

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Ki Tisa:*** **Exodus 30:11-38**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 18:1-6**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 8:1-6**

Take b'samim (NKJV 'sweet spices') ... ***and make of them incense, a perfume after the perfumer's art.***
[Exodus 30:34-35]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 19:1-3;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Avot*, the Prayer of the Fathers

Ki tisa et-rosh b'nei-Yisra'el lifkudeihem – *If/as/when/to the extent you lift up the heads of B'nei Yisrael to muster/visit/inspect/address/make an accounting regarding them ... v'natnu ish* – every man is to give/appoint ... ***kofer nafsho l'Adonai*** - a covering for his soul [i.e. his animalistic mind, will, and emotions] unto the Holy One **Exodus 30:12a.**

For the last five and a half chapters – throughout the stunning section of Red-Letter Creator-Speak that I call the '*Mish'kan Discourse*'² - the Holy One has been going on enthusiastically about a very special 'Beauty Realm' structure that He wants His Redeemed Community to construct, maintain, and introduce to the world. He actually sees this structure's construction, operation, and display as an essential part of our 'great nation' identity. Like Avraham's tent, in which our patriarch hosted and served the Holy One and His angels – see **Genesis 18:1-15** – was the portal of the Holy One's blessing of the world in his day, the '*Tent of Meeting*' is to be the portal of His blessing of the world in our all our days. What is this structure the Hebrew text calls a '*Mish'kan*'? It is the earthly shadow of the Throne Room of Heaven. It is to serve as the parlor for safe, non-threatening God-man interactions; as the stage on which a great passion play is acted out; and as a shadow-box through which we are to learn about Messiah. The initial construction, consecration, and inauguration of this structure is to occur at Sinai; but the structure is to be moveable, so we can take it with us wherever the pillar of fire and cloud take us.

The Holy One opened the *Mish'kan Discourse* by instructing Moshe which earthly materials He wanted *B'nei Yisrael* to use in its construction. In *Terumah* He laid out the blueprint according to which He wanted the structure replicated on earth. He then gave Moshe a detailed description of the *foundation* and *framework* and

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² This great download of Divine vision, energy and instructions began at Exodus 25:1 and will continue through Exodus 31:18. Some might prefer to call it the '*Tabernacle Blueprint Download*'.

furnishings and curtains the earthly replica should have. More recently, in *Tetzaveh*, He identified by name *the people He wants to minister in it* – and described in detail the special garments of beauty and honor that He wants them to wear. He has spelled out exactly *how He wants Moshe to inaugurate the edifice and its furnishings and how He wants him to consecrate those who will serve in its courts*. He has also introduced us to the critical element of *avodah* – *i.e.* the *faithful, selfless service we are to perform in the various courts of our Beloved Bridegroom*. Today the Holy One will introduce us to another form of *avodah* - *the avodah of Kingdom currency*. Remember – every picture tells a story!

The Avodah of Kingdom Currency

Last week's parsha began with the Holy One instructing Moshe that the first and foremost *avodah* of every person in the Camp of the Redeemed is to be constantly about the business of finding, cultivating, purifying, and offering pure oil *for the lamp*. This week the Holy One will make sure that we know we are called to be *people of the silver* as well as people of the oil and the incense. The Holy One will kick off the revelation this week by directing that as part of their reasonable *avodah* every man in the Camp of the Redeemed is to show his love for and devotion to the Bridegroom-King by stepping forward at a designated time and placing in Moshe's hand a *half-shekel* of silver. Since there are 600,000 or so men in the Camp, not counting women and children, well let's just say that is A LOT OF SILVER!³ Hmmm. Is there perhaps something more going on here than a just a Divinely inspired fundraising technique? You better believe there is!

The Half-Shekel: A Beautiful Picture of Atonement

Before we begin building the *Mish'kan* – indeed before we even begin to prepare the site – the Holy One wants us to do something. He wants each of us to produce a half-shekel of silver. It is not that He needs us to contribute to a building fund. What He wants from us is a whole lot more than silver. What He wants from each of us is a *soul-searching audit*. He wants to teach us something very important about what Western theologians have come to call 'atonement'. In Hebrew the word is *kippur*. Why is a *kippur* suddenly important? *Kippur* is not a theological status; it is an essential element of covenant relationship. It is what every human party to a covenant hopes to be afforded when he, as he inevitably will, commits a small or large breach of the covenant under which he lives. *Kippur* is what I call

³ The Holy One later will define a shekel of silver in this context as 20 *gerahs*. A *gerah* is 1.14 grams. Hence, a shekel is 20 x 1.14 grams, or 22.8 grams [approximately 0.8 ounces]. The half shekel coin that was eventually utilized for this purpose, in Temple times, was a coin made of silver approximately the size and weight of an American half dollar. The value of silver in the days of Moshe was very high –believed by some to be about the equivalent of \$80.00 USD per shekel today. If only the men brought a half-shekel, and this was approximately the value as supposed, the present value of the silver presented at this special occasion would be somewhere around \$1.2 Million US Dollars in today's terms.

forgiveness on steroids. Kippur means a party to a covenant who is innocent of wrongdoing himself but has been horribly wronged by the other party says to the party who has breached the covenant:

**DO NOT WORRY - ALL IS STILL WELL BETWEEN US.
NEITHER MY COMMITMENT TO YOU
NOR THE FAVOR YOU HOLD IN MY EYES HAS CHANGED.
I WILL NOT ONLY NOT HOLD YOUR BREACH OF COVENANT
AGAINST YOU, BUT I WILL GLADLY BEAR THE ENTIRE
COST, PENALTY AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE BREACH MYSELF.**

Kippur [i.e. atonement] means that wherever one party to a covenant fails or falls short in performance of his covenant undertaking, the other covenant partner [i.e. the one who has been wronged] will come behind, quietly fill in the gaps or gaping holes left by the other party's breach. He will make up the difference – the kippur - out of his own pocket or flesh. He will call it even, and He will never breathe a word about it. Think of Shem and Yafet [Westernized by the KJV to 'Japheth'] walking backward to respectfully lay a covering over their drunken and passed-out father, Noach. Talk about SEEING BEYOND CURRENT BEHAVIOR FOR THE SAKE OF LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP! Talk about HONORING A COVENANT PARTNER EVEN IN HIS WORST MOMENTS/SEASON OF LIFE! Talk about MERCY! Talk about LOVE! Talk about GRACE!

Kippur is so much more than a doctrine; it is a warm, cleansing, healing outpouring river of covenantal love that covers a real person, in real situations, despite that person's multitude of 'sins'. The comfort and redemptive energy of that sweet river covers everything from *minor deviations from covenantal instruction* [e.g. Avraham in Genesis 12:10-13, 16:1-4, and 20:1-2], to *critical departures from assigned post, duty, and mission* [e.g. Noach in Genesis 9 and Yehudah in Genesis 38], to *shameful abuse of positions of trust* [e.g. Rivkah and Ya'akov in Genesis 27, Reuven in Genesis 35:22, Aharon in Exodus 32, Moshe in Exodus 32:19-20, and David in II Samuel 11]. The good news is that the Holy One designed this glorious, living, breathing *love-gift* into our Covenant relationship from the very beginning. He even established a day each year - *Yom Kippur* - for us to remember, relish, and celebrate, and reconnect afresh with this wonderful love-gift. He wants a Bride-People that He can win over with His love – a 'forgiven-much, therefore loving-much' people who will share the abundant love and mercy they have received with others. He has no desire for robots who follow orders mechanically without passion or understanding. The Holy One therefore now says to Moshe:

Ki tisa et-rosh b'nei-Yisra'el
If/as/when/to the extent you lift up the heads of B'nei Yisrael

lifkudeihem

to muster/visit/inspect/address/make an accounting regarding them

v'natnu ish kofer naf'sho

every man is to give a covering for his nefesh [i.e. his animalistic mind, will, and emotions]

l'Adonai bifkod otam

unto the Holy One at the time of mustering/visitation/inspection/address/accounting

v'lo-yihyeh vahem negef bif'kod otam

And they will not be stricken by the plague when they are mustered/visited/inspected/addressed.

I know that many English translations of this Divine Declaration describe what the Holy One tells Moshe to do as ‘*take a census*’. I know English translations tend to put the emphasis of this passage on numbers. That is, of course, the way Western minds are programmed by culture to think. It is a product of our fruit-of-the-tree-of-a-little-bit-of-knowledge-generated ‘*exalt-form-over-substance obsession*’. It is just one of the distraction delusions under which our fallen minds have become *serpent-seduced* to indulge. But spoke this directive in the Hebrew of Heaven, not in any language of fallen humanity. In Hebrew the verbs used in the text are *nasa* and *paqad*. *Nasa* means *to lift up, to bear up in one's arms or on one's shoulders or back, and to carry/transport to an appointed destination*. If all you get out of that verb is ‘*count*’ – *i.e.* crunch numbers - do you see where you might be suffering under a *cultural myopia* problem? The second verb used – to describe the purpose of the *nasa*-ing – is *paqad*. That verb means *to muster, to visit, to assemble, to address, to inspect, and/or assess someone or some group* - like a shepherd does with his flock or herd. Neither *nasa* nor *paqad* are primarily about numbers or counting.

The text of Torah instead talks about ‘when Moshe ***lifts up the head***’ of the children of Israel. Think about that for a few moments. Why lift a person’s head if all you want to do is assign a number to it? Most frequently one lifts another’s head *because the person whose head needs lifting is horribly ashamed of himself*. In my experience as an attorney most people who are caught red-handed in sexual sin, embezzlement or other criminal activity – especially the first time – tend to lower their heads and stare at the floor when they appear before whoever holds the power to sentence. They are ashamed. They avert their eyes. They do not even dare lift their head and look at the judge or official who knows what they have done and will determine and announce to them and to the world what they ‘deserve’.

So is it possible that what the Holy One is after here at Sinai is not a *count* of heads. He knows how many people He has called out of Egypt. And His knowledge is more accurate than any count Moshe could make. So is it possible that the Hebrew text of Torah means exactly what it says – that what the Holy One

is really after is a *lifting* of heads – i.e. an understanding that full *atonement has been made*, and that therefore there is no more guilt nor reason for shame. Is that why the instructions of the Holy One are that as Moshe visits⁴ each man in the Camp what he is to do is to *lift that man's head*? And is that why as the prophet lifts each man's head the man is to do something the text calls *natat* [i.e. *give, set in place, appoint, establish*] ***kofer naf'sho***?

What meaneth this, you ask? ***Kofer naf'sho*** literally means *an atonement* [*kofer is, of course, a form of the word kippur*] *for his nefesh* (i.e. *his animal-like mind, his pseudo-intellect, his fleshly emotions, and his self-will*). And why suddenly is an atonement for one's nefesh necessary? B'nei Yisrael didn't need a *kippur/kofer* to get out of Egypt, or to pass dry-shod through the Sea of Reeds. They didn't have to have a *kippur/kofer* to eat manna or drink water from a rock. They didn't need a *kippur/kofer* to enter covenant with the Holy One under the Chuppah of Heaven at Sinai. But now suddenly the Holy One says the need one – and they need it ***v'lo-yihyeh vahem negef bif'kod otam***. This Hebrew phrase means 'in order not be stricken with a plague in the course of the visitation.

A Plague? In the Camp of the Redeemed? Among the Redeemed?

Whoa! Hold on a minute. What is the Holy One talking about? Why would anybody in the Community of the Redeemed possibly need to be worried about being *stricken by a plague*? No one at this point has failed to *sh'ma* the Voice of the Holy One. No one up to this stage of the narrative has failed to *sh'mar* the Covenant that was just cut in parshot *Yitro* and *Mishpatim*. No one we have read about thus far had done anything that could be construed as a violation of the Covenant – much less a serious violation needing *kippur/kafar*. Could the Holy One know something that we do not know? What does the Holy One have foreknowledge is about to break loose at the bottom of the mountain? What is possibly going to threaten the life of the precious people the Holy One would not let Pharaoh's chariots or bloodthirsty Amalekites so much as lift a finger against? Why is every man in the Camp's *personal kippur/atonement* suddenly so important? What plague is about to strike the Encampment of the Redeemed?

Oh Dear Reader – do you not get it? The *calf-sin* is coming⁵. The Holy One knows it even if we do not. A horrendous breach of Covenant is indeed about to take

⁴ The Hebrew phrase ***b'fakod*** literally means 'in visiting', not 'in counting'.

⁵ The sin of Nadav and Avihu will follow a few months later. Then will come the sin of the spies – and the 40-year long plague that it produces. Then the rebellion of Korach will break out. The generation of the Exodus will see all of these plagues.

place. A life threatening plague is indeed about to break out. The Holy One has known it all along. And now that the time for this potentially catastrophic event is drawing near, out of His great love and mercy He is preparing in advance a means for the guilt and shame that will flow from it to be erased.

There will be a need for atonement very soon. And the Holy One, as a loving Bridegroom, is building a fail-proof mechanism of atonement into the Covenant before the need even arises. What the Holy One is talking about is picking up the broken pieces of the Camp into which the golden calf episode is going to cause it to shatter. What the Holy One is talking about is how He will cause all who will heed His atonement instructions to survive the plague that is about to break out and move on with the Covenant mission. But wait. What is the connection that the Holy One sees as existing between *being counted in a census* and being *stricken by a plague*? Is being *stricken by a plague* something that could really happen to the Redeemed of the Holy One? Furthermore what does Moshe's making an accounting of the number of people who have come with him out of Egypt and made covenant with the Holy One on Sinai have to do with the *mish'kan*? And finally, what on earth can a man possibly give for *kofer naf'sho* – i.e. *atonement for his nefesh*?

Let's consider these questions in the order they are stated. First of all, what is the connection between being counted in a census and being stricken by a plague?

More Precious Than Silver

We in the modern world see no problem whatever in *reducing people to numbers*. We do so all the time. Today's political systems run on *public opinion polls*. The secular way of organizing and controlling people depends totally upon first reducing human beings to *pie charts* and *bar graphs* according to the numbers reporting conservative vs. liberal opinions on issues of our day. The financial world of our time is much the same. Its ups and downs are measured based upon 'leading economic indicators' instead of people's lives. It uses *market analyses* to reduce people to *product-consuming numbers* and *service-using numbers*.

The world of organized religion has followed the same path. The clergy are taught to reduce people to *attendance* numbers and *membership* numbers and the recipients of redemptive miracles to *decision* numbers. It should surprise no one that the Holy One's thoughts about people however are much, much *higher than our thoughts in this regard*. He knows the truth about *what* politicians and market analysts and religious leaders are doing - and *why* - when they reduce people to numbers like so many pieces of silver. He knows that every time they do it – unknowingly – they claim the people those numbers represent as *their own*. They add the people to their personal religious balance sheet as if they belonged to them.

They figure them into their personal religious ‘bottom line’. If people can be numbered, you see, they can be *separated*, and *categorized/labeled*, and *divided*, and most important of all – they can be *manipulated*. And if those doing the numbering can in the process number the people *in their sphere of influence*, those people can pretend that the people counted actually *belong to them* – which of course in the Holy One’s eyes they *never do*.

The Holy One admonishes us not to think or speak of people in terms of numbers. He knows that as soon as we look at people as numbers we *dehumanize* and *de-individualize* them. He knows that in numbering others we *destroy what makes each of His Creations unique* - and *totally miss the point of what He is doing* – and *intends to do* – in *each individual life*. He also knows that looking at people as numbers tends to make us *fixate us on the present*. In tough times, He knows, we focus desperately on *holding on to* the numbers - as if they *meant something*. In good times, He knows, we try to *increase the numbers* so that we can feel an inner sense of accomplishment and receive accolades and admiration from men. He knows therefore that for us the true tale the numbers tell is not about *the* people who are numbered – but is, instead, about *us who have numbered them*. He knows we use the numbers to JUSTIFY OUR MINISTRIES. He knows we see only the ‘snapshot’ that the numbers present. He knows that those who look at numbers can never see either the ‘whole person’ or the ‘whole picture’. He knows we do not see the people from the Holy One’s perspective - as *living, breathing Adams and Chavas into which He has breathed life*. He knows that when we reduce people to numbers we cease to see them individually as *souls in the midst of transformation* and *sparks of eternal flame* each destined to become a shining light to the world. Heaven help us. What *on earth* have we been thinking?

Changes in Latitude, Changes in Attitude

Today the Holy One is going to instruct Moshe to never look upon the people who followed him out of Egypt the same way again. The redeemed of the Holy One – who have now been divinely called and empowered to re-create on earth the Heavenly realities the Holy One has shown Moshe - are no longer to be looked upon by Moshe as numbers. The Holy One’s people are no longer to be counted like so many head of livestock. Avraham’s seed is never again to be reduced to mere ‘numbers’ – notches in someone’s gun, or assets on someone’s ledger sheet. Each individual in the multitude is *uniquely precious* and *imminently valuable* in the Holy One’s sight – indeed much more precious and valuable than silver. *And woe to the man who thinks he owns them, or has the right to determine their worth, their value, or their potential.*

Numbering the Innumerable

How does the Holy One see the ‘numbering’ issue? According to our aliyah He

sees the practice of reducing people to numbers as *striking them with a plague*. The Holy One sees our number fixation as *dangerous* and *injury causing*. Why would He see it that way? Do you remember when the Holy One appeared to our father Avraham, called him into covenant relationship, promised to ‘make him a blessing’, the Holy One said to Avraham at that time “***I will make your offspring as the dust of the eretz, so that if a man can number the dust of the eretz, then your seed may also be numbered.*** Genesis 13:16. The Holy One also told Avraham:

Look now toward the sky, and count the stars, if you are able to count them."

He said to [Avraham], "So shall your seed be."

[Genesis 15:5]

Counting the descendants of Avraham by numerical means – like a rancher counts cattle or like a slave owner counts slaves - is thus *totally inconsistent with the covenant relationship between the Holy One and Avraham*. Think about it. The Holy One had promised to make Avraham’s seed ‘uncountable’. If one believes this promise, visible ‘numbers’ mean nothing. Indeed to allow one’s self to think of the Holy One’s covenant people in such terms is downright *insulting* - not only to the souls involved but also to the Holy One. To count that what the Holy One has called uncountable is therefore not merely an unproductive exercise – it is *a serious breach of the covenant*.

Handling the Issue of Numbers and Accountability In a Holy Manner, Consistent with the Covenant

Despite how dangerous ‘numbering’ the Holy One’s people is, in today’s aliyah the Holy One advises that there are still going to be times – indeed *whenever a departure from Covenantal Protocol is about to burst forth into a full-fledged plague-discipline because it threatens the very essence of the Camp’s mission* - it will serve the redemptive plan and purposes of Heaven to muster, assemble, visit, inspect, and address, and make an assessment of the community.

The Covenant breach of making up our own objects of worship [i.e. golden calves and the like] and calling them by our Redeemer’s Name is, you see, even more life- and destiny-threatening to the people in the Camp of the Redeemed than counting what the Holy One has declared are uncountable. So the Holy One says:

Zeh yitnu kol ha-over al ha p’kudim machatzit ha-shekel

Everyone included in the muster/assembly/visitation/accounting must give a half shekel.

B’shekel ha-k’desh esrim gerah

This shall be by the holy standard – a shekel being 20 gerahs⁶

⁶ A *gerah* is 1.14 grams. Hence, a shekel is 20 x 1.14 grams, or 22.8 grams [approximately 0.8 ounces]. The half shekel coin that was eventually utilized for this purpose, in Temple times, was a coin made of silver approximately the size and weight of an American half dollar.

Ha-shekel machatzit ha-shekel t'rumah l'Adonai

Half of such a shekel is to be dedicated unto God for a higher purpose.

Kol ha-over al ha-p'kudim miben esrim shanah

Every man over 20 years old shall be included in this accounting

v'malah yiten terumat Adonai

and raise up this [half shekel presentation] to the Holy One.

In times of mass-sin induced plagues accountings must be taken – but they are not to be taken by body counts. They are to be conducted by having each person the Holy One had redeemed contribute exactly *one-half a shekel of silver* towards the building or maintenance of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. People were never to be counted – all that was to be counted was silver. Only by multiplying the total quantity of shekels brought forward by the people and dividing the total shekel count by two could the number of people involved in the process could be ascertained. Hence the Holy One told Moshe to make it clear that the *terumah* He was calling forth was not to be a ‘love offering’ which might vary in amount from person to person. The Holy One’s directions were:

He'ashir lo-yarbeh v'hadal lo yam'it mimachatzit ha-shakel

The rich may not give more, and the poor may not give less than this half shekel.

latet et-terumat Adonai l'k'fer al-naf'shoteychem

It is to be dedicated to the Holy One for the atonement wrought in their lives.

V'lakachta et-kesef ha-kipurim me'et b'nei Yisra'el

And you - you will take this silver of atonement from B'nei Yisrael

V'natata oto al-avodat Ohel Mo'ed

and use it for making the Communion Tent.

V'hayah liv'nei Yisra'el l'zikaron lif'nei Adonai

It will be for B'nei Yisrael as a remembrance before God

L'k'fer al-naf'shoteichem

as an atonement for their souls.

When the Torah says what our English Bibles interpret as "take a census" it literally uses words that mean: "*when you lift up the heads of the people...*" In order to be counted as part of the redeemed nation it seems you must "*have your head lifted up.*" What does this mean? The Holy One’s purpose in directing that a ‘census’ be taken of His people is not so they can be counted – He knows *full well* how many He has. He knows every hair on every head. So why a *census*? The purpose of the Holy One is explained by the Hebrew terminology used. Moshe is not told to count B'nei Yisrael – he is told "*tisa et rosh*" – literally, "lift up the head". Moshe is not to count heads. He is instead to elevate the people in his charge to a new level of awareness, revelation, and calling. This is not a numbering the Holy One is calling forth – it is a *choreographed matriculation*. Lift

up your heads, Dear Reader - your redemption draws nigh!

Hmmm - But Why a Half-Shekel, Pray Tell?

We are not to count heads one-by-one. We are instead to have every man appear and put in Moshe's hand a half-shekel of silver – no more and no less. Then we can multiply the number of half-shekels Moshe receives by two and calculate the number of persons who have taken advantage of the Holy One's offer of atonement. Huh? What spiritual difference does *that* little exercise make? On first blush it seems like a lawyer's loophole, a technicality allowing Moshe – or anybody with access to his checkbook - to accomplish indirectly the counting of the Holy One's *uncountable people*. Could we be missing something?

Every time I read this passage about the half-shekel I recall a story from the apostolic writings, about Yeshua of Natzret. The story is found in the 17th chapter of the account of *Mattityahu* [Matthew], as follows:

“When they had come to *K'far-Nahum* [Capernaum], those who received the temple tax [i.e. the half-shekel of silver mentioned in Exodus 30] came to *Sh'mon Kefa* [Peter] and said, ***"Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"*** He said, ***"Yes."*** And when he had come into the house, Yeshua anticipated him, saying, ***"What do you think, Sh'mon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons - or from strangers?"*** Kefa said to Him, ***"From strangers."*** Yeshua said to him, ***"Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."*** [Emphasis added]

Did you ever notice that the ‘*temple tax*’ that the men who accost Kefa are trying to collect in this story is the same ‘half-shekel of silver’ per person assessment mentioned in Exodus 30? Now look closer. Notice that Yeshua says there will be, in the fish's mouth, ONE COIN. Note also that this ONE COIN is to be given to the collectors of the ‘temple tax’ on behalf of *both Kefa and Yeshua, as a combined unit*.

The ‘tax’ of Exodus 30 requires payment of exactly one *half*-shekel [of silver, pursuant to the holy measurement] per person. The coin supernaturally provided in the mouth of the fish must, therefore, since it will suffice for two people, weigh *one whole shekel*. That makes sense, doesn't it. Everything about the Mik'dash of the Holy One is based upon things that are *whole* – not halved. It would be unfitting to use a half-shekel coin. Something – or someOne - must make the *half*-shekel become *whole*. SomeOne must provide that which we lack. SomeOne must cover

our insufficiency, and complete our ‘atonement’. Each of us provides only a *half-shekel*. In Whose Name is the other, corresponding half-shekel – the half-shekel that completes our atonement – provided? It is provided, for each of us as it was for Kefa, in the Name of *Yeshua*. Without joining our half-shekel to Yeshua’s our atonement is incomplete, insufficient, and inadequate. But the Holy One’s mathematics are supernatural. He allows Yeshua to provide the other half-shekel *for all of us!* Taking a census then, in the few instances when it was directed, was always designed by the Holy One to lead His people to *look forward to the coming Messiah* – the one who would *pay the price* to make their *half-shekel whole*, and make it sufficient for atonement.

Some of you may be thinking – but why did Yeshua tell Kefa to get the coin that paid the half-shekel tax for him and for Yeshua from *the mouth of a fish, of all places?* Well, where else in the TaNaKh did something come from the mouth of a fish? Remember the book of *Yonah* [Jonah]? In that book we read first that the Holy One ‘*provided a great fish to swallow Yonah*’ [Jonah 1:17] and then ‘*commanded the fish, and it vomited Yonah onto dry land.*’ [Jonah 2:10].

What does Yonah have to do with the one-shekel silver coin the Holy One provided for Kefa to retrieve to pay the ‘temple tax’ that brings atonement on his own behalf [and for the son who did not owe the tax —Yeshua]. Because Beloved, as Yeshua Himself taught: ... *No sign will be given to [this generation] except the sign of the prophet Yonah. For as Yonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Yonah, and behold, one greater than Yonah is here.* Matthew 12:39-41.

One Final Piece of Furniture: A Picture of Consecration

V'asita kiyor nechoshet – i.e. *Make/build/form a basin of copper/bronze Exodus 31:1a.*

Ki Tisa is a training manual for transcendents. It is all about making *responsible vs. irresponsible exits and entries* in relation to the realms and spheres of influence in which we are called to function. We are not just called to soar around the Heavens for the thrill of it, you see; our mission awaits us on earth. What goes up must come down. He who is invited to bask in the King’s Beauty Realm must absorb its Beauty, become a carrier of it, take it back to earth, and pass it on to the rest of humanity without a hint – much less an attitude – of superiority, pseudo-intellectualism, condescension, scorn, offense, outrage, or judgmentalism. The reason the Holy One keep calling us to His Beauty Realm, and the reason He keeps empowering us to soar majestically at higher and higher levels, is so that we can land at the assigned destination without causing mayhem, deplane without

wreaking havoc, and deliver the designated Kingdom cargo to its intended recipients in ways that bring honor to our King instead of focusing the attention on us. All of this must be done in ways that [a] do *no harm*, [b] reflect our King's Beauty, Majesty, and Goodwill; and [c] gently, gradually infuse the atmosphere with a pleasing, fragrant aroma of revelation, inspiration, empowerment, hope, healing, *shalom*, and Kingdom-advancing vision and vocabulary.

Next Protocol – Making the Transition From the Outer Court to the Inner Sanctum – and Vice Versa

Aharon and his sons are the living, breathing hypotheticals that the Holy One is using to teach us the lessons we need to learn about '*transcending and transitioning*'. So as today's aliyah opens the focus is on how a *kohen* make a smooth, safe transition from the busy outer court of the *Mish'kan*, where the messy *avodah* of the brazen altar is the order of the day, through the *keruvim*-embossed linen veil into the 'holy place'. Before the *kohen* passes through the veil, what protocols should – must – he follow in order to make himself ready – mentally, physically, and spiritually – to transcend, and shift gears, and faithfully perform the higher *avodah* of the *lampstand* [the hidden and un-noticed light of the world], the *table* [the humble bread of life], and the *altar of incense* [the sweet-smelling clouds of glory that carry Messiah into the world]?

Who can ascend the hill of the Holy One – or who may stand in His Holy Place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart – who has not let his soul [will, mind, or emotions] be carried into vanity, nor made false declarations. Psalm 24:3-4. Cue the cleansing waters. See you at the bronze laver.

The Holy One instructs Moshe that a *kiyor nechoshet* [*i.e.* a copper/bronze laver] is to be located in the outer court of the *Mish'kan* between the brazen altar and the entrance to the 'Holy Place'. We will need to know the purifying, consecrating waters of this structure very, very intimately. It is at the waters of this laver that we will maintain our own purity despite having to deal up close and personal with all sorts of uncleanness, vanity, and profanity in the outer court experiences of life. We cannot 'take on' the uncleanness we help others deal with. We cannot allow the pollution and perversion of others – even those to whom we minister on behalf of the King – to follow us into our homes and family relationships. We need a fountain of living water in which to wash after we minister the love and grace of the Bridegroom-King in the public realm.

I absolutely love the laver. It is a wonderful place – a place of *leaving both unclean and profane things behind*. Its waters are every bit as pure and as full of healing virtue as the spring of *Gichon*, the River Jordan, and the pools of Bethesda and Siloam. I hope that through these studies you come to look forward to washing

your hands and feet and face and heart in its waters as much as I do. Here are the Holy One's initial instructions concerning the laver [in Hebrew, *kiyyor*, meaning a hewn out pot, kettle, or basin⁷]:

V'asita kiyor nechoshet v'chano nechoshet l'rachtzah

And you are to make a bronze washstand along with a copper/bronze base for it.

V'natata oto beyn-Ohel Mo'ed uveyn ha-mizbe'ach

And you are to place it between the altar and the Communion Tent,

V'natata shamah mayim

and fill it with water for washing.

The *kiyor nechoshet* was just a simple basin filled with water. Its size and dimensions are not specified. All that we know of it is that both it and its base were to be formed of a substance described in the Hebrew text as *nechoshet*⁸, was to be placed in the courtyard area of the *Mish'kan* between the copper/bronze altar and the entrance to the tent that contained the *holy place* and *most holy place*, and that it was to contain *shamah mayim*. In parsha *Vayakhel* we will learn that this basin was actually fashioned from the *mirrors of the women of the Redeemed Community*. **Exodus 38:8**. That is fitting - for it is in reflections that emanate from this laver that we begin to see ourselves as we really are.

Shamah Mayim

Water – in Hebrew *mayim* - has been an important part of Torah from the very beginning. In Genesis 1 we learned about the waters of ‘the Deep’. In Genesis 2 we learned about the 4 ‘headwaters’ of earth that proceeded out of the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 18 and 19, 24, Avraham, Lot, and Lavan, respectively introduced us to water as an instrument of hospitality. In Exodus 2 we were introduced to water as an instrument of deliverance. In Exodus 17 water was shown to be an instrument of spiritual blessing. In Exodus 19 however, when the people at Sinai were instructed to wash their clothes in preparation for meeting with the Holy One on Mount Sinai, we were introduced to the use of water for something else altogether - as *a source of spiritual purification*. It is in that context that the Holy One instructs us to make the bronze laver and fill it with water.

V'rachatzu Aharon uvanav mimeinu et-yedeyhem v'et-ragleyhem

Aharon and his sons are to wash their hands and feet from [this washstand].

bevo'am el-Ohel Mo'ed yirchatzu-mayim v'lo yamutu

Before going into the Meeting Tent, they are to wash with the water or they'll die;

⁷ *Kiyyor* is *kaf, yod, vav, resh*. Strong's Hebrew word #3595, it is pronounced *kee-yore'*.

⁸ *Nechoshet* in Hebrew is *nun, chet, shin, tav*. Our English Bibles usually translate this Hebrew word as *copper* or one of its alloys, *bronze* [an alloy of copper and tin], or *brass* [an alloy of copper and zinc]. Copper is a common ore found in nature. It is reddish in color, ductile, and easily malleable. Human beings have used copper for several thousand years.

o v'gishtam el-ha-mizbe'ach

it is to be same regarding approaching the altar

l'sharet l'ha-ktir isheh l'Adonai

to perform the divine service, presenting a fire offering to the Holy One

V'rachatzu yedeyhem v'ragleyhem v'lo yamutu

If they are not to deserve death, they must first wash their hands and feet.

v'hayetah lahem chok-olam

This shall be for [Aharon] and his descendants an instruction to follow

lo ulezar'o l'dorotam

for all time, for all generations.

Please note that though the laver itself was to be located in the public area of the *Mish'kan*, the water of the laver was not for everyone. It was only to be used by the *kohanim* – by Aharon and his sons. They were to wash their hands and their feet, before going into the inner chambers to minister.

The Holy One made it clear as well that for the *kohanim* washing hands and feet at this laver was not a pleasurable option – but was *mandatory* ... a matter of life and death. They were to wash ... *that they not die*. Why wash hands and feet? Why apply waters of spiritual cleansing? Keep in mind that the *Mish'kan* and its priests and services are given to us as 'shadows' – earthly images of Heavenly realities. They are made after a 'pattern' the Holy One showed Moshe of the Eternal Realities of the Heavenly Throne Room. It is the same with the waters. The waters in which the earthly *kohanim* are to wash are earthly waters, but they reflect and point us to the eternal *mayim* of the Holy One. They represent the waters of the *River of Life* described in Revelation 22:1:

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding out of the throne of the Holy One and of the Lamb.*

See also Ezekiel 47:1, where we are told:

*Then he brought me back to the door of the temple;
and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east,
for the front of the temple faced east . . .*

The River of Life is flowing. Wash in it, then drink it in, and let it flow from your innermost being as well.

The Oil of Anointing: A Picture of Divine Calling

The concept of 'anointing' things – or people - with oil is unfamiliar to most Westerners. Anointing a person or object with aromatic spices blended with olive oil, however, has long been practiced in a variety of contexts, for a number of reasons. Anointing a guest in one's home was to confer a special welcome and a

special honor. Travelers weary and dirty from the road would be accorded this kindness.

Among many ancient religions the sacrament of *anointing with oil* came to be recognized as a highly significant spiritual event – a means of declaring the person or object as *consecrated, set apart* unto God [or ‘*the gods*’, as the case may be]. Among the Hebrew people anointing a person with oil came to be considered a catalyst of sorts, activating a spiritual process in that person in connection with which the *Ruach HaQodesh* [Holy Spirit], simultaneously with the physical smearing or pouring of oil, imparts a Divine ‘touch’ upon the person’s heart and mind empowering him (or her) to fulfill a Divinely-ordained commission.

During the physical act of anointing, by Hebrew custom, a person customarily knelt while oil was poured or rubbed on the head or forehead. But not just any oil would do for the Hebraic version of this ancient practice. The Holy One gave Moshe a Divine Formula to follow:

chamesh me'ot v'kinmon-besem machtzito

500 shekels of distilled myrrh, two half-portions,

chamishim umatayim ukneh-vosem chamishim umatayim

consisting of 250 [shekels] of both fragrant cinnamon and fragrant cane,

V'kidah chamesh me'ot b'shekel ha-kodesh

and 500 shekels of cassia, all measured by the holy standard,

v'shemen zayit hin

along with a gallon of olive oil.

V'asita oto shemen mischat-kodesh

Make it into sacred anointing oil.

rokach mirkachat ma'aseh

It is to be a blended compound as a skilled perfumer would make,

roke'ach shemen mishchat-kodesh yihyeh

[made especially for] the sacred anointing oil.

If you know how to read this passage you will realize that what your Divine Bridegroom is doing is calling us to go on a journey with Him. The ingredients He calls for are not found in one place. He wants you to walk with Him to five different places to collect the ingredients of the precious oil of anointing.

1. To the Mountain of Myrrh

The first place to which the Divine Bridegroom wants us to accompany Him is the Mountain of Myrrh. Song of Solomon 4:6. *Myrrh* is a fragrant resin produced by bushes and trees covered with very long, very sharp thorns. To harvest myrrh one must fight through the thorns and pierce the bark and cause the precious liquid life

source of the plant to ooze forth.

I suspect that you are beginning to see where the Bridegroom is going with this, aren't you. Right about now the words '***Take up your Cross and follow Me***' should begin to resonate through your spirit. There is an appointed time of thorn-pricks and piercing and oozing lifeblood. Ah, but we are just beginning our journey. Myrrh is after all only the first of five ingredients.

2. To the Orchard of Cinnamon Trees

Next our Divine Bridegroom calls us to collect *cinnamon*. To do that we must go with our Beloved into the deepest, darkest evergreen forests. **Song of Solomon 4:14**. We must make this journey not in fair weather, but in the rainy season. The trees must be in the early part of their growing season in order that they will be soft and pliable. Amidst the shadows of the giant trees dripping with rain we will find an orchard of closely cropped, deeply pruned cinnamon trees. From the pruned branches of these carefully groomed trees stripes must be cut deep into the bark. Long strips of moist, tender wood must then be ripped out. The strips of tender flesh must then be beaten fine. The fibrous material from each cruelly crushed branch must then be torn into strips. Cut off from its life source, each of the strips of fiber will then curl upon into a quill as its lifeblood oozes out and it 'dies'. The quills must then be left in the heat and sun to dry. Once dead and lifeless, the quills must be cut into sticks, which must in turn be ground into powder just before use. It is of course through the process of the cutting, the beating, the stripping, the drying and the grinding of the cinnamon that the most glorious of fragrances is emitted.

3. To the marshes of calamus

We cannot stop now. We have not yet reached the halfway point of our journey. We are also called by our Bridegroom to gather *calamus*, or sweet cane. **Song of Solomon 4:14; see also Job 40:21**. To obtain this particular spice for the special anointing oil we must go with our Bridegroom to the marshes in late summer/early Autumn. In the marshes beside the swampy waters at that season we will find a medicinal reed-like plant called *calamus*. The first thing we will notice is that the seed clusters which grow on these soft canes attach their sweet scent to our feet and our garments. **Psalm 45:8**.

But it is not the cane, nor the seed clusters, but the pure roots of the calamus that we are seeking. The root itself must be plucked up, split, dried, and ground into fine powder. With a sharp hook-like implement therefore we must pluck the calamus from the muddy soil by its roots. We separate the root from the summer's growth, and all that was visible above ground is piled up and burned. We must then lay the axe to the root, cutting it completely in two. Both halves of the root are then

laid in the hot sun to dry. When the divided rhizomes are completely dry and ready for use they must be ground to fine powder.

4. To the Thickets of Cassia

Ah, the Bridegroom is signaling that it is time to move on yet again. This time we are headed back to the forests of the high country. In similar surroundings as we found cinnamon trees previously He has prepared for us finely cropped and cultivated thickets of *cassia*. As we approach we will see these trees resemble the cinnamon, but the bark is darker, thicker and coarser. The outer bark is rough, grayish brown, and cork-like. We must cut plugs out of the pruned branches. We find the inside bark is much smoother and reddish-brown in color. The plugs are beaten flat and the fibers are separated into strips and left to dry. As the life-blood departs from them they curl from both ends to the middle, forming quills resembling scrolls of Torah.

Also harvested from the branches are the small clove-like buds. These are ground together into a fine powder with a pungent scent similar to cinnamon but sweeter and much gentler to the senses.

5. To the Olive Groves

Our final stop on this journey will be the groves of olive trees located upon the hills in well-drained soil. The ancient trees grow in wondrous, tangled ways, with trunks resembling characters in fairy tales. Olive trees are among the heartiest species on the planet. They are able to survive for centuries – indeed in some cases millennia – and retain their leaves year round, year after year. They can handle the presence of salt water as well as fresh, sunny as well as temperate climates, and all kinds of arid soil.

The harvesting of the fruit of the olive must be accomplished on sunny days in early Fall, before the rain, wind, and fog set in. The harvesting is done by spreading a canvas under the branches, then shaking the tree so as to cause its ripe fruit to fall to the ground. This is followed by a process of striking the limbs one by one with rakes or staves in order to induce them to release the more reluctant fruit. After the fallen fruit is collected from the canvas it must be washed and all stray leaves and stems must be painstakingly eliminated. Then the olives are poured into a press, and carefully crushed into a paste. Then the paste is separated into three parts: pure oil, vegetable water and pomace. The oil is then strained thoroughly, placed into a clear vessel, and corked. It is in connection with this process that we are called to kneel with the Divine Bridegroom at the olive press called *Gat-Shemani*.

When the journey of discovery is completed, one finally understands just how

precious the Holy One's oil of anointing really is. It is, you see, the bi-product of a lifelong walk of faith.

Instructions for Use

As interested as the Holy One is in our preparation of the oil of anointing He is even more concerned with our *use* of the oil. Here are His instructions regarding *the uses* to which He wants us to put the very special anointing oil He has ordained that we make with our lives:

Umashachta-vo et-Ohel Mo'ed v'et Aron ha-Edut

And you are to use it to anoint the Communion Tent, the Ark of Testimony,

V'et ha-shulchan v'et-kol-kelav v'et ha-menorah v'et-keleyha

the table and all its utensils, the menorah and its utensils

v'et mizbach ha-k'toret v'et-mizbach ha-olah v'et kol-kelav

the incense altar, the sacrificial altar and all its utensils,

v'et ha-kiyor v'et-kano

the washstand and its base.

V'kidashta otam vehayu kodesh kodashim

You are thus to set them apart, making them holy in the superlative degree

kol-ha-nogea bahem yikdash

so that anything touching them becomes infused with holiness.

Every tangible thing in and around the *Mish'kan* must receive an anointing of consecration with this special oil.

The Oil For Anointing

The Holy One next makes it clear that the fragrant oil is for more than just anointing the furniture and fixtures of the *Mish'kan*. It is also for anointing all *kohanim* [priests] who will serve there.

V'et-Aharon v'et-banav tim'shach

And Aharon and his sons you are also to anoint

V'kidashta otam l'chahen li

In order to set them apart as ambassadors for Me.

And ultimately the oil of which we are speaking is for the Messiah [anointed One] Himself. As the woman with the alabaster box described in Luke 7 it will be our inestimable privilege to take turns washing his feet with our hair and our tears and anointing his head and feet with the precious ointment reserved from the foundation of the world for Him and for Him alone.

*[It is] like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard, [even] Aaron's beard: that went down
to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon,*

*[and as the dew] that descended upon the mountains of Zion:
for there the Holy One commanded the blessing, [even] life for evermore.*

[Psalm 133:2-3]

Restrictions of the Use of the Anointing Oil

Please note that the specially formulated oil was not to be rendered ‘ordinary’ by use outside the precincts of the *Mish'kan*. We are not to lavish this treasure upon ourselves, upon other men, or upon any life-endeavor. For the Holy One has said:

Shemen mishchat-kodesh yihyeh zeh li l'doroteichem

'This is to be the sacred anointing oil to Me for all generations.

Al-besar adam lo yisach uveimatkunto

Do not pour it on the skin of any [unauthorized] person,

lo ta'asu kamohu kodesh

and do not duplicate it with a similar formula

hu kodesh yihyeh lachem

It is holy, and it must remain sacred to you.

Ish asher yirkach kamohu v'asher yiten mimeinu al-zar

If a person blends a similar formula, or places it on an unauthorized person,

v'nich'rat mei'amav

he will be cut off from his people.

[Exodus 30:31-33]

The K'toret [Fragrant Incense]

Moshe has previously been given instructions regarding the golden altar of incense that is to be located in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil which separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. In today's aliyah the Holy One gives Moshe a *specific formula or recipe* for use in preparing the incense that was to be burned on that golden altar:

kach-lecha samim nataf ush'chelet

Take fragrances such as balsam, onycha,

V'chelbenah samim ulevonah zakah bad bevad yihyeh

galbanum, and pure frankincense, all of the same weight as stated before.

V'asita otah k'toret rokach ma'aseh roke'ach memulach

Make [the mixture] into incense, as compounded by a master perfumer,

tahor kodesh

Well blended, pure and holy.

V'shachakta mimeinah hadek

Grind it very finely,

V'natatah mimenah lifnei ha-edut b'Ohel Mo'ed

and place it before the [Ark of] Testimony in the Communion Tent

asher iva'ed lecha shamah

where I commune with you.

kodesh kodashim tihyeh lachem

It shall be holy to the ultimate/superlative degree to you

Note that the Holy One sends us on a completely different journey to obtain the ingredients for the *k'toret* [incense]. In addition to our journey for collecting myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil for the anointing ointment, we are called to walk with the Holy One to the sources of *balsam*, and *onycha*, and *galbanum* and *frankincense* in order to make a very special incense. I will leave it to your study to discover where these substances may be found and how they must be harvested.

As was the specially prepared anointing oil, the incense prepared pursuant to this formula was to be subject to very restricted use. It was to be used by consecrated *kohanim* and no one else. And it was to be used in the holy precincts of the *Mish'kan* and nowhere else. This special incense is, you see, designed *for the pleasure of the Holy One alone*. It is not something one creates to please men. But our giving it to the Holy One does nevertheless serve two purposes for us. First of all, its fragrance is designed to cover the stench of our sin. Secondly, the cloud of fragrant smoke it produces when cast upon the coals of the golden altar is designed to cover every spot and wrinkle and blemish that might be found in us.

V'ha-k'toret asher ta'aseh b'matkuntah lo ta'asu lachem

Do not duplicate the formula of the incense that you are making for personal use,

kodesh tihyeh lecha l'Adonai

since it must remain holy/set apart to the Holy One

Ish asher-ya'aseh chamoha l'ha-riach bah

If a person makes it to enjoy its fragrance,

V'nichrat me'amav

he is to be cut off from his people.

Questions For Today's Study

1. The name of this week's parsha is the Hebrew phrase *Ki Tisa*. Look up the word "*Tisa*" and its root in Gesenius. How do you think that word should be translated into English – at least in the context of this verse?
2. *Ki Tisa* starts with what some call the first "tax" [actually, a kind of mandatory contribution] that is recorded in the Bible:

They shall give this, everyone who passes over to those who are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary; (the shekel is twenty gerahs;) half a shekel for an offering to the Holy One.

Everyone who passes over to those who are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering to the Holy One.

The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of the Holy One, to make atonement for your souls.

Take the atonement money from the children of Yisra'el, and appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may be a memorial for the children of Yisra'el before the Holy One, to make atonement for your souls."

[Exodus 30:13-16]

[A] What was the money raised by this “tax” to be used for?

[B] How much was this tax for a rich person?

[C] How much was this tax for a poor person?

[D] How did Moshe [Moses] collect this tax from everyone?

[E] The English translations use the word “ransom” [and the word “atonement money”, by the way] to describe this tax. Look up the Hebrew word translated “ransom” and its verb root in Gesenius, then write the word (in Hebrew with vowel markings, and in English transliteration), and explain on your paper the Hebraic picture you see when you search out the meaning of this word and its verb root. How is this tax a “ransom”?

3. Beginning with verse 17 of today’s aliyah another furnishing for the *Mish’kan* [Tabernacle] is introduced.

[A] What new furnishing for the *Mish’kan* is described by the Holy One in today’s aliyah?

[B] Where is this furnishing to be located in relation to the rest of the *Mish’kan*?

[C] What is the **purpose** of this furnishing – for what, and by whom, was it to be used?

[D] What do you think it symbolizes in regard to our interaction with our Betrothed Bridegroom?

4. In the remainder of Exodus 30 the Holy One gives a series of “recipes”.

[A] What is to be made from the first recipe?

[B] What is that to be used for?

[C] What are the ingredients?

[D] What is this NOT to be used for?

[E] What do you think this substance symbolizes? Explain your answer.

5. The second recipe given by the Holy One is for something to be used solely in the *Mish’kan*, and, indeed, solely in the Holy Place in front of the “veil”.

[A] What is to be made from the second recipe?

[B] What is that to be used for?

- [C] What are the ingredients?
- [D] What is this NOT to be used for?
- [E] What do you think this substance symbolizes? Explain your answer.

6. The haftarah for *Ki Tisa* is the story of *Eliyahu* [Elijah] and the so-called prophets (priests) of Ba'al. It is found in the first book of Kings and begins at a time of supernatural drought in Israel – brought on by . . . well, you read the passage in context and decide for yourself!

It happened after many days that the word of the Holy One came to Eliyahu, in the third year [of the drought], saying,

“Go, show yourself to Ach'av; and I will send rain on the eretz.”

Eliyahu went to show himself to Ach'av [Ahab]

The famine was sore in Shomron.

Ach'av called `Ovadyah, who was over the household.

(Now `Ovadyah feared the Holy One greatly:

for it was so, when Izevel [Jezebel] cut off the prophets of the Holy One, that `Ovadyah took one hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

Ach'av said to `Ovadyah, “Go through the land, to all the springs of water, and to all the brooks: peradventure we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, that we not lose all the animals.” So they divided the land between them to pass.

[1Kings 18:1-6]

[A] What was going on that caused the King of the Northern Kingdom, *Ach'av* [Ahab], whose queen was *Izevel* [Jezebel] to consult with *Ovadyah* [Obadiah] [the governor of the king's house]? [See I Kings 17:1 for the beginning of this situation].

[B] What kind of man was *Ach'av*?

[C] What kind of man was *Ovadyah*?

[D] What righteous act does the writer tell us *Ovadyah* had done at risk of his job and his life?

[E] On what mission does *Ach'av* send *Ovadyah*, and for what purpose?

[F] From what tribe or nation was *Eliyahu* descended? [NOTE: I Kings 17:1 and Judges 12:4 may help you make this determination]

7. In today's reading from the Apostolic Scriptures Shaul starts by discussing a matter of real controversy to the inhabitants of Corinth – Gentile and Jewish – who have elected to *sh'ma* the Torah teaching of Messiah Yeshua – the issue of how to relate to things sacrificed to the idols of the pagan culture in which they lived.

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols ...

From this statement of the subject matter of the controversy he has been asked to address however, Shaul turns the issue around, getting to what he sees as the heart of the problem in Corinth:

We know that we all have knowledge [Greek, gnosis]. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

The most immediate problem Shaul sees the need to address in his letter is obviously not the eating – or refusal to eat - by some of foods that have been part of a sacrifice to Aphrodite or one of the other pagan gods worshipped in the area. The most pressing issue that needs to be addressed is the haughty and self-righteous attitudes of the ones who insist on being ‘right’.

*But if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he doesn't yet know as he ought to know.
But if anyone loves God, the same is known by him.*

Only after that threshold issue has been addressed and everyone in the city is placed on equal footing does Shaul feel comfortable talking about the ‘food sacrificed to idols’ controversy.

*Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols,
we know that no idol is anything in the world, and that **there is no other God but one.**
For though there are things that are called "gods", whether in the heavens or on eretz;
as there are many "gods" and many "lords;" yet to us there is one God, the Father,
of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah,
through whom are all things, and we live through him.*

[1Corinthians 8:1-6]

[A] What is the “Corinthian controversy” about which Shaul is speaking in this passage? Explain your perspective of the situation to which Shaul was asked to apply Torah wisdom.

[B] Scan through these verses. List the Torah concepts which Shaul applies to the controversy, citing specific verses of Torah which contain those concepts. [Example: In verse 3, Shaul speaks of “loving” the Holy One as being the key to rising above the controversy. This is a concept embodied in Deuteronomy 6:5 – *You are to love the Holy One your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*] Now find at least one other Torah concept Shaul applies to this controversy.

[C] In verse 1 Shaul speaks of “knowledge” as something we all have. The Greek word translated “knowledge” is *gnosis* [Strong’s Greek word # 1108]. Does Shaul speak *favorably* or *unfavorably* about this kind of knowledge? In other words, does the *gnosis* we “all have” tend to be helpful and beneficial in resolving the controversy, or does it have the opposite effect?

[D] In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words that our English Bibles translate as “knowledge” [E.g. *da’at* (Strong’s Hebrew word # 1847, from *yada* (Strong’s Hebrew word # 3045)]. What is the difference between the Hebraic words for “knowledge” and the Greek abstract concept of *gnosis*?

[E] Read Acts 15:1-21. Is Shaul the first apostolic authority to deal with the issue of eating “things sacrificed to idols”?

[F] What does the Torah say about eating “things sacrificed to idols”? Give the book, chapter, and verse where you find any references to this subject, and summarize the contents of the Holy One’s instructions in regard thereto.

[G] Shaul refers to “the Father” as the only “God”, and to Messiah Yeshua as the only “Lord”.

- i. What Hebrew concept of Torah is embodied in the title “*God*” [Hebrew, *Elohim*]?
- ii. What Hebrew concept of Torah is embodied in the title “*Lord*” [Hebrew, *Adon*]?

[H] Does Shaul consider the Father and Messiah Yeshua as having two separate identities? [If so, how can “God” be an *echad* [one]? If not, how can a Father be the same as his son?]

[I] Shaul says that all things are “of” the Father, but all things are “through” Messiah Yeshua. What is the distinction Shaul is drawing between what all things are “of” and all things are “through”?

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 19:1-3

*The heavens declare the glory of the Holy One.
The expanse shows his handiwork.
Day after day they pour forth speech,
and night after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*