

PARASHAH: Ki Tissa (When you take)
ADDRESS: Sh'mot (Exodus) 30:11-34:35
READING DATE: Shabbat
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

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Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

The portion this week is packed with goodies! **Parashat Ki Tissa** (say "Kee Tee-suh") is an excellent portion to conduct a verse-by-verse commentary on. If you are familiar with the Jewish New Testament Commentary by David H. Stern, I will be following a similar format, with small portions quoted from the text (in bold) and my commentary immediately following.

Chapter 30

11-16 There are important and complex topics being discussed in the first few p'sukim (verses). I would like to turn to my good friends Ephraim and Rimona Frank of First-Born.com for a technical discussion of this section. I will use a direct quote from their site:

"When you lift up ["ki tissa"] the head of the sons of Israel to be mustered, they shall each give the ransom of his soul to YHVH, in mustering them, and there shall not be a plague among them in mustering them" (Ex. 30:12, literal translation). Hundreds of years later, when King David made an attempt to conduct a census, YHVH reprimanded him heavily ("And Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel... And it was evil in the eyes of God as to this thing", 1st Ch. 21:1,7). We see, therefore, the necessity for each of the souls numbered to offer a token, as a "ransom" ("kofer", of the root k.f.r., that is, "kippur", meaning "propitiation, covering"), and also for the purpose of symbolically representing each person. Thus, all those who are over twenty years of

age provide half a shekel, as a contribution ("trumah") to YHVH. This "atonement money" is to be given "for the service of the Tent of Meeting ("ohel mo'ed")" for it to "be a memorial of the sons of Israel before YHVH to make atonement for yourselves" (30:16). This atonement (or ransom) money is to help in constructing the place where these sons of Israel will be atoned for and remembered. Interestingly, later on in the Parasha, in 34:23, we read: "Three times in the year your men shall appear before YHVH". In Hebrew "man" or "male" is "zachar" (literally, "one who remembered"), but here the word has been modified to "za'chur", which means "one who is remembered." But back to our census, which enables further national organization to take place, while offering an opportunity for contributions to be collected for the construction of Ohel Mo'ed ("tent of meeting", as it is referred to in this Parasha). This pragmatism, wherein the nation's practical and spiritual needs are combined, illustrates the Torah's intrinsic and typical proclivity of fusing the various components and aspects of life into one act or event, as seen here.¹

17-21 This practice of ritual washings, as performed by the cohen (priest), actually became the standard by which later, everyday Jewish males would treat each meal in his home. The Torah here instructed the cohen to wash before each offering. Once the Temple was destroyed and it was assumed that it would not be rebuilt soon, the priestly duties were then transferred to each individual house (per authority of Rabbinical Judaism). As such, each man as "cohen over his own home" performed the ritual of hand washing before each offering (meal). **A perpetual law.** This is still practiced in Torah observant homes, including Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox homes.

22-33 A holy anointing oil. This is not the ordinary anointing oil that is found in many New Covenant passages, giving rise to the precedent used in many churches today. Although the uses are similar (i.e. for consecration), and even though our modern olive oil used in today's churches could very well be one of the same ingredients as is mentioned in this passage (v. 24b), the special mixture mentioned here was not to be used arbitrarily. **It is holy, and you are to treat it as holy.** It has not been reproduced using these exact ingredients since.

Chapter 31

1-11 I have singled out B'tzal'el the son of Uri the son of Hur, of the tribe of Y'hudah and his assistant Oholi'av the son of Achisamakh, of the tribe Dan. These men were supernaturally gifted to oversee the construction of the fore-mentioned Mishkan (Tabernacle) and its furniture. The lesson is obvious: when HaShem sends his people to perform a task, he will also equip them with the necessary skill and gifting to accomplish the task for his glory. Conversely, if someone is occupying an office within the Body of Messiah, and there seems to

¹ http://www.1st-born.com/ki_tissa.php

be a lack of supernatural gifting and ability to function correctly within the said office, then the individual might want to "re-check" his or her calling to make sure they're in the right spot.

12-17 Not since Sh'mot chapter 20 with the giving of the Ten Words (Ten Commandments) has the Torah elaborated so much concerning **Shabbat**. Modern Judaism has set forth verses 16-17 to music, which is chanted in synagogues, every Shabbat—to include Messianic ones, throughout the world today. When the Sabbath is first mentioned in the Ten Words it is for the sake of remembering the Creative work that HaShem performed during those first **six days**. However, here in our current passage, we find out that HaShem wants 'Am Yisra'el (the People of Isra'el) to recognize that the Sabbath is also a "**sign**". In Hebrew, this word is "ot" (say "oat"). Of what is the Sabbath a **sign**? Of the formerly expressed truth—that HaShem is indeed the Creator of the Universe, and that the entire cosmos sprang forth from the creative power of his spoken word!

Along with the fact that it is a memorial of Creation, the Sabbath day is also an identification of HaShem's authority. Only he could set a day apart as holy (read B'resheet 2:1-3). Only he could sanctify a day as an eternal memorial of his uniqueness. No other created being has this authority. This includes man. This includes religious institutions. When we attempt to override this authority, we undermine the very character, identification, and nature of our All-mighty God. Once we find ourselves playing God, it is then that we are in serious trouble. While it is true that we have been given the authority to make lasting decisions governing everyday communal matters (read Mattityahu 18:15-20 to understand an often-misunderstood application of heavenly authority), we have not been given the authority to switch God's Sabbath Day, nor to abrogate it.

Author and translator David H. Stern has this to say about the Sabbath Day, in his **Jewish New Testament Commentary** to a well-known passage in the book of Hebrews:

'A Shabbat-keeping, Greek *sabbatismos*, used only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, the related Greek word "*sabbatizein*" was coined to translate the Hebrew verb *shabat* when it means, "to observe *Shabbat*." The usual translation, "There remains a Sabbath rest," minimizes the observance aspect and makes the role of God's people entirely passive.

Christians often assume that the New Testament does not require God's people to observe *Shabbat* and go on to claim that Sunday has replaced Saturday as the Church's day of worship (see 1C 16:2N). But this passage, and in particular v.9, shows that *Shabbat*-observance is expected of believers. From Co 2:16-17, which says that *Shabbat* was a shadow of things that were to come, but the substance comes from the

Messiah, we learn that the essence of *Shabbat*-observance for believers is not following the detailed rules which *halakhah* sets forth concerning what may or may not be done on the seventh day of the week. Rather, as v.10 explains, the ***Shabbat-keeping*** expected of God's people consists in resting from one's **own works, as God did from his**; it consists in trusting and being faithful to God (vv.2-3). Although the specific "works" from which the readers of this letter were to rest were animal sacrifices (see 6:4-6N), by implication all self-struggle, in which one relies on one's own efforts instead of trusting God, is to be avoided; and in this the author is making the same point as Sha'ul does at Ro 3:19-4:25.²

In the Talmud, the great compendium of Jewish thought, since this mitzvah is juxtaposed with the building of the Tabernacle, the rabbis supposed that HaShem was hinting at defining "work" as the tasks necessary to build the Mishkan. Therefore, they deduced that at least 39 different tasks were prohibited on the Sabbath day (corresponding to the 39 tasks that it took to build the Mishkan). I believe that for the most part, since the Torah is rather silent when it comes to defining all modes of work, that our sages had the right intentions. However, the overall outlook of Sabbath prohibitions with their various halakhic rulings—as interpreted by non-Messianic Judaism, amounts to legalism. Sadly, today many Jewish people have even added more tasks to the original 39 tasks, so that to "properly keep the Sabbath" is an enormous burden on the average Torah-observant prospect!

One other point and then I'll close out this argument: whether or not seventh day Sabbath-keeping is for all believers (Jew and Gentile alike) remains to be universally accepted. However, the Torah makes it clear that when the Messiah returns to set up his Millennial Kingdom from Yerushalayim here on earth, that all of his followers will be enjoined to observe the seventh-day Sabbath, as it is eternally taught in his Torah (read Yesha'yahu 66:22-24).

Chapter 32

1-10 When the people saw that Moshe was taking a long time to come down from the mountain, they gathered around Aharon. Impatience is not a virtue. The people rebel against HaShem and his chosen leader and instead instruct Aharon—the future cohen gadol!—to build a false god. Aharon plays the antithetical role of his future office and intercedes between the idolatrous nation and their false god. It is only by the grace of HaShem that he and his offspring will be chosen to function as go-betweens for HaShem and the people.

11-35 Moshe pleaded with ADONAI his God. Moshe obediently plays his brother Aharon's future role by interceding on behalf of the people. HaShem

² David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Jewish New Testament Publications, JNTC 1992), p. 673.

"repents" of the terrible judgment that he had planned for this rebellious crowd. The formula that Moshe uses is worthy of note. He provokes HaShem himself to "remember" his promise made to their forefathers! Can HaShem forget such a promise?! Of course not. Yet Moshe has come to trust in the spoken Word of HaShem (since there was no formal written Word as of yet), and it was this Word—this promise that acted as a guarantor of HaShem's character. In other words, if HaShem couldn't be trusted to be faithful to the avot (fathers), then with equal failure, he couldn't be trusted with these people! Of course the converse is equally true as well! Later on in this same chapter (vv.30-35), we find that Moshe even risks his own spiritual inheritance based on this principle. The same formula can be found in Rav Sha'ul's letter to the Gentiles in Romans 11 specifically vv. 21-22.

Chapter 33

1-6 I will send an angel ahead of you. The Hebrew word for angel is "malach", and it literally means, "one who is sent" [midrash: implying perhaps a 'messenger' of the 'melech' (king)"]. The reference here is not to the familiar Angel of the LORD—who is the LORD himself, else the clarifying statement **I myself will not go with you** wouldn't make any sense. Moshe is aware of this indicated shift and later on we shall see his reply. This definitely signaled the move of HaShem's Sh'khinah (manifested Glory of HaShem) from the midst of the camp to the outer borders away from the people.

11 ADONAI would speak to Moshe face to face (Hebrew: "panim el panim", literally means, "faces to faces"), **as a man speaks to his friend**. There exists a few words in the Hebrew language, which represent themselves without a "singular" form. This is one of those words. We translate this word as "face", yet the literal word is פנים "faces".³ The root word from which we get face/faces is פנה panah, most often translated as "turn."⁴ The term "**face to face**" is a well-known idiom in Judaism. It conveys the sense of acceptance on the part of a holy, unapproachable God, in spite of the sinful nature of mankind; the idea of atonement is in view here. This is fitting given the recent turn of events involving the awful golden calf. There we saw that Moshe was actually attempting to make "atonement" for the wicked people (see Sh'mot 32:30-32). Elsewhere in the Torah, the idiom "**face to face**" is an indication of the festival of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), in which the Cohen haGadol (the High Priest) went into the Most Holy Place and came "**face to face**", as it were, with the otherwise unapproachable God of the Universe. With this interesting insight in mind, read 1 Corinthians 13:12a. This noble statement about the relationship between Moshe and HaShem would later be remembered at his death as well (see D'varim 34:10).

³ Brown, Driver, Briggs (BDB), פנים.

⁴ Ibid., פנה.

12-23 The "messianic" themes abound in this unique and never-again duplicated encounter between HaShem and his friend Moshe! **I will pronounce the name of ADONAI** (YHVH). Fantastic insights are revealed as we begin to understand from the New Covenant text of Philippians 2:6-11—which quotes from Yesha'yahu 45:23—that the **name of ADONAI** (YHVH) is actually equated with Yeshua—who is actually the fullness of **ADONAI** (YHVH) veiled in flesh! Only in this regard is the name of Yeshua, as indicated in the above passage of Philippians, "above" every other name (including, by implication, YHVH). Only the name given to Yeshua (by YHVH his Father) is the fullest revelation of the unfathomable **favor** (v.19) and **mercy** (v.19) of our Almighty God—YHVH himself! Moreover, Yeshua is also the visible **glory** (v.22a) of the Invisible YHVH as well!

Chapter 34

5-7 This is the famous "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy", of HaShem, as identified by the sages. The ministry of which I was a former writer, First Fruits of Zion, has this to say about these attributes:

"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty..." This passage—or 'The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy' as the rabbis call these verses—has become one of the central doctrinal expressions in Judaism. The verses have found their way into the Siddur and are recited on fast days and Yom Kippur. According to Hertz, "All schools of Jewish thought agree that these momentous and sublime attributes enshrine some of the most distinctive doctrines of Judaism." What does God's forgiveness and compassion actually look like in flesh and blood? The answer, of course, is that we should look immediately to Yeshua the Messiah. For, "in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9). By looking for these Thirteen Attributes in the person of the Messiah, we are implying that there is an intimate connection between the Messiah and God. This is not just an imitative connection, but a substantive one—as the Lord is, so is the Messiah. Moreover, Messiah is the walking embodiment of all of these Thirteen Attributes.' (Taken from a commentary to Ki Tissa, March 6, 1999, available at <http://www.ffoz.org>)

17 Do not cast metal gods for yourselves. Obviously applicable to the immediate situation.

19 Everything that is first from the womb is mine. Also previously stated at Sh'mot 13:2, 12, 15. Yeshua's parents were obedient to this mitzvah (see Luke 2:22-24).

22-26 The following p'sukim and the topics they cover (are milk and meat to be consumed separately?) were briefly addressed in **Parashat Mishpatim**. What did we decide their cryptic meaning was? Let us dig a bit deeper this time with the help of **Chazal** (the Sages of blessed memory), and with a little help from some rabbis who are still living. Rabbi David E. Lipman of Gates to Jewish Heritage writes concerning the ancient Hebrew's important God-given calendar. Quoting him at length concerning the influence of pagan practices on ancient Isra'el:

'Canaanites developed a cosmology which explained this phenomenon. The rain/fertility god Ba'al had a consort Anat, Earth/ Fertility. Their successful union resulted in both rain and crops. In June each year the god Mot, Death/Sterility, strangled Baal. Anat mourned the death of her consort and the earth dried up. Then, in Tishri, Anat would pull out her sword; she and Mot would fight, and Anat would kill Mot. She'd revive Ba'al, they would join, and the result would be the fall rains and fertility throughout the land.

'The Canaanites participated in this yearly struggle. They too would mourn the death of Ba'al. In the fall, they would make special sacrifices. They would perform a limping dance and slash themselves to afflict their bodies. They would blow their war horns (go, Anat!!!); they would beat the ground with plants which required a lot of water, and they would have sexual orgies in huts, trying to encourage the gods to do the same to bring the rains.

'One of the most important world-view features for the Canaanites, however, was that this process was cyclical. It didn't change. Each year fit into this same pattern, and human behavior didn't change the outcome..

'The early Hebrews were greatly influenced by the geographical reality of the Canaanites. The Torah created many similar rituals to the Hebrew fall festivals. However, the reason for the customs changed radically.

'Despite their acceptance of many Canaanite rituals, the Hebrews lived in personal, not cosmic time; there was change, movement, and growth, and what the community did affected God's response. Our actions affect God's actions. God chooses to permit the rains or hold them back. Fertility is a reward for our maintaining our covenant with the Divine. It's a fundamental assumption of the Torah, described brilliantly in Deuteronomy.

'One of the major themes of Deuteronomy (an anti-Canaanite/idolatry text) is that God provided the rains as a result of the Hebrews following God's covenant. If the Hebrews followed idolatrous practices, the rains would cease. However, it is fascinating to see some of the parallels in the Hebrew rituals during the fall festivals.'

This important look at historical and cultural interaction between ancient peoples helps us to understand a bit more of why HaShem wanted his chosen people to be set-apart from the Nations.

Another article, written by Rabbi Isaac Klein speaks of this milk and meat prohibition thusly:

'The separation of milk and meat is the most prominent distinguishing mark of the Jewish home. Most of the laws connected with the consumption of food are the concern of the shohet, the butcher, and the grocer, all of whom are involved before the food reaches the home. With the separation of milk and meat, the family becomes directly involved and the kitchen receives its Jewish character.

'Neither the Bible nor the Talmud gives any rationale for these laws. Maimonides ascribes their origin to Jewish disgust at the fertility rites practiced by the pagan cults of Canaan (*Guide* 3:48). One of these rites was the cooking of a kid in its mother's milk. Dr. Nelson Glueck reports that this practice is still found among the Bedouins of today, not as a pagan rite but as an act of hospitality to a distinguished guest (see also Finkelstein, *Pharisees* 1:58-60, 2:831-32, n.; *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, 1:89; *Baron, Social and Religious History*, 1:328, n. 22).

'To us this regulation reflects reverence for life and the teaching of compassion. To seethe a kid in its mother's milk is callous. Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel expresses it thus: The goat—in our case, more commonly the cow—generously and steadfastly provides man with the single most perfect food that he possesses, milk. It is the only food which, by reason of its proper composition of fat, carbohydrates, and protein, can by itself sustain the human body. How ungrateful and callous we would be to take the child of an animal to whom we are thus indebted and cook it in the very milk which nourishes us and is given us so freely by its mother (see Ibn Ezra on Exod. 23:19; Dresner and Siegel, *Jewish Dietary Laws*, p. 70).

Sources

The laws concerning the consumption and cooking of milk and meat together are based on one verse that is repeated three times in the Torah, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (Exod. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21). The Talmud interprets this prohibition to include all kinds of meat, not only that of a kid, explaining that a kid is mentioned specifically because cooking a young goat in its mother's milk was the prevalent custom (B. Hul. 113b; *Y.D.* 87:2). The term meat, however, is limited to its popular connotation; it does not include fish, or locusts in places where it is permitted to eat locusts (*Y.D.* 87:3).

The rabbis noted that the prohibition is mentioned three times; they interpreted this to indicate that it refers not only to cooking, but also to eating and to the derivation of any benefit (*hanaah*) from the cooked mixture. Thus it is forbidden to cook milk and meat (the very act of cooking), to eat the cooked mixture, or to derive any benefit there from. A dish that combines meat and milk may not even be fed to one's dog, but must be disposed of. Since the Bible speaks of "cooking," this stringency prohibiting any benefit from a mixture applies only when the milk and meat have been cooked together, not just mixed (Y.D. 87:1, and Rama).'

What is my understanding of these p'sukim according to the facts presented? I still stand by my statement made back in **Mishpatim**:

"Unfortunately, the sages of old, without the proper guidance of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), did just that. Not only did the people engage in gross idolatrous practices, but also our sages completely misunderstood the instructions, and turned the mitzvah into some nonsense involving the prohibition of eating milk and meat products in the same meal! This conclusion of theirs is totally out of context with the surrounding verses! Understood correctly I want to emphatically state that it is not forbidden to eat milk and meat product together. In fact, to prove my point, I site the passage found in a previous portion (Genesis 18:1-8).⁵

29-35 Compare 2 Corinthians chapter 3, especially vv.7-18.

In conclusion I want to emphasize the fact that although 'Am Yisra'el sinned grievously, their possibility for escaping that awful temptation was as great as is available to us today. In other words, they could have chosen not to sin. As the Torah demonstrated then and still teaches us today, HaShem's loving-mercy is made available in abundance, despite our spiritual depravity! They did not deserve his forgiveness, any more than we deserve it today. I want to close with the admonition of Rav Sha'ul to his Corinthian readers. Speaking of the golden calf incident, he assures them in 1 Corinthians 10:11-13,

"These things happened to them as prefigurative historical events, and they were written down as a warning to us who are living in the *acharit-hayamim*. Therefore, let anyone who thinks he is standing up be careful not to fall! No temptation has seized you beyond what people normally experience, and God can be trusted not to allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. On the contrary, along

⁵ Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy, *Parashat Mishpatim* (HaNaviy Internet Ministries [HIM], 2005), p. 5.

with the temptation he will also provide the way out, so that you will be able to endure."

The closing blessing is as follows:

***"Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-'Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v'chay-yeh o'lam nata-b'tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn."***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

"Shabbat Shalom!"

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