

thoughts, a lack of discernment, and a bevy of iniquities that can seriously impede our relationship with the Holy One of Israel. Hence, it is beneficial to frequently go before the Lord—if and when any thoughts or actions disrupt the blessing of intimate fellowship with Him. The beloved Apostle John honestly described the need for those called into the light of truth, to faithfully confess whatever sin might darken the soul:

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:6-10).

May we all forever embrace this eternal truth!

V'yakheil וַיַּקְהֵל He assembled

Exodus 35:1-38:20

1 Kings 7:40-50 (A); 7:13-26 (S)

Pequdei פְּקוּדֵי Accounts

“The Glory of Faith and Works”

Exodus 38:21-40:38

1 Kings 7:51-8:21 (A); 7:40-50 (S)

This week’s Torah reading completes the Book of Exodus, with the final two readings being studied. For a substantial part of the selection, the instructions given to Moses for the construction of the Tabernacle, furnishings, and its components, are essentially a reiteration of the details which have been previously considered (Exodus 35:10-40:33). Apparently, the command to build a formal dwelling place for the Holy One of Israel was of such significance for the chosen people of God, that Moses repeated the specifications for it. After the failings of the golden calf resulted in the execution of some three thousand faithless rebels, Moses and the artisans returned to the work at hand. After an additional forty days and forty nights in the presence of the Lord, the radiating facial appearance of Moses helped further convince the remaining Israelites, that the instructions he was conveying were directly from the Holy One, as noted in the closing verses of the previous *parashah*:

“Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. **Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai.** When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, **the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him**" (Exodus 34:31-35).

With the trauma of violent death having permeated the encampment, the visible reminder that Moses was intimately communicating with the Almighty, prompted the Israelites to respond with willing hearts, as they were stirred to contribute the materials needed for the Tabernacle. Those people, endowed with supernatural skills, were given the opportunity to finally exercise their faith in the Holy One, by completing the work as prescribed:

"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.' Moses spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, 'This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying, **'Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD's contribution:** gold, silver, and bronze, and blue, purple and scarlet *material*, fine linen, goats' *hair*, and rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood, and oil for lighting, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. **Let every skillful man among you come, and make all that the LORD has commanded**'" (Exodus 35:1-10).

However, before Moses rested these instructions, there was a key reminder that remembering the Sabbath during the construction of the Tabernacle was not to be abandoned. As important as it would be for the Tabernacle to be assembled, so that God could dwell in the presence of His people—He still desired His people to rest (cf. Exodus 31:13-17).

While reconsidering the different elements of the Tabernacle and the priestly garments, in light of the prohibition to work on the Sabbath, from this week's Torah reading—it is significant to note the unique intersection of faithful obedience to a command, and the completion of human works resulting in the presence of the glory of the Lord. For assuredly, when the Book of Exodus comes to a close describing the "finished" work of the Tabernacle, there was the incredible blessing of the "glory of the Lord" residing in the midst of the Israelites throughout their desert journeys:

"From it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. **Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.** Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel" (Exodus 40:31-38).

Glory or Glorify?

In many regards, the description of the blessing of the “glory of the Lord” filling the Tabernacle could be taken as an example of faith and works combining—in what was then among the Ancient Israelites, a tangible manifestation of God. However, over the course of time, the visible evidence of the “glory of the Lord” has no longer centered on a transportable Tabernacle. Instead, since the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah, the Holy Spirit of God has taken up universal residence in the hearts of God’s people, which “glorify the Lord” in their actions:

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Modern-day Messiah followers can vaguely imagine the majesty of the “glory of the Lord,” filling the desert Tabernacle. The days of the Ancient Israelites, fearfully observing the presence of the Lord, has largely shifted to faithful Believers willingly allowing the Holy One to accomplish His will through their works. There is now a definite, personal responsibility to “glorify the Lord” through faithful acts of obedience, the good works that Yeshua requires of each of us, as they emulate His fulfillment of the Torah:

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:16-19).

If someone has truly been born from above, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and given a measure of faith (Romans 12:3)—there should be a heartfelt willingness to want to obey the Torah (which has not been abolished or nullified). Such a trusting obedience to the commandments of God should evidence itself in faith, combined with good works, which together ultimately brings glory to the Lord. In his epistle, James the Just specified how it was faith combined with his works, that reckoned Abraham righteous. Faith alone was not enough, because only by demonstrating the right actions could Abraham be truly said to have faith:

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** But someone may *well* say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS’** [Genesis 15:6], and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is

justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **For just as the body without *the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead***” (James 2:14-26).

While this passage from James is commonly quoted to emphasize the relation that faith and works have together, Paul’s teaching is not at all devoid of an emphasis on faith and works. In his letter to Believers in Asia Minor, Paul stated that eternal salvation only comes from grace and not from works—but that we have been created to walk in good works, surely something resultant of salvation:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Notice that in God’s sovereign will for humanity, He has actually chosen certain faithful people to glorify Him, by performing good works that were prepared beforehand that they should walk in them. This can refer to artisans like Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 31), who had the privilege and God-given skill to help assemble the Tabernacle. It can also surely refer to the Prophets, the Apostles, or for that matter, a multitude of people down through the ages who have been used for critical tasks to glorify the Lord—especially by bringing others to Himself.

Self-Examination

As we come to the end of the Book of Exodus, in considering this week’s reading and trying to imagine the majesty of the glory of the Lord residing in and around the Tabernacle—it would be beneficial to make a personal assessment of just how we are individually seeking to glorify the Lord. After all, since through the ages, the Lord has chosen to use mere mortals to bring glory to Him through their faithful works—we each should take some time to introspectively challenge ourselves, to see that we are fulfilling our God-ordained destinies.

- Are we truly walking by faith?
- Are we living and walking by sight?
- Are we obeying the commandments of God? Or are we trying to pick and choose which to obey?
- Are we willfully available to let the Lord use us for His glory? Or are we seeking personal glory?
- Are we doing the good works prepared for us to do? Or are we avoiding works due to selfishness?
- Are we glorifying the Lord in our marriages, family, and relationships?
- Are we glorifying the Lord in our neighborhoods and the marketplace?

This sampling of questions only scratches the surface of personal self-examination. More can be added to the above list, but what is most critical is taking the time as admonished by Paul in his instruction to the Corinthians, to test and examine ourselves so we might bring glory to the Lord:

“Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

May we each be strengthened in our resolve to glorify the Lord, by our faithful works to persevere to the end!