeshua of Natzret’s parable of the man who built a house on a foundation of rock. He said, at the end of his ‘Sermon on the Mount’:

*Everyone therefore who hears [i.e. sh'ma's them] these words of mine,  
and does [i.e. asah's] them,  
I will liken him to a wise man, who built [i.e. asah-ed] his house on a rock.  
The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house;  
and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock.*  
[Matthew 7:24-25]

To *asah* the *words* of Torah [which is, as the context of the Sermon on the Mount (and especially Matthew 5:17-19) makes clear, precisely what Yeshua was referring to by the phrase ‘*these words of mine*’] simply means *to apply creative energy toward them, and thereby to “build” something useful with them – i.e. to take instructions of the Holy One as to the way we are to live out our lives, and relate to Him, to time, to our fellow man, and to Creation out of the realm of the theoretical and to fix them securely in the world of the very, very practical.* It means to conform one’s human thoughts, priorities, values, words, and conduct to the shape of the Torah the way a potter conforms the clay with which he works to the blueprint he has in his mind or on his drafting table.

To *asah* the *mitzvot* [teachings/instructions] and *mishpatim* [perfect blend of Wisdom and Compassion] of the Holy One requires one to continually work with his thoughts, his priorities, his values, his words, and his conduct like a potter works with the clay to make it into the shape on the blueprint. Continuing with the potter/pottery analogy, understand that if a potter wants to make a water pitcher, he must first have a clear mental picture of what he wants the water pitcher to look like, and then he must keep working with the clay until it conforms to the shape and image he has in his mind<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The potter will only be successful however if and to the extent he is *inspired* and *gifted* with the ability to make the clay become a water pitcher. Similarly, the *mitzvot* of Torah are thus not just things to “do”; they are the image of the righteousness of the Holy One, to which we are - with the inspiration and empowering of the Holy One - to conform every aspect of our lives.

## ***What Happens When the Innate Desire to Asah Is Mis-Applied***

What does all this have to do with religious images and ‘worship’ modalities in general, and with the golden calf in particular, you ask? The ‘building program’ in which the Holy One has called us to participate – the *asah-ing* of the words He spoke on Sinai - is designed to be for us a lifelong, 24/7 project. It is to *totally occupy our lives*. For us to expend our energies and creativity in creating anything else – anything the Holy One did not instruct us to focus our energies on – even for a moment - would be inconsistent with the covenant relationship. In short, to apply our creative drive to build or shape or mold anything other than that which the Holy One has told us to build, shape and mold constitutes a declaration of independence from our Bridegroom-King. It separates us from both the Holy One’s Intimate Fellowship and His Brilliant Mind. It takes us on an *all-aboard-for-Tarshish* journey away in the exact opposite direction from our purpose and destiny. It saps us of precious time and energy. And, perhaps worst of all, it *fragments and fractures our new creation identities*.

### ***If I Was A Sculptor ... But Then Again, NO<sup>9</sup>***

With that in mind let us now go back through the sequence of events in the *calf-sin* narrative. Perhaps now we can see it. The golden calf debacle was about the human drive to *asah* gone berserk. First we *asah* a ministry platform that appeals to our fleshly desires. Then we *asah* a fire. Then we *asah* a mold in the shape of a calf. Then we *asah* a golden image in the mold. Then we *asah* an altar for sacrificing burnt offerings and peace offerings to the image we *asah-ed* in the mold. Hmmmmmn ... whose voice did we *sh'ma* in connection with this course of action? We certainly did not *asah* these things in *sh'ma* response to the Holy One’s voice. In fact, we had to completely *lo sh'ma* His Voice in order to do these things. So the expenditure of spiritual energy by any of us to construct, celebrate, or worship a golden calf is a denial to the Holy One of what is His, and His alone. Such things follow the pattern of the men of Babel. Those men, when told by the Holy One to go forth, populate the world, and make His Creation fruitful, chose instead to band together, formed *a community of their own choosing*, and *asah-ed a an edifice that they deceived themselves into believing would connect them with Heaven*.

### ***And Now, What About Us?***

As mentioned previously, however, the narrative of the *calf-sin* events is not included in Torah by its Divine Author to make us turn up our noses in judgment of our forefathers. Nor did the *Holy Spirit* include these details as mere history.

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<sup>9</sup> The words of this heading are borrowed from the lyrics from a 1970 song written by Elton John (music) and Bernie Taupin (lyrics).

The question the Torah's golden calf narrative is asking is *what about US?* Are we *sh'ma* people - people who move only in response to the Words of the Holy One? Are we participants in His Divine program of *restoration*, doing *only what we see Him doing* and *building only what He tells us to build*? Are we *passionate lovers* of Him Who redeemed us and calls us His Bride? Or are we just intoxicated *with the sensual feeling of self-importance that comes with acts and attitudes of religiosity*.

Are we living a surrendered *sh'ma* lifestyle, doing only what we see the Father doing – or are we just doing *our own thing* – doing every man what is right in his own eyes – and wanting the Holy One to bless it and pat us on the back for our efforts? Have we harnessed – and submitted to the Holy One - our innate human drive to create and build something transcendent any better than our forefathers did? Are our spiritual giftings being applied, and our creative energies expended, upon things other than building a world based upon the Holy One's *mitzvot* and *mish'patim* as He called us to do. Are some of us, instead of *asah-ing* the Holy One's *mitzvot* and *mish'patim*, expending most if not all of our spiritual energies and giftings *asah-ing* little golden-calf kingdoms of Christianity and/or Judaism? Are we calling church buildings and synagogues built by men *wherever, whenever, and however we want* and *decorate according to our own tastes* the 'House of God'? Are we *asah-ing* meeting schedules and orders of service pursuant to which we can engage in activities that appeal alternatively to our flesh and to our religious spirits? Are others among us, instead of *asah-ing* the Holy One's *mitzvot* and *mish'patim*, wearing ourselves out *asah-ing* websites, doctrinal statements, board meetings, budgets and golden-calf ministry organizations? Where does Torah – or any verse of Scripture – authorize us to expend energy or gifting or time *asah-ing* such things? Whose voice are we *sh'ma-ing* when we *asah* those things?

We have only finite quantities of *time* and *energy*. Every second of time and every ounce of energy we spend in *asah-ing* things the Holy One did not tell us to *asah* is that much time and energy we do not have to *asah* things He did tell us to *asah*. So the question is, when we do the religious 'stuff' we do, are we really doing whatever it is we are doing *for Him*, according to *His instructions* – or are we, like our forefathers of *chet-ha-egel* fame, caving in to our own innate drive to create, build, form, establish, something transcendent?

If and to the extent we are *asah-ing* whatever it is we are *asah-ing for Him*, in *sh'ma* response to His instructions in Torah, what we *asah* will be filled with His Breath. It will reflect His goodness. It will declare His holiness. And it will reveal His beauty to the world. But if and to the extent we are merely yielding, as did our forefathers at the time of *the calf-sin*, to our un-harnessed drive to create something

transcendent, whatever we *asah* will instead reflect *our arrogance*. It will declare *our self-centeredness*. And it will reveal our *shallowness* and *narrow-mindedness* to the world. Just how much golden calf dust will we have to swallow to take until we get this out of our system once and for all?

### *A Ki Tisa Travelogue*

As our parsha opens we will find the Holy One instructing Moshe in the delicate task of giving an accounting of the souls the Holy One has entrusted to his care. The children and heir of the Covenant are not to be treated like commodities and counted like sheep. Their number is to be calculated indirectly, if at all, as part of an intimately personal process of redemption. If we really need to know the number of the innumerable, we can determine that simply by dividing the number of shekels of silver the Community contributes to the *Mish'kan* project by two.

Next the Holy One will instruct Moshe concerning one last piece of furniture for the *mish'kan*'s outer court – the so-called *bronze laver* at which Aharon and his sons will wash their hands and feet before engaging in their assigned tasks. The Holy One will then give Moshe two recipes – one for the oil of anointing to be used for anointing Aharon and his sons, as well as the furnishings of the *Mish'kan*. The other recipe will be for the *fragrant incense* that is to be burned upon the golden altar in the Holy Place.

The Holy One will then appoint and Divinely-empower two men - *Betzal'el* and *Oholi'av* - as the master-craftsman in charge of the *mish'kan* project. Next, the Holy One will once again emphasize the primary role of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath in the life of His holy nation. The Sabbath is made for man – and man is to *sh'mar* [treasure, value, cherish, and keep careful watch over to preserve as holy] it. The Sabbath is, we will learn this week, the *ot* [sign] of the covenant that He has cut with us – the ring we wear that proclaims that we are His Betrothed Bride.

After Moshe receives these instructions, the narrative will change drastically. The Holy One will advise Moshe what is going on back in the camp in his absence. And that is when we will read the narrative of the golden calf incident, to which I have already alluded. Three thousand souls - One half of one percent of the population of the redeemed community perished in connection with this incident. Everyone in the community was affected dramatically. They began to wonder what effect this disastrous turn of events might bode for the Betrothal covenant. They knew that they all had committed adultery against their Bridegroom-King - right under His *chuppah*, no less - and that they therefore all fully *deserved* to share the fate of those who died.

The survivors therefore wait in agony to learn how their Divine Bridegroom would respond to what they had done. No one expected – could even fathom – what that

response will be. The Holy One will prove Himself to be *a God of forgiveness and faithfulness to covenant* - even in circumstances where His covenant partners have been horribly unfaithful.

Aware of his own failings in the situation, Moshe will then ask to be taught the Holy One's *ways* - and shown the Holy One's *glory*. The Holy One will smile. He knows there is hope for Moshe the murderer, descendant of Levi the murderer, yet. He promises to *hide Moshe in the cleft of a rock*, and then *cause all His goodness to pass by Moshe*. As He does so, He promises, He will *describe Himself to Moshe in a way that stretches all Moshe's – and our - theologies to the breaking point*.

At the Holy One's instruction Moshe will then hew stones for two new tablets on which the Holy One will inscribe the Torah through the operation of a force Moshe describes as *'the finger of God'*. The Holy One will then reveal to Moshe more about what He has planned for the people He has redeemed from Egypt and their descendants. He will promise to provide an angelic manifestation to lead them to the land of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, and then drive out the Kena'ani for and before them. The Holy One will instruct Moshe how the people are to relate to the people of those nations when they encounter them. He will be told what is to be done with those nations' altars and worship practices. The Holy One will then launch back into a bit of a *mitzvot* download– reiterating the instruction not to make molten gods, not to eat *chametz* [leaven] on *Pesach* (Passover), to sanctify all first-born males, to refrain from working on the Sabbath, and to observe the festival of *Shavuot* (Pentecost), among other instructions.

Moshe will then descend from the Mountaintop a second time. This time he will not overreact. This time there will be no rage. This time no swords will be drawn. This time no judgment will be pronounced. This time no one will die. This time, you see, he will understand the nature, the covenant faithfulness, the patience, the forgiveness, and the mercy, of the Holy One. This time his face will be transfigured with divine light and love. This time his countenance will reflect the glory of the Holy One. And *Ki Tisa* will end with the prophet wearing a veil, humbly teaching the people the Torah as viewed through the essential lens of 'mercy triumphs over judgment'. Are you listening, Beloved?

### ***Haftarah Ki Tisa***

I Kings 18:1-39

The haftarah for *Ki Tisa* is the familiar story the confrontation between *Eliyahu* [Elijah] and the prophets (priests) of Ba'al. The story is set in the breakaway kingdom established by *Yerov'am* [Jeroboam] after he and the 10 northern tribes parted company with *Y'hudah* [Judah] and Binyamin [Benjamin]. *Yerov'am* adopted the name Yisrael [Israel] for the new kingdom he *asah*-ed in the North., and the ancient city of *Shechem* was established as its capital. The kingdom to the South

became known by the name *Y'hudah*, and its capital continued to be *Y'rushalayim* (Jerusalem).

When *Yerov'am* established his breakaway kingdom in the North he faced a serious problem. The Temple, to which all men were according to Torah to travel three times a year, was in *Y'rushalayim* – *the capital city of the kingdom of his hated adversary Rehoboam*. Lest the people he ruled feel constrained by Torah to make the thrice-annual journey to his rival's kingdom, and thereby establish comradery with their kinsmen to the South, *Yerov'am* and his advisors decided it was time to ... well, let's just say *update Torah* a little bit. For wholly political reasons *Yerov'am* found it beneficial to advance the proposition that Torah's instructions as to how, when, and where the Holy One was to be worshipped were old-fashioned, outdated, and no longer appropriate in the new, more enlightened kingdom he was *asah*-ing. So, *Yerov'am* and his advisors decided to restructure and redefine the worship of the Holy One, which the people were by no means ready at that point to abandon. He re-molded the veneration of YHVH into a form he believed was "better suited to present circumstances".

The plan *Yerov'am* and his advisors settled upon was tantamount to *resurrecting Aharon's golden calf idea*. *Yerov'am* went Aharon one better, however, and had two golden calf images *asah*-ed. He located these images in easily accessible shrines, one at the Southern end of his kingdom, at *Beit-El* [Bethel], and one at the Northern end of his kingdom, in the city of Dan. These golden images were defined by *Yerov'am* – as the golden calf about which we will read in this week's Torah readings – not as some false god, but as representations of the Holy One Himself. They were just 'visual aids' – symbols, as it were. At least that is how Jeroboam sold the public on the idea. *Yerov'am's* new religious system did not stop with the golden calves however. He also replaced the Aharonic priesthood set up by the Torah with a new hybrid, ecumenical form of priesthood<sup>10</sup>, where priests were chosen from each of the tribes. Of course, *Yerov'am* appointed himself as the High Priest. **I Kings 12:32-33.**

The haftarah this week takes place generations later. In the intervening years, all of *Yerov'am's* successors have "... *walked in the way and in the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat ... wherewith he made Israel to sin*". The kingdom *asah*-ed by *Yerov'am* has drifted farther and farther into apostasy. The king who now reigns in that kingdom is named *Ahav* [Ahab]. He and his murderous and blatantly idolatrous wife, *Izavel* [Jezebel], have plunged the kingdom *asah*-ed by Jeroboam into new

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<sup>10</sup> *Yerov'am* was unfortunately by no means the last to separate from true Biblical ways and patterns of worship for reasons that began with politics. In the early centuries of this age, when the gentile branch of the 'church' of Yeshua chose to eschew the foundation of Torah and separate from its Hebrew root structure, leaders like followed *the way of Yerov'am* pretty much to the letter.

depths of perversion. Seeking to eliminate all vestiges of the even the polluted and perverse form of the worship of the Holy One which had been established by Jeroboam, Ahav and Izavel have both *made Ba'al worship the official religion of state* and *outlawed the worship of the Holy One completely*. In these circumstances the Holy One raised up *Eliyahu ha-navi* [Elijah the prophet] from the obscure village of Tishbe to act as His prophet and to bring down Ahav, Izavel, and Ba'al much as He had raised up Moshe to bring down Pharaoh and the false 'gods' of Egypt.

Our haftarah narrative begins at the conclusion of the Holy One's first phase of judgment upon Ahav, Izavel, and their Ba'al-worshipping kingdom. As you may recall that 1<sup>st</sup> phase judgment was a 3-year long supernatural drought. As our haftarah begins the Northern Kingdom is the 3rd year of that draught. Unbeknownst to Ahav and Izavel and all those who scraped and bowed to them, the Holy One of Israel has decreed that a game-changing confrontation is going to occur on a mountain called Karmel. And there's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

The main characters in this week's haftarah drama - other than the Holy One, of course - will be Eliyahu, Ahav, Izavel, *Ovadyah* [*i.e.* Obadiah – one of the few officials in Ahav's court who was still loyal to the Holy One], and of course 450 prophets/priest of Ba'al. Eliyahu will not only issue a challenge to Ahav, Izavel, and the prophets of Ba'al. He will challenge each of us as well with the famous words:

*How long will you hesitate between two opinions?  
If the Holy One is your God, follow Him! And if Ba'al is, then follow him.*  
[I Kings 18:21]

By the end of the week may we all shout along with the multitudes on Karmel:

*Adonai hu ha-Elohim! Adonai hu ha-Elohim!  
The Holy One, He is God! The Holy One, He is God!*  
[I Kings 8:39]

### ***A Look at the B'rit Chadasha Readings for the Week of Ki Tisa***

I Corinthians 8:4-13

It was probably in Philippi, c. 54 or 55 CE, that Shaul received from *Titus*<sup>11</sup> a startling report concerning what was going on in some of the home fellowships in Corinth. Corinth was a city well to the south, located on the strategic narrow isthmus connecting northern and southern Greece. 20 or more years had passed since Shaul, the young fire-breathing rabbi assigned by the *P'rushim* (Pharisees) to

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<sup>11</sup> Some have speculated that Titus was a close relative, perhaps a brother, of *Lukas* (Luke), but this is not known. Titus is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Acts (which Lukas wrote), and very little is known about him except that Shaul used him as an emissary, and later left him in Crete to correct some misconceptions and problems of cooperation among the believers there. Shaul mentions Titus in four of his letters, namely II Corinthians [8:16-24 and 12:17-18], Galatians [2:1-3], II Timothy [4:10], and in the epistle bearing Titus' name.

function as the chief prosecutor of Yeshua's talmidim, 'saw the light' on the road to Damascus. In the interim, Shaul has become Yeshua's *shaliach* [appointed messenger/apostle] to the *Diaspora*. Timotheus, the young man with a Hebrew mother and a Greek father whom Shaul had met at Lystra in the course of Shaul's first journey as Yeshua's *shaliach* to the *Diaspora*, had become Shaul's most trusted companion.

Two or three years prior to the matters about which we will read in this passage from the apostolic Scriptures, Shaul had visited Corinth – the seat of the worship of *Aphrodite*, the Greek goddess of love, sensuality, and desire. At that time he – and his essential message about Yeshua being the Messiah promised in Torah – had been warmly received. A diverse group of Corinthians – some Hebrews, others God-fearing foreigners, and still others pagans - had at that time whole-heartedly embraced Shaul's message that the prophesied Messiah had come. Shaul had therefore remained in Corinth for a year and a half, at the house of a God-fearing foreigner - *Titius Justus*. The house of Titius was strategically located next door to the synagogue of Corinth – and it was from that command center that Shaul, with the help of Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos, had introduced the local population to Yeshua. The people were enamored by, and Shaul apparently stuck with, the basic message of '*Messiah, and Him Crucified*'<sup>12</sup>.

Shaul thus taught the group at Corinth how to get to Heaven; but alas, he did not teach them how to live beautiful and meaningful lives while here on earth. He downloaded a radical new belief system that tickled their itching ears for something new and exciting, but, alas, he failed to impart to them the more important, weightier elements of the Kingdom of Heaven lifestyle. He taught them how to see themselves forgiven of sin and declared righteous in Messiah, but not how to live – and interact with each other and the world - in a manner consistent with that new status. He taught them to become champions of the most basic aspects of Pauline theology; but alas, he did not teach them how to die-to-self and live as humble, surrendered, joy-filled and *shalom-impacting* talmidim. He had failed miserably to model for them Yeshua's '*Deeper Things of Torah*' training program in real time. His ministry had been strong on individual salvation – but weak on Covenantal identity, mission, and responsibility. The result of his download of only the introduction to the world-changing revelation he had been given to impart was predictable - chaos, competition, infighting, and sensuality. In short, a golden calf worship system. The gold-gilded monster that popped out of his prophetic fire pit at Corinth emphasized charisma over character, exalted form over substance, preferred human intellectual processes over Divine wisdom

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<sup>12</sup> See I Corinthians 2:2-3, where Shaul says: *I determined not to know anything among you except Yeshua Ha-Mashiach and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*

downloads, and valued ecstatic experiences over practical demonstrations of love for God and for man, real *shalom*, and true joy.

On his first trip to Corinth, Shaul had taught the people there how to believe with their minds for salvation and forgiveness of sin; but he left them virtually clueless as to how to embrace and carry the ‘Easy Yoke’ of Messiah in this world. He led them in a prayer to accept Yeshua as their individual, personal savior – but he failed to teach them how to abide daily in, and draw energy and wisdom from, the Beauty Realm of the Risen, Ascended Messiah in any meaningful way. He now saw that by teaching only ‘*Messiah and him crucified*’, had caused him to leave out some pretty critical matters – especially Messiah’s lifestyle teachings. Lost in the go-to-Heaven-when-you-die and build-a-personal-ministry-around-spiritual-gifts message that he had emphasized at Titius Justus’ house were the eternal truths of Torah, the prophets, and the writings. Ignored by his ‘Messiah, and him crucified’ partial-gospel approach were Yeshua’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount of the practical, originally intended Torah lifestyle and the Kingdom of Heaven parables. A ‘Cross-only’ focus, he now realized, also ignored all Yeshua’s post-resurrection teachings. He realized that he had taught the people of Corinth how to take up offerings for the victims of persecutions far away, but he had not taught them Torah’s practical wisdom regarding how to care for the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the foreigner in their midst. He realized that he had taught them how to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but he had failed to teach them what Yeshua had made clear was the purpose of that baptism [see **John 14:26-27 and 16:7-15**]. Since Shaul left Corinth, therefore, things have gone very, very badly. Shaul’s teachings had awakened their hearts to Yeshua’s identity as Messiah, but had not equipped them to live real, substantive lives of excellence in this world. The fellowship Shaul had left behind at Corinth therefore soon devolved into *sound and fury, signifying nothing*. They quickly became *puffed up with what they thought was knowledge* –but they were woefully short on *Torah mitzvot*. Without learning and walking in the ‘deeper things of Torah’ that Yeshua taught, the salvation-is-in-Yeshua message that Shaul taught in the house of Titius Justus produced no Kingdom-lifestyle fruit. Those whose sole spiritual diet consisted of this teaching quickly became known for ‘messy-antics’ instead of models of true Messianic Peace, Love, Hope, Joy, Mercy, Compassion, Patience, Covenant Faithfulness, Kindness, Gentleness, Goodness, Wisdom, and Truth. What they was a *hot mess* – both on an individual and a communal basis. He now could see that what he had left them with was a form of Pauline Theology that focused their attention on *holding exciting meetings, on competing with one another over spiritual gifts, in jostling over titles and positions of authority and influence, and on arguing over who should get to say and do what when*. Why had he not taught them Yeshua’s ‘Upper-Room’ download about how to become truly great in the Kingdom of

Heaven by humbly serving others in practical ways [John 13:12-17], by loving one another [John 13:35], and by *asah*-ing the instructions of Torah [John 14:15: *If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments*].

What the Corinthians were *asah*-ing in their city after Shaul left, therefore, was *lo tov* [not good]. Shaul was appalled. In his excitement over the salvation message, had he really forgotten to teach them the message of loving one's neighbor? In his exuberance over the empowerment of the Holy Spirit had he really forgotten to teach them the messages of humility, service, and unity? Yes, he had. Realizing his work in Corinth was woefully incomplete, he sent a letter of lifestyle correction to them – i.e. '*I Corinthians*'. In that letter Shaul gave the world a beautiful rabbinic drash on Leviticus 19, the infamous 'love chapter' of Torah. The world now refers to his drash as 'I Corinthians 13'.

Then, to follow up and make sure his message was received and its 'deeper things' teachings implemented, Shaul sent his co-laborer, Titus of Crete, to Corinth to deliver it. Titus returned and gave Shaul a report that prompted him to fire off a second letter to Corinth. It is a portion of this latter letter - the epistle we know as II Corinthians - that forms our apostolic Scripture readings for the week of *Ki Tisa*. At first glance it may appear that what Shaul is talking about in the portion of that letter we will read has very little relevance to us. He is speaking about whether or not followers of Yeshua should/can eat food that has been part of a sacrifice to an idol. But that issue, which was indeed very relevant to the Messianics of the First Century, had already been decided by the council of elders in Jerusalem [Acts 15]. So as we shall soon see what Shaul is really addressing in what we know as the 8th chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians has very little to do with food [sacrificed to idols or otherwise], and has everything to do with *pride, arrogance, and 'knowledge that puffs up'*. See Proverbs 6:16 and Romans 13:8. Such a message is as fresh – and needed – today as it ever was.

*May we all focus our attention and energy on what the Holy One has called us to do and be.*

***The Rabbi's son***

**Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week**

**Avot – The Prayer of the Fathers**

**Baruch Atah Adonai eloheinu v'elohai avoteinu**  
*Blessed are You, O Holy One Our God, and God of our fathers*

**Elohai Avraham, Elohai Yitzchak, v'elohai Ya'akov**  
*God of Avraham, God of Yitzchak, and God of Ya'akov*

**Ha-El ha-gadol ha-gibor v'han'ro, El- Elyon**  
*The great, mighty God, and awesome, supreme God*

**gomel chasodim tovim v'konai ha-kol**  
*Who bestows good things upon those He loves and Who creates all things*

**v'zachar chasdai avot u'mayvi goel liv'nei v'nayhem**  
*and Who remembers our ancestors' acts of covenant love  
and brings a Redeemer to their children's children*

**l'ma'an sh'mo b'ahavo**  
*for the sake of His Name, and out of love*

**Melech ezer u'moshiach u'mogan**  
*O King, Helper, Messiah/Savior, and Shield/Defender*

**Baruch Atah Adonai Mogen Avraham**  
*Blessed are You, O Holy One, Guardian of Avraham*