

May we each be called into that place of service as He dwells among us and in us and operates through us, as we are set-apart unto Him!

Ki Tisa When you take “Compassion Personified”

Exodus 30:11-34:35
1 Kings 18:1-39 (A); 18:20-39 (S)

This week’s Torah portion is entitled *Ki Tisa*, and we see how the Israelites continue to receive instruction from God via Moses, who continues to remain on Mount Sinai. For the past two weeks in *Terumah* (Exodus 25:1-27:19) and *Tetzaveh* (Exodus 27:20-30:10), we have seen much instruction regarding the Tabernacle service and how different offerings were to be contributed toward its construction. Now, additional instructions are given, including: taking a census,⁵³ a laver for proper cleansing at the Tent of Meeting,⁵⁴ prescriptions for the anointing oil,⁵⁵ and the ingredients for the holy incense.⁵⁶ After this, Moses is given directives about those who have been specifically anointed with the Spirit of God in wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and the required skillset to construct the Ark of the Covenant and all of the related implements.⁵⁷ The Lord also speaks of the significance of the seventh-day Sabbath,⁵⁸ as this special weekly day of rest is to be set aside as a unique “sign” between Israel and God, designating this community as His chosen people.

As Moses was handed the two tablets of stone which had been inscribed by the very finger of God, he began to make his descent toward the camp of Israel, which was impatiently waiting below. Apparently, the forty-day period he was on the mountain was too long for the people to wait. In the interim, they had lost faith in God and in Moses’ ability to return from Mount Sinai:

“Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, ‘Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’” (Exodus 32:1).

⁵³ Exodus 30:11-16.

⁵⁴ Exodus 30:17-21.

⁵⁵ Exodus 30:22-33.

⁵⁶ Exodus 30:34-38.

⁵⁷ Exodus 31:1-11.

⁵⁸ Exodus 31:12-18.

Amazingly, within less than forty days, the Israelites departed worship of the Lord and pressured Aaron to make a god for them to worship. With the offerings of gold rings and earrings by the people, Aaron himself fashioned a golden calf and proclaimed a feast unto this golden idol:

“He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the LORD’” (Exodus 32:4-5).

As this rebellion erupted, God was incensed with the actions of His chosen people, and He responded by stating that He was ready to eliminate all of them, and start over with the offspring of Moses:

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation’” (Exodus 32:9-10).

At this point, we get a glimpse into the heart of Moses, who beseeched God to remember His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through interrogative questions. What would it communicate to the Egyptians if the God of the Hebrews simply delivered His people into His safety only to wipe them out?

“Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’” **So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people**” (Exodus 32:12-14).

In an interesting statement by the Lord, it is recorded that He “repented” (RSV) or changed his mind about what He wanted to do to the Israelites. The Hebrew verb *nacham*, appearing in the Nifal stem (simple action, passive voice), means “*be sorry, rue, suffer grief, repent*” or “*comfort oneself, be comforted*” (BDB).⁵⁹ The LXX renders this with the Greek verb *hilaskomai*, meaning, “*to make him propitious to one, conciliate him, win his favour*” (LS).⁶⁰ Yet, even while God is said to have changed His mind or repented, elsewhere in the Torah we see how “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent [*nacham, Hitpael*]⁶¹; has He said, and will He not do it?” (Numbers 23:19). God actually repented from His stated intention to eliminate the people of Israel when witnessing their idolatry; God as an Eternal Being with a definite plan for Creation

⁵⁹ BDB, 637.

⁶⁰ LS, 379.

⁶¹ In Numbers 23:19 the verb *nacham* appears in the Hitpael stem (intensive action, reflective voice), meaning “*rue, repent of*” (BDB, 637).

cannot repent or deviate from His plan. Why the tension between Exodus 32:14 and Numbers 23:19? Is it because we are limited mortals and are unable to see things *fully* from His perspective? Or was it because the Lord was refining Moses for further service, seeing if he truly was the able leader of Ancient Israel that he could be in reminding God of His duty not to wipe out the idolatrous people?

One thing we know for certain is that witnessed in many of the mythologies of the Ancient Near East, if various gods and goddesses saw disloyalty being committed by their people—they would exterminate them *without a second thought*. The Lord God of Israel, quite to the contrary, is compassionate, understanding, and merciful—especially when we entreat Him! Some might even observe how one of the primary reasons that God even created the universe, the Earth, and humanity was to display His attributes which center on grand compassion.

The Golden Calf Incident

Moses returned from the mountain with the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and with Joshua he found Aaron and the remaining Israelites in idolatrous revelry (Exodus 32:15-18). The scene was too much to bear, and in his anger Moses broke the two tablets that God gave him as he approaches the golden calf (Exodus 32:19). Moses shoved the idol in the fire and reduced it to a powder (Exodus 32:20a). He took this powder and mixed it with water, forcing the revelers to drink a bitter mixture (Exodus 32:20b). At this point, after Aaron's poor justification that the golden calf just "made itself" in the fire (Exodus 32:21-24), the indignant Moses declared that all of those true to the God of Israel must join to him:

"Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies—then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Whoever is for the LORD, *come* to me!' And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. He said to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Every man *of you* put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day" (Exodus 32:26-28).

The drama of the moment subsided as the Levites went through the crowd, and slew three thousand people who were participating in the riotous festival (Exodus 32:28-35). Moses interceded to God for the Israelites with one of *the most self-sacrificial offers* that is ever recorded in the Scriptures: He unabashedly offered his own life for the lives of the Israelites. He was even willing to have his name erased from the Book of Life:

"But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" (Exodus 32:32).

Moses completely understood his role as an intermediary between God and Israel.

Face to Face

Now as the days proceed, Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the Lord “face to face.” The Israelites began to respect Moses, because as he departed for the Tent of Meeting, the people stood at their tents and watched him enter in. As they watched the pillar of cloud descend upon the gathering place, the people arose and began to worship the Lord at the opening to their own tents. We are then told that Moses spoke with the Lord “face to face,” as a person would speak with his friend:

“Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. **Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.** When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent” (Exodus 33:7-11).

A very interesting request from Moses is then recorded. While interceding for the people of Israel, Moses expressed a great desire to get to know the Almighty on a much deeper level:

“Then Moses said to the LORD, ‘See, You say to me, “Bring up this people!” But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, “I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.” **Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight.** Consider too, that this nation is Your people’” (Exodus 33:12-13).

Moses pleaded that God would reveal His ways to him in order for him to really know Him and find favor in His sight. This plea of Moses is somewhat reminiscent of what the Apostle Paul would later communicate to the Philippians regarding a Believer getting to know Yeshua intimately as Lord—ultimately to the point of emulating His ministry even in death:

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Messiah, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but

that which is through faith in Messiah, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:7-11).

Of course, this heartfelt request of Paul comes after he has listed all of his worldly accomplishments and personal passion for the Lord. He realized, just like Moses centuries earlier, that getting to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **is really what life is all about!** A committed man or woman of faith must pursue an understanding of God with all of the heart, mind, soul, and strength.

At this point, the Holy One made a promise to Moses about revealing Himself, and He showed Moses His glory:

“Then Moses said, ‘I pray You, show me Your glory!’ And He said, ‘I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.’ But He said, ‘You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!’ Then the LORD said, ‘Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen’” (Exodus 33:18-23).

As you read these words, the Lord clearly states, “You will not be able to see My face, for no human can see My face and live” (ATS). An unholy mortal cannot look upon the sheer holiness of the Creator and survive. Sinful flesh cannot bear to view the awesomeness of pure holiness. Moses, however, was allowed to see the proverbial “back” of God and His glory, as He passed by. Throughout the Scriptures we are certainly encouraged to *seek the face* of God, but since this statement about seeing God’s face appears so definite, in our mind’s eye when we consider who we are seeking—it is probably better to visualize seeking God’s presence or intimacy, or His favor or His compassion.

A Second Chance

After the Lord had decided not to eliminate Israel, He commanded Moses to hew out two more tablets of stone to replace the two which were broken in anger over the discovery of idolatry in the camp. In an answer to Moses’ petition, the Lord came down to meet Moses and revealed His glory to Him, uttering some profound words which described His Divine character:

“Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain.’ So he cut

out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, **‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations’**” (Exodus 34:1-7).

What we see described of God in Exodus 34:6-7 are the attributes of a Creator who is full of great compassion, longsuffering, and faithfulness toward His human creations. In His self-description, we find a God whose character is beyond our sinful imagination to comprehend. These are characteristics—because God is infinitely perfect—that He will always exemplify toward men and women of any generation. They are not just “New Testament” concepts, as many people may falsely think—but are demonstrated time and time again in the “Old Testament.” They are, however, *chiefly embodied* in the revelation of the Messiah of Israel, who was incarnated as a man so that there might be a permanent solution provided for the human sin problem.

The Compassion of the Cross

The Father’s compassion toward us **is absolutely epitomized** by the sacrificial death of His Son, who absorbed in Himself the capital punishment of the Torah due upon each of us (cf. Colossians 2:14). When I consider the gruesome sacrifice of the Messiah upon the tree, I can only be reminded of the prophetic declaration of Isaiah—but in so doing I am deeply saddened by how many have not believed the report of the good news:

“Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. **Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed**” (Isaiah 53:1-5).

The Psalmist also reminds us that it is impossible for a mortal man to redeem another from the power of death and being left to the realm of the dead in Sheol. Only God Himself can provide the ransom required for redemption:

“No man can by any means redeem *his* brother or give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease *trying* forever—that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay...As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form shall be for Sheol to consume so that they have no habitation. **But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.** Selah” (Psalm 49:7-9, 14-15).

God Himself had to offer Himself in order to redeem fallen humanity, something which because of His compassionate nature He did in the person of Messiah Yeshua. *This is an awesome thing to consider.* As we get to know Him more, we realize just what a sacrificial heart He has for His Creation.

The Prophet Micah summarizes, in similar terms, the attributes of God that we witness in Exodus 34:6-7, making the following declaration:

“Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sin from to the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob *and* unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old” (Micah 7:18-20).

Micah states that God will not retain His anger forever because of His attribute of “steadfast love” (RSV) or “mercy” (NIV), *chesed*. The Lord will have compassion on us and forgive us for our iniquities and sins, casting them into the depths of the sea.⁶² The Lord is fair and just, and He will not just summarily *wipe out* His people.

What a gracious God we honor, worship, and glorify! May His love for us become a part of who we are as we continue to know Him. Ultimately, we can understand how the Father’s compassion was personified in the glorious work accomplished by Yeshua on the cross at Golgotha (Calvary)—and surely also in many more acts to come as we eagerly await the Messiah’s return. The ability of God to continue to demonstrate love and compassion toward us is unfathomable by the human mind, as observed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans:

“For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!** For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? [Isaiah 40:13; Job 15:8;

⁶² It is from Micah 7:19 that the Jewish custom of *tashlikh*, throwing crumbs or small pieces of bread into a body of water at the time of *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah*, is derived. For more information, consult the relevant sections of the *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

Jeremiah 23:18] **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen**" (Romans 11:30-36).

We cannot fully understand what true godly compassion is; it is beyond our human ability to compute. We need to simply be thankful that through the Father's compassion personified in the Son, Yeshua—through faith we can get a glimpse of who God truly is *and* by His grace continue to seek Him. We need to demonstrate such love and compassion to others, and by loving them and showing them His goodness, hopefully the Lord will allow us to be used to draw others unto Him!

V'yakheil He assembled "Actions Speak Louder Than Words"

Exodus 35:1-38:20
1 Kings 7:40-50 (A); 7:13-26 (S)

By the time we arrive at this week's Torah portion, *V'yakheil*, we discover that it encapsulates a description of the actions of Ancient Israel, as the people collectively fulfill the requirements for the Tabernacle construction which was the subject of the previous *Terumah* (Exodus 27:20-30:10) and *Tetzaveh* (Exodus 30:11-34:35) readings. Without any hesitation, the text reminds us about the commandment to take a Sabbath rest, even in the midst of the Israelites building of the Tabernacle and producing the various implements, accouterments, and garments as defined.

If you have been reading closely the past few weeks, you will have noticed that *Shabbat* is of particular concern to the God of Israel. Two times (Exodus 31:12-17; 34:21), an emphasis is placed not only on the "sign" of *Shabbat*, but also on the importance to observe it faithfully. **As the physical labor for constructing the Tabernacle finally commenced, Moses once again reminded Israel about the Sabbath.** Perhaps knowing human nature, these admonitions have been placed by the Lord in these Torah portions, so that we may be reminded that having a day of rest is a great blessing to all those who remember and observe it:

"Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, 'These are the things that the LORD has commanded *you* to do: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy *day*, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day'" (Exodus 35:1-3).

Of course, it is important to note that in this section of the Torah, we find that the whole congregation of Israel, *kol-adah b'nei Yisrael*, was supposed to rest. By resting one day out of seven, the people would be able to focus on the Lord in a