

## KI TISA {כִּי תִשָּׂא} (When You Take/Elevate)

Exodus 30:11 –34:35, 1 Kings 18:1-39, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

A Messianic Jewish Commentary By Hannah Nesher

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This week's study of Parashat Ki Tisa begins with the Lord commanding Moses to take a census of Bnei Yisrael (Sons of Israel).

**“Then the LORD said to Moses, “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his soul at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them.”** (Exodus 30:11-12)

Every man was required to give half a shekel as a ransom for his soul (nafsho נַפְשׁוֹ).

**“Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel...”** (Exodus 30:13)



Carthage shekel, c. 310–290 BC

The word ‘ransom’ here in Hebrew is כָּפַר {*kaper*} which means ‘to atone for’ as in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The use of this word refers to the money paid by someone guilty of taking human life in circumstances that do not constitute ‘murder’. Ransom money is forbidden to be paid in the case of deliberate murder.

No one can really ‘purchase’ their eternal redemption with silver or gold – money cannot truly buy our eternal redemption, for the value of our soul is priceless: **“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly.”** (Psalm 49:7-8)

The good news is that the atonement (kapparah) for our eternal nefesh (soul) has been provided as a free gift through the costly blood sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

**“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”** (Hebrews 9:12)

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:12

Not every act of killing is murder. The commandment is “*Thou shalt not murder*” **לֹא תִרְצַח** (not ‘Thou shalt not kill’).<sup>2</sup> A soldier or warrior preparing to go into battle is, in the eyes of God, a potential taker of human life, but not a murderer.

Sometimes war is a necessary evil. It seems to me that Hitler has shown us the danger of refusing to enter into combat with the enemy. There are some enemies with whom negotiation or peaceful resolution is impossible and war the only regrettable answer. Israel has had to learn this lesson the hard way in our battle with Islamic terrorism.

Whereas others may celebrate when their enemy is defeated, God instead required ancient Israel to pay a ‘*ransom for their souls*’ to show how very seriously God considers the taking of life.

Mini-Hebrew lesson:

Machatzit shekel

We can learn a very interesting lesson from the Hebrew wisdom contained in these letters and may apply this wisdom to our lives. The Hebrew word for the half shekel is **מַחְצִית שֶׁקֶל** {*Machatzit shekel*}.

The first letter, mem, **מ** can represent ‘*mavet*’ **מוֹת** which is the Hebrew word for ‘*death*’; but the second letter, chet, **ח** stands for ‘*chaim*’, **חַיִּים** which means ‘*life*’.



Modern shekel coins and agorot coins used in Israel

And what is the next letter? It is tzadik, **צ** which means ‘*righteousness*’, and can also represent ‘*tzdakah*’, **צְדָקָה** which is ‘*charity*’. Yud **י** is the first letter in the name of God (Yah), **יְה** and Yad **יָד** means ‘*hand*’, which can represent the power of God in His right hand. The last letter, Tav, **ת**, is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet and can stand for ‘*tamim*’ **תָּמִים** which means ‘*pure*’.

So let’s put this message all together. Death (mem **מ**) and life (chet **ח**) stand side by side and the thread holding them apart is fragile. Death can potentially come at any time for any one of us. A sobering truth. But what follows death and life? Tzadik **צ** (Righteousness).

**“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness (tzdakah) delivers from death.”** (Proverbs 10:2) If righteousness delivers from death, then how can we be sure we are righteous?

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20:13

Only in the Messiah, Yeshua, can we be made perfectly righteous. **“For He made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

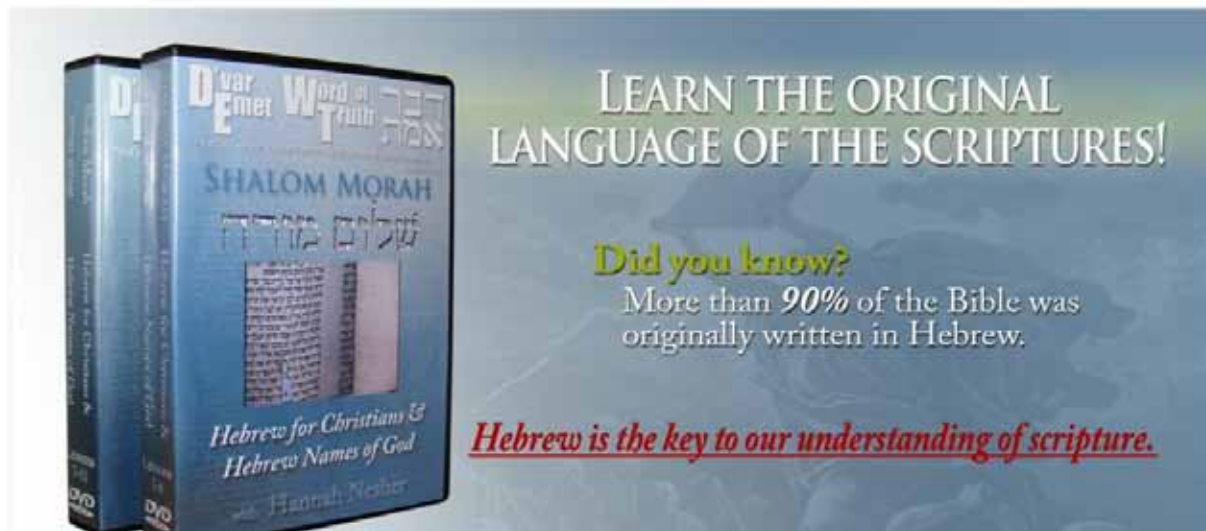
Through Yeshua’s sacrifice, we cross over from death (mavet) into life (chaim). Since Tzedakah not only means righteousness but also the giving of charity it seems to me that we need to take this virtue very seriously. What is a characteristic of a righteous person? He (or she) gives generously to the poor.

**“The righteous gives and does not spare.”** (Proverbs 21:26). **“Those who are generous will be blessed, for they give tzedakah (charity) to the poor.”** (Proverbs 22:9)

All throughout Scripture we can see that God takes notice of people’s giving, especially to the poor and needy. This issue of alms, giving tzedakah to the poor, is a subject all in itself.<sup>3</sup> And what is the end of the matter? In the end, (tav נ), God will make all things tamim (pure) in the New Jerusalem. Halleluyah!

There is so much wisdom and relevant applications to our lives in the Hebrew language itself. I hope you are enjoying these mini-Hebrew lessons in these studies; but I also want to encourage those who are really zealous and seeking the deeper things of God to learn at least some Hebrew.

We have available two beginner’s Hebrew courses on DVD, called **Shalom Morah I & II.** The first course contains a study on the Hebrew names of God and the second one also teaches beginners Hebrew but focuses on the wisdom contained in the Hebrew aleph-bet.



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<sup>3</sup> See article on The Eight Degrees of Tzedakah on the website: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

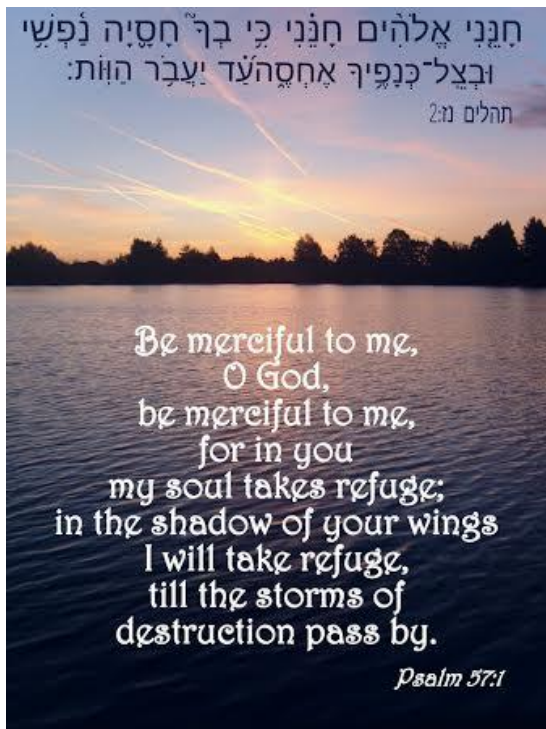
The parashah goes on to give commands about the production of the anointing oil to be used in the Temple. We discussed the whole issue of the pure olive oil and the anointing in last week's study (see Tetzaveh).

## Betzalel – In the shadow of God

In chapter 31, the Lord speaks to Moses about a special calling on a man named **Betzalel**, **בצלאל** whom God filled with *His Spirit, wisdom, understanding and knowledge, and in all manner of artistic workmanship*.

**"See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah."** (Exodus 31:2)

Betzalel's name is interesting in its meaning. It comes from three Hebrew words: 'Be' **ב** (in), 'Tzel' **צל** (shade), and 'El' **אל** (God). His name is so significant that one of the main streets of downtown Jerusalem is named after him. Also named after Betzalel are schools of art and artistic academies in Israel.



Abiding in the shade (tzel) or shadow of the Lord is such a secret, special place where we can find refuge.

**"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by."** (Psalm 57:1)

Yeshua made reference to this place of refuge when he wept over Jerusalem, knowing the calamity that was about to befall them.

**"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,...How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"** (Matthew 23:37)

It is this maternal, protective quality that wants to hide our children under the shadow of our wings and keep them safe from every threat and danger. Therefore, it is God's maternal name,



El Shaddai,<sup>4</sup> which comes from the Hebrew word for a woman's breast, that is used in Psalm 91 in reference to the shade צל of God אל El.

**“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High (Elyon) shall abide under the shadow (Betzel) of El Shaddai. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, My God in Him I will trust.’” (Psalm 91:1-2)**

Isn't it interesting that this particular name, Betzalel, so filled with spiritual meaning, was given to the first artisan mentioned in the Bible? Bezalel was the first Israeli artist called by the Creator to build the sanctuary in the desert. The four names of Bezalel's genealogy, as written in the Bible, reveals a message from the Creator to us.

- Bezalel can be translated from Hebrew as “in the shadow of God.”•
- His father's name Uri means in Hebrew “my Light.”•
- His Grandfather's name Hur means “purified.”
- Bezalel is from the tribe of Yehuda (Judah), whose name means – “the one who worships God.”



Bezalel drawing class under direction of Abel Pann, 1912

What is it about creativity and art that is so holy and close to God? There is a direct correlation, as shown in the Hebrew, between an artist (oman אומן) or art (omanut אומנות) and faith (emunah אמונה). These all share the same Hebrew root word ‘amen’ אמן. All creative endeavors are acts of faith – creating something out of nothing.

## Blocked Creatives

It seems to me that we highly underrate the whole issue of art and creativity in our ‘goal, results, and profit’ - orientated world. I suspect that Julia Cameron is correct when she writes in her book, The Artists' Way, that many of us are what she calls ‘blocked creatives’.

God is infinitely creative; one of His first and primary names is ‘The Creator’. The first words of the Bible are, “***In the beginning, God created...***” (Genesis 1:1) Therefore, since each of us has been created in the image of God, we should all be incredibly creative as well; but far too often, we are so busy with the all-consuming duties and demands of making a living that we are not making the time to explore this creative side of our natures.

I'm not sure where you are with this, but for the last thirty or so years of my life, I think I would call myself a ‘blocked creative’. Writing is most definitely a creative outlet for me and I enjoy it

<sup>4</sup> See audio message on El Shaddai: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net) and Shalom Morah I, Hebrew names of God.

immensely (as those of you who receive my pages and pages of notes will attest to I'm sure ☺); but there are other aspects of my creative nature which I have not indulged in – and it does feel like an indulgence, doesn't it?

I remember as a child spending hours and hours in a little room under the stairs, shut away with my little glass bottles and jars of paint. How I loved painting designs on these little bottles - and on those paint-by-number kits as well. I took these very seriously and spent hour after hour meticulously filling in the colors - even in the tiny spaces only marked by arrows.

Now that we are '*grown up*'; however, these artistic pursuits seem like frivolous hobbies that should be shelved in favor of more '*serious business*' like making money (or doing the laundry).



Last Supper 2011 Paint by Number Image

Bezalel shows us an alternative - we can create as an act of worship. With this in mind, I would like to share with you An Artist's Prayer:

O Great Creator, יהוה, we come together in Your name, that we may be of greater service to You and to Your people. We offer ourselves to You as instruments. We open ourselves to Your creativity in our lives. We surrender to You our old ideas. We welcome Your new and more expansive ideas. We trust that You will lead us. We trust that it is safe to follow You.

We know that You created us and that creativity is Your nature and our own. We ask You to unfold our lives according to Your plan, not our low self-worth. Help us to believe that it is not too late, and that we are not too small or too young or too old, or too flawed, to be healed – by You and through each other – and made whole.

Help us to love one another, to nurture each other's unfolding, to encourage each other's growth, and understand each other's fears. Help us to know that we are not alone, that we are loved and loveable. Help us to create as an act of worship to You. Amen. <sup>5</sup>

Is there a creative pursuit that you long to explore? Is it music or art? Singing or learning to play an instrument? Fashion design? Dance or drama? Video editing? Animation? Carpentry? Gardening? Cooking? Photography? Or maybe just 'plain old paint by numbers'? I hope that this study of Bezalel inspires each of us to make room for beauty and creativity in our lives.

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## Keeping the Sabbath on the Seventh Day

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<sup>5</sup> Julia Cameron, The Artists Way

The work of building the tabernacle was now set to start – an immensely important task! And yet what was the first thing God did? He reminded the Israelites to keep the Sabbath – to rest. As important as are any of our works, even those we do for the Lord, resting on Shabbat takes precedence. The first day that Adam and Eve spent on earth was a day of rest. All our ‘works’ must come out of a place of resting in God with peace in our hearts, not strife and struggle.

The work of God was not permitted to be elevated above the command to rest on the Sabbath. It is to be observed as a perpetual covenant, throughout time and generations. Why is keeping Shabbat so important? Because it is *a special sign* between God and His people. **“It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”** (Exodus 31:17)

In Hebrew a ‘sign’ is called an **Ot אֹת** just as the rainbow was a sign and circumcision on the eighth day was a sign, so is Shabbat a sign that we are in a covenant relationship with the Almighty God. We are a peculiar people - while heathens or unbelievers stay busy seven days a week, we work only six days and rest on the seventh, just as God, our Creator, also rested on the seventh day.

I love the fact that the convenience stores in Israel are not open 24/7, but 24/6. Halleluyah!

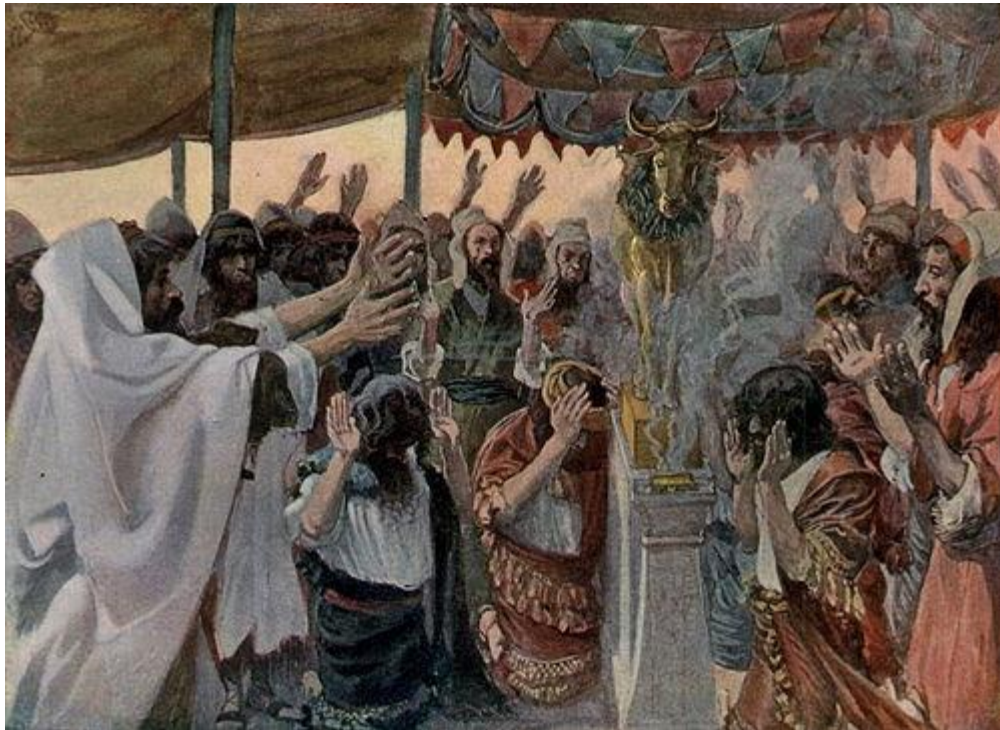
I was so proud of my teenage son, Timothy, for turning down a job offer to work part time at a little restaurant nearby. He really could have used the extra cash for spending money, but because the hours were on Shabbat, he said no. I may not have taught my kids all they need to know, but at least they have learned that by honoring Shabbat, we honor God and He will bless us for our obedience and for putting Him first.



So the question remains, “*What about non-Jewish or Gentile Believers?*” I don’t want to impose anything on anyone (and risk being labeled a ‘Judaizer’). We each have to follow the voice of the Holy Spirit for our own lives; but this is the Word of God regarding Shabbat for foreigners (non-Israelites) who have joined themselves to the Lord (through the blood of Yeshua the Messiah).

**“Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants – everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant – even them I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer...for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”** (Isaiah 56:6-7)

## The Sin of the Golden Calf



The Golden Calf (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

We now come to the shameful account of the sin of our Israelite ancestors with the idolatrous golden calf. Throughout history, the Israelites have shown their tendency toward spiritual unfaithfulness.

When the people saw that Moses was delayed from coming down from the mountain, they got a ‘great idea’ – *“Hey! Let’s make ourselves a god for ourselves out of all this gold we got from Egypt. Moses? Who knows what has happened to him. We want a god we can see!”*<sup>6</sup>

And so Aaron, ever the peace lover, fashioned a golden calf and said, **“Here is your god, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”** (Exodus 32:4) This shows us the danger of compromising our integrity for the sake of peace or ‘people pleasing’.

And then Aaron went even further and proclaimed a ‘*feast to the Lord*’ the next day. And the people rose up and ate, drank, and made merry ‘to the Lord’.

**“Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.” So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.”** (Exodus 32:5,6)

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 32:1 paraphrase



The people did not want to give up their allegiance to God; but they wanted to do it ‘their way’. They wanted a ‘*visible representation*’ of God, which is forbidden in the second of the Ten Commandments.

I remember so clearly before I came to faith, when I had been abandoned by the father of my unborn child. Someone from the Church tried to minister to me about the faithful love of God who would never leave me nor forsake me. But no, I wanted someone I could see; someone I could feel; I had made man my God and this needed to be broken in my life.



*The Adoration of the Golden Calf* by Nicolas Poussin

What is it that we can ‘*see*’ that has become more real and more important to us than God Himself? This is a deep question we each need to ask of ourselves.

God was actually so angry with the people of Israel that He momentarily disowned them, saying to Moses, **“Go down, for *YOUR* people that *YOU* brought up out of the land of Egypt have dealt corruptly.**” (Exodus 32:7)

Have your kids even done something so rotten that you wanted to disown them? I wrote about this in one of my very favorite devotionals called, *You are Mine.*<sup>7</sup>

Just as we may get angry with our children but will never abandon them, God the good father also will never forsake His inheritance: **“For the LORD will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance.”** (Psalm 94:14)

When God saw the people worshipping a golden calf, He threatened to destroy them and to start all over again with Moses.

**“I have seen these people,” the Lord said to Moses, ‘and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave Me alone so that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.’”** (Exodus 32: 9 – 10)

Instead of accepting God’s offer, however, thankfully Moses stood in the gap and interceded on behalf of the people of Israel<sup>8</sup>. Is this the attitude found within the Christian Church toward the Jews? Some Christians do fervently love and intercede for the Jewish people; but there is also a portion of the Christian Church which believes in the doctrine of ‘replacement theology’.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.voiceforisrael.net/articles](http://www.voiceforisrael.net/articles)

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 32:11-14

Moses Pleaded with God (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Distant Shores Media/Sweet Publishing)

This erroneous doctrine professes that God has disowned the Jewish people and has ‘*replaced them*’ with the Christian Church. Those who accept that they are a ‘replacement’ for the people of Israel display an arrogance in stark contrast with the humility of Moses. The apostle Paul warned the church against this kind of false conceit saying:



**“do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”** (Romans 11:18)

Paul wrote in the book of Romans that God has put a temporary blindness upon Israel in order that the fullness of the Gentiles may come in – and then:

**“all Israel will be saved, as it is written, the Deliverer will come out of Zion and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”**<sup>9</sup>

Moses’ intercession - his standing in the gap and pleading for Divine mercy upon a whining, complaining, ungrateful bunch of ‘rag-tag’ people who were sinful, faithless, and disobedient is nothing short of amazing!

May we have the same merciful spirit of humility as had Moses, not to sit in judgment when we see the sins and faults of others, but to plead for God’s forgiveness upon them.

**“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...Repay no one evil for evil...Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”**<sup>10</sup>

I thank God for all the faithful intercessors who are pleading for our sinful nation today. Who knows whether your prayers are going to make the difference and turn the tide of God’s judgment away from us? You may have come into the royal position for such a time as this. One person can make a huge difference!

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 11:25-27

<sup>10</sup> Luke 6:28, Matthew 5:44

Although Moses prayed for the people, he was so angry when he came down from the mountain and witnessed their idolatry that he smashed the tablets of testimony upon which God Himself had engraved the Ten Commandments. Moses then destroyed the golden calf and had the primary instigators put to death.<sup>11</sup>

Moses' prayers made all the difference for Israel:

**“And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people.”** (Exodus 32:14)

Although God relented from destroying Israel entirely, their sin did result in terrible consequences –three thousand men fell that day under the sword of judgment. What I find amazing, however, is that at the exact same time, Shavuot (Pentecost), when the Spirit and the Torah was given to Israel, that exact same number of souls were saved!

**“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”** (Acts 2:41)



Moses Destroys the Tables of the Ten Commandments (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Yeshua did not come to condemn us but to save us.<sup>12</sup> There is hope for us yet. We have been given the Spirit of God to bring us into life, not death, by leading and guiding us into all truth.

Moses refused to take a step unless the presence of God went with him. **“Then he said to Him, ‘If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.’”** (Exodus 33:15)

I totally understand. I so desperately need the presence and power of God to go anywhere or do anything! If God's not going with me, I just don't want to go!

Although Moses had to descend from the mountain and had destroyed the first set of tablets, God instructed him to come back up again and to receive a second set of tablets.

**“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.’”** (Exodus 34:1)

We may go through periods of our life where we descend into sin or fall away from the Lord, but God promises the hope of restoration and renewal if we will agree to come back up into His presence to find forgiveness.

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<sup>11</sup> Exodus 32:19-28

<sup>12</sup> John 3:17

God is so good! He passed in front of Moses and proclaimed His wonderful divine character:

**“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;”** (Exodus 34:6-7)

The more we become conformed and transformed into the original image and likeness of God in which we have been created, the more we will demonstrate these wonderful qualities of mercy, grace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, and truth. We will become less judgmental and more merciful; we will criticize less and intercede more.



Moses Receives the Tablets of the Law (1868 painting by [João Zeferino da Costa](#))

Moses pleaded with God to show him His glory: “Then Moses said, **“I pray You, show me Your glory!”** (Exodus 33:18) No one could see God’s face and live, therefore God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock as He passed by, proclaiming His goodness, grace and compassion<sup>13</sup>:

“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.”** (Exodus 33:19)

Oh, how we long to be changed – to be more like Him. Coming into covenant with God is not about just ‘following the rules’; it is about having a deep, abiding, intimate relationship with a loving God. When Moses came down from the mountain, he had experienced the presence and glory of God to such an intense level that his face shone and he had to cover it from the people.<sup>14</sup>

Moses with Radiant Face (1638 painting by [José de Ribera](#))



In the New Testament, a verse is found that tells us we should be shining even more gloriously through the ministry of the Spirit than was Moses: *“But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.”* (2 Corinthians 3:7-9)

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 33:19-23

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 34:29-35



## Haftorat Ki Tisa

The Prophetic portion for Ki Tisa shows us how Israel again fell into idolatry. In 1 Kings Chapter 18, we read about Elijah's mighty victory on Mt. Carmel. He challenged the prophets of the false god, Baal, to a contest of sorts. Whichever was the one true God would send fire down from Heaven to burn up the sacrifice.

Elijah made a mockery out of their false god and proved in dramatic fashion, without any shadow of a doubt, that *YHVH יהוה* is *Elohim*. These words (YHVH hu ha'Elohim) form the final conclusion of every Day of Atonement service and are some of the last words uttered by a dying Israelite.<sup>15</sup>

Elijah effectively turned Israel away from their infidelity and back to the One True God. But why had Israel strayed?

King Ahab, married to the Phoenician queen Jezebel, called Elijah the '*Troubler of Israel*'.

In actuality, however, it was not Elijah who caused Israel trouble, but Ahab's foreign wife, Jezebel, who enticed Israel to follow her false god, Baal.



Jezebel and Ahab meeting Elijah, print by Sir Francis Dicksee (1853-1928)

This stands as a stark warning, to both men and women, to be very careful who they choose to marry. A woman can have a powerful influence over a man in the intimate relationship of marriage – for good or for evil. If anyone has seen the movie: 'My Big, Fat, Greek Wedding' there is one clip where the daughter wants to go to college and the traditional, patriarchal, Greek father is refusing to allow her to do. The mother consoles the daughter with the assurance that she will change her husband's mind. "But *the man is the head!*", the daughter exclaims in despair. And the mother answers, "*Yes, the man is the head, but the woman is the neck that can turn the head whatever way it wants.*" ☺

Of course this is not always the case, but we can see from many examples in the Bible that a woman can have a powerful influence over a man – we need only to look at the examples of Eve with Adam, Sarah with Abraham, Esther with King Ahashverosh, Bat Sheba with King David, and Delilah with Samson to prove this is true.

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<sup>15</sup> Also the prayer of Sh'ma Yisrael (Hear O Israel) is usually uttered on a Believing Jewish person's deathbed

It has been said that *‘behind every good man is a great woman’*. I know my Dad would not be who he is today if my Mom had not been such a wonderful, faithful, loving wife to him (and he’d be the first to say so).

But the wrong woman can also be a man’s downfall. God has warned men not to marry non-believers, lest they turn their hearts away from God. We see this very thing with the example of King Solomon, to whom God gave such great wisdom; but who fell in his decision to marry foreign women. In the end, they did turn his heart away from God to worship false gods; and Solomon seemed to die a bitter, disillusioned man. As women, we need to be conscious of the influence we can have over the men in our lives and use it wisely in the fear of the Lord.

Queen Jezebel used her powerful influence to lead Israel into the sin of false worship. Elijah, as her direct opposite, turned Israel back to faithfully worshipping God. If we look at their lives on a superficial level, it could seem that Jezebel was more *‘blessed’* than Elijah. She had power, position, and prosperity; while Elijah had no lineage, no ‘position’, and little prosperity. In fact sometimes Elijah had to even beg for food.

He felt alone and sometimes despaired that there was even anyone left who wanted to serve God. He longed for fellowship but often felt lonely. There were times he felt so depressed and discouraged, he wanted to die. Doesn’t sound much like a blessed man, does it? But we can’t take only a temporal view of life; we can’t see this life as *‘the end’*, for all of eternity awaits us and we may have treasures stored up in Heaven that no eye has even seen!



The Cave of Elijah, [Mount Carmel](#), Israel.



Elijah in the Wilderness\_ by Washington Allston.

**“Better the little a righteous man has than all the riches of the wicked.” (Psalm 37:16)**

I am not preaching that poverty is holy; I would like to be blessed and prosper just like my Father Abraham! But if we look at the lives of Elijah and Jezebel, we see that power, position and prosperity cannot be our end goal; it must be to stay faithful to the Lord God of Israel – in sickness and in health, in riches and in poverty, for better or for worse – from this time forth and forevermore!

In some deep, dark corner of our hearts, we may hide some envy of people who seem more blessed or prosperous and think, “*But they are not even believers – why are they more blessed?*” This is so dangerous to our well being to even think like this. The word says that “**envy rots the bones.**” (Proverbs 14:30)

Thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit that shows us these secret things of which we are not even aware. “**Do not let your heart envy (be jealous of) sinners, but be jealous for the fear of the Lord.**” (Proverbs 23:17)

We can see that these two people, each zealous in their own mission – one for the Lord and one for a false god - ended their lives in vastly different ways. Jezebel, while she sat applying her makeup, was pushed out the window by her servants, and she fell to her death. The horses trampled her body and the dogs savagely ate her flesh.<sup>16</sup> What a horrible end – and her eternal destiny is far more horrifying.

But Elijah, who endured great and severe trials in this lifetime, went up to Heaven on a chariot of fire.<sup>17</sup> He is still honored and revered today at every circumcision ceremony with a special chair being set aside for the Prophet Elijah to witness the sign of the covenant upon every Jewish infant.

Also at every Passover Seder, a special place is set for Elijah. At a certain point in the ritual Passover meal, the door is opened to welcome in Elijah, who (it is believed in Judaism) would precede the coming of the Messiah.



"Chair of Elijah" used during the [brit milah](#) (circumcision) ceremony. The [Hebrew](#) inscription reads "This is the chair of Elijah, remembered for Good."

Someday, like Elijah, we will ascend to Heaven and will enjoy God’s presence forever. Life’s present troubles and trials will fade away. There, we will be comforted on every side, as God wipes away all of our tears.<sup>18</sup> His presence and love will bring perfect peace.

The pain, sorrow and troubles that we suffer in this lifetime are called ‘light and momentary afflictions’ which are preparing us for the glory which awaits us in eternity. “**For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.**” (2 Corinthians 4:17)

So let us not despair if our lives are not perfect; if we see sinners that seem to prosper in their ways while we struggle and sweat.

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Kings 9:30

<sup>17</sup> 2 Kings 2:11

<sup>18</sup> Revelation 21:4

One day God will show us His glory; and we will be forever safe with Him. So let us put on the full armor of God, that we may be able to stand firm – until that final day. <sup>19</sup>Amen.

### Ki Tisa Study Questions

1. What is the spiritual relationship, as shown in the Hebrew, between art and faith?
2. Do you consider yourself a ‘blocked creative’? Is there something creative that you have been longing to do but never give it the time and space required? Discuss how you can give more room for creative expression in your life.
3. Do you enjoy a day of rest on the seventh day of the week? Do you feel that your ‘works’ (even for the Lord) come out of a place of peace and rest? Or strife and struggle?
4. What scriptural evidence could you give to support the idea that even non-Jewish followers of Yeshua should keep the Sabbath on the seventh day?
5. Are there times when you give in to pressure that compromises your integrity (like Aaron)? Do you have issues with being a ‘people pleaser’? Discuss
6. Why do you think the people so quickly fell into idolatry? Do you find yourself looking for something (or someone) visible to worship rather than the invisible God?
7. When you see someone who has fallen into gross sin, is your tendency to judge them or to intercede for them?
8. What would you say to someone who believes in ‘Replacement Theology’?
9. Do you believe the statement: ‘Behind every good man is a great woman’? Have you seen examples of this (or the opposite)? Discuss the importance of choosing a spouse.
10. Does material or financial prosperity or power alone demonstrate that God is blessing us?
11. How can we keep our hearts from becoming envious if we are struggling while seeing sinners prosper?



## About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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