

## Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat March 31, 2007/Nisan 12, 5767

**Parashah #25: Tzav (Give an order! / Command!), VaYikra (Leviticus) 6:1(8)-8:36**

**Haftarah: Regular Haftarah omitted for Shabbat HaGadol (The Great) reading:**

**Mal'akhi (Malachi) 3:4-24(4:6)**

**Suggested Messianic Writings reading: Romans 12:1-2**

Shalom,

As the Parashah opens, three times within six verses the *Kohanim* (Priests) are commanded to “keep the fire burning” on the altar. As the fire on the altar is a picture of our prayer and worship, “keep the fire burning” has long been a theme particularly of 24/7 prayer movements, including Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in the 1700's, as well as what is currently happening at IHOP in Kansas City and numerous global locations, including Jerusalem.

But the Kohanim were also commanded to remove the ashes from the previous day's burning; this was the first Temple duty of each day. The *Kohen HaGadol* (High Priest) was to remove a few ashes while in his official garments, place them on the floor of the Courtyard, then change to a lesser garment to clean out all the ashes and carry them to a location outside the camp. But what do the ashes represent? Why were some laid outside the altar before the rest were disposed of? One thought is that the ashes refer to the past, specifically the past of our faith. The portion of the ashes that was put beside the altar is to remind us that we are never totally free of the past. The rest of the ashes that were taken outside the camp signify that we are not to rely solely on the past.

The ashes, since they were part of the previous day's offering, were not to be considered mere refuse. A trace of holiness remained; the ashes were to be treated respectfully, and thus our past should be treated respectfully. In fact, the ashes were to be disposed of properly *before* the new offering could be offered. For us, that should mean that the past is to be treated with respect before we press on into today's work.

Thinking Biblically and beyond, since Torah often commands something without giving the how to, wise traditions have developed which help explain such things as how to properly hold a *Pesakh* (Passover) Seder. Russ Resnik<sup>1</sup> notes that if tradition is handled properly, it honors the past by giving it a voice in the present. Tradition can help us to gain perspective on issues of our own day by observing the collective wisdom from the past. Tradition should be flexible and adaptable to current situations, utilized if helpful, discarded if unnecessary. “New is better” must be thoughtfully considered, while at the same time, “we've always done it that way” is not a proper standard. We need to look at the “why” from each angle. Resnik says that, “When we treat the past with respect, we can address the present with flexibility and energy. Proper handling of the past promotes continuity, even as it permits change and adaptation.”<sup>2</sup> Yeshua never invalidated tradition, but He was strongly against tradition invalidating the Word of G-d. A proper understanding of Mattityahu 5:17 reveals that Yeshua came to preserve Torah and the Prophets.

A wise person looks to the past to help direct his future. The prophet *Yesha'yahu* (Isaiah) places this idea before us in Isaiah 51:1-2, “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek ADONAI: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.” This couple is the root of the entire tree. Our faith has had a great past, Hebrews 11 gives some great examples, and that past is there to strengthen us for our future. Sadly enough, Dave Ramsey says that the average American looks forward only as far as the coming Friday night outing. If our tradition is based on our best parties, we are in dire need of help.

So once the ashes are removed (the past is considered), then the Kohanim were to “stoke” the fire, get it going good. We know that *Kefa* (Peter), speaking first to Jewish believers, then to all followers of Yeshua, called us “the King's Kohanim.” All who have been redeemed by the blood of The Sacrifice Lamb, Yeshua, are now a member of the *Ke-hu-nah*, the Priesthood. Think of that – we all belong to the “Big Kehunah.”

From the fact that the Kohen HaGadol carried the ashes outside the camp in lesser garments, then returned and put on the priestly garments to carry out his Tabernacle duties, the Sages derive the importance of dressing nicely for Shabbat and worship of our Creator; citing a comparison that, in a fine home, a servant would not pour wine for his master wearing the same clothing that he wore while working in the kitchen.

In VaYikra chapter 7, the peace-offerings are described, especially those that are offered as a thank offering. Of note is that the Rabbis, still looking for Messiah's first coming, believe that in the Messianic era the only sacrifice that will remain in the new Temple is the thank-offering, and in fact, this offering will continue forever. Ezekiel may be describing this possibility. After the destruction of the second Temple, when animal sacrifice ceased, the Rabbis developed blessings to be said, giving thanks for everything the Creator has bestowed upon us. Giving thanks to Adonai for all we have sounds like a "respectful tradition" to me.

So the first two chapters of the Parashah taught about the burnt-offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the consecration offering, and the sacrifice of peace offerings, including the thank offerings. In chapter 8 is detailed the consecration and installation of Aharon and his sons as the first of Israel's Kohanim. This pictures some important details to be considered when one is "consecrated and installed" as a Kohen of Yeshua – complete immersion in water; putting on holy garments; being anointed with oil; and placing the blood of the slain sacrifice upon our lives. Jewish "tradition" states that complete submersion under water, or undergoing *t'villah* (immersion) in a *mikveh*, signifies a change in spiritual status; in the same sense "one should submerge himself in G-d's holiness, to the exclusion of extraneous and contradictory influences"<sup>3</sup> [compare with 2 Timothy 4:3-4]. The oil of course represents the *Ruakh HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit, and the blood represents the sacrifice of Yeshua. The blood of the sacrifice was placed on the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot of the Kohanim. This represents consecration of the entire body to the service of Adonai. The ArtScroll commentary notes that there are two kinds of anointing with oil – one for power on a king, and one for holiness on a kohen. As believers, we get both, and they are not to be taken lightly.

So I hope that as we read through VaYikra, the Ruakh will enable us to look past what on a surface reading seems mundane and archaic and see the reality that this is training for life, needed because, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Our special Haftarah takes us into the writing of the final book of the prophets, *Mal'akhi* (Malachi). Pesakh is observed next week, we always look forward to our Or HaOlam seder, and every year at every Seder around the world, a child is sent to open an outside door to see if *Eliyahu* (Elijah) has come, for this passage declares that he will come to prepare the way for the return of Messiah. One of these times Eliyahu may be at that door, declaring the coming of Yeshua. And Barukh HaShem, it is wonderful that we are "covered" by the blood of Yeshua, for Mal'akhi wonders, "Who can endure the day when He comes? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire...." That is why the Day of Adonai is called both terrible and great – terrible for those who do not know Him, great for those who do.

Here's something to think about regarding why we *sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* (pray for the peace of Jerusalem). The Jewish people have carried some wonderful traditions down through the centuries. *Sha'ul* (Saul/Paul), from the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), who called himself a Jew (Acts 21:39), desired earnestly for the salvation of Yeshua for his brethren. Yet it was because of their [the Jewish people's] rejection of Yeshua that the Gentiles were given the opportunity to be grafted "into the family." There never was the intention of a "new religion" being started. "For if their casting Yeshua aside means reconciliation for the world, what will their accepting Him mean? It will be life from the dead!" (Romans 11:15). Sha'ul seems to reference Isaiah 26:18 here, where Israel laments, "We have not brought *salvation* to the land, and those inhabiting the world have not come to life." Soon that will change, I believe.

In Acts 15, as Sha'ul recounts what Adonai was doing among the *Goyim* (Gentiles), he quotes from the prophet Amos, "After this, [says Adonai] I will return; and I will rebuild the fallen tent of David... so that the rest of mankind many seek Adonai, that is, all the Goyim who have been called by My Name." What is the

“fallen tent (or tabernacle) of David?” After the Assyrian conquest [who by their own records took only just under 28,000 of the millions of the Northern Kingdom of Israel captive], the remainder of the Northern Kingdom of Israel did one of three things: 1) moved down and assimilated into the Southern Kingdom of Judah (for example, Anna from Asher who was daily at the Temple in Jerusalem, Luke 2:36); 2) remained and blended with captives from other nations that Assyria brought in to live in Israel, eventually becoming the Samaritans, whose descendants today continue to blend Judaism with false beliefs; or 3) moved to the east of their own accord. Members of this third group are being identified today in such far-reaching locations as India and China. As Judah was the largest tribe in the Southern Kingdom, all who moved there, from whatever tribe, came to be known as “Jews”. When Yeshua said He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that meant the spiritually lost, for the Land of Israel contained members from all the tribes at that time. Before Yeshua’s time, after the Babylonian captivity, and after Yeshua’s time, following the Roman destruction of the Temple, the Jewish people were scattered around the globe. That’s why there are Jewish people everywhere, with great diversities in backgrounds (Sephardic, Ashkenazic, etc) and physical appearances, who are still a remnant of the Babylonian captivity. And that’s why today *in G-d’s Kingdom there is only Jew or Gentile* – one in Messiah, yet different just as male is different from female, yet one in Messiah.

I am a grafted-in Gentile with a Jewish heart, but with no Jewish blood as far as I know. If there is any back down the family tree anywhere, they assimilated into the gentile world very well. And many Jewish people did just that during the past 1700-some years for varying reasons – from forced conversions to the church, to hiding their Jewishness out of fear or repulsion. The term “Jew” signifies as being from any and every tribe of Israel, not just the tribe of Judah. I do not believe that *only one tribe* from Israel – Judah – has had to endure crusades, pogroms, forced conversions, anti-semitism, the holocaust, and various replacement theologies, much from the gentile body of “believers,” as well as constant daily threats from a large part of the Arab world. It is a “family thing.” However, in our day, more and more believing Gentiles are beginning to understand and stand with Israel. And when “all” the Jews – those in Israel along with those remaining in the diaspora – come to salvation in Yeshua, that is, when the fallen tent of David is rebuilt [that’s what that means], it will be life from the dead for the rest of the world – revival in every nation on earth among the goyim, the gentiles. I do believe that something will break forth in the spiritual realm at that time, bringing the great end-times revival.

That’s why we sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim, that’s why we study and learn from the book of Leviticus how to live a life of holiness, to be ready for the multitudes that will be coming to Yeshua, the Jew first, then the Gentile. We also live a life of holiness in order that we will be strong in our faith and not be of those of the great apostasy, the great falling away, who turn from their faith in Yeshua to whatever “tickles their ears.” That’s why we study Torah, which teaches this holiness, as well as the rest of Scripture, which expounds on but does not replace Torah. Torah is the foundation for all of Scripture and for all of life. We learn from our past, and press on into our future, through Mashiakh Yeshua!

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Russell Resnik, *Gateways to Torah*, Lederer Books 2000

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> ArtScroll Chumash commentary