

APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

for *Ki Tisa*

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Luke 11:14-20

Acts 7:35-8:1

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

“Unveiled Hearts from Glory to Glory”

Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35), our Torah reading for this week, starts out quietly with the requirement of Israel to take a population census, with the contribution of a half-shekel. The most significant feature of *Ki Tisa* is understandably the Israelite rebellion and worship of the golden calf, as the people get impatient for Moses to return from the summit of Mount Sinai, bearing God's Law. We all know the scene far too well, as Moses returns and smashes the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and the ensuing punishment and plague which occur. However, upon receiving the heartfelt pleas of His servant Moses to not wipe out His chosen people, the Almighty gives Israel a second chance, and in so doing, personally describes His nature and enduring attributes:

“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.’** Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. He said, ‘If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.’ Then God said, ‘Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you’” (Exodus 34:1-10).

The Holy One not only gave Moses a second set of the Ten Commandments, but most importantly declared His compassion, grace, patience, lovingkindness, forgiveness, and great majesty. One of the most fascinating aspects we witness in *Ki Tisa* is that Moses maintained intimate communion with the Almighty during the whole of Israel's desert sojourn. Because he would spend a great deal of time in God's presence, the glory of God which radiated toward him continued to have an effect when Moses would interact with the Israelites, forcing him to wear a veil:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. **It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony *were* in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him.** So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his

face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 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 34:27-35).

The veil that Moses placed over his face, which kept the Israelites from seeing the glory of God that was radiating from it, can be compared to the curtain in the Tabernacle and Temple, which separated out the Holy of Holies.¹ *Human sin prohibits one from fully beholding the presence of the Creator.* The Apostle Paul makes a reference to Moses' veil in his writing to the Corinthians, in elaborating for them how it served as an object reminder of the ministry of death or condemnation that has been rendered inoperative via the work of Messiah Yeshua. With the ministry of death nullified by His sacrifice, redeemed Believers can see the glory of the Father via the supernatural power of the New Covenant enacted (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Those who have not appropriated Yeshua's sacrifice and have received forgiveness, can only be condemned by the condemnation of the Old Covenant:

"Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Messiah, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Messiah toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. **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. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*. For if that which fades away *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory. Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech, and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. **But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Messiah. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:1-18).

Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 is often read from the assumption that the Tanach Scriptures (more frequently called the Old Testament) have been removed or nullified in Messiah, when this is not what Paul says at all—especially if the promise of the New Covenant includes the Lord writing His Torah onto human hearts! We should correctly recognize, contrary to this, that being subject to either the Old Covenant or New Covenant *does not at all concern* the relevance of Holy Scripture, but instead concerns a spiritual status before God. Those who hear Moses' Teaching read as the Old Covenant, are those who have a veil lying over their hearts because they are condemned by its statutes. Contrary to this, those who hear Moses' Teaching read as the New Covenant, are those who have recognized Messiah Yeshua and have been forgiven of their sins. The Old Covenant ministry of condemnation, frequently executing capital punishment upon

¹ Peter Enns, *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 587.

Law-breakers, gives way to the New Covenant ministry of the Spirit brought forth in the gospel to those who receive Yeshua as Savior. God's Torah is in no way abolished, but is understood in light of the fulfillment Yeshua has enacted (Matthew 5:17-19ff).²

What does it mean for the veil lying over someone's heart to be removed in Yeshua? Would it not mean that Believers should be able to behold the glory of God more fully? Just as the veil in the Holy of Holies shut the people out, was it not ripped in two when Yeshua was crucified (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45)? If we are able to have access to the Most Holy Place, because barriers erected as a result of human sin have been removed—should we not be thankful? Rather than not being able to even consider looking closely at the Father, the author of Hebrews describes how we should have confidence to approach Him during our times of need:

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

For modern-day Believers who have been given a heart of flesh with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, with a veil removed from our hearts because we have been forgiven—we should be radiating the glory of God from ourselves, because just like Moses we spend time in intimate conversation with Him. The knowing that one has partaken of the grace of God via His Son should be so overwhelming **that the joy of knowing that your sin has been atoned for should be evident in your very countenance**. Born again Believers are to be conformed to the image of Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:29-30), and are to be living the holy life required because of what He has done for us:

“I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Admittedly, even though Believers have access to the presence of our Heavenly Father because of the transforming power of the gospel, being transformed into men and women who constantly radiate such a presence *is not an instantaneous process*. Paul writes, “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). Presumably, as we spend more time in the presence of the Lord—and less time in the presence of sin—the ability to radiate who He is becomes something much easier *and more delightful* to do.

Recognizing Moses' declaration of the Lord in *Ki Tisa*, it might be instructional to ask yourself if you are **consistently exhibiting His attributes**. Are you compassionate, grace-filled, patient, kind, and forgiving of all? Are you walking in the fruit of the Spirit?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Messiah Yeshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:22-26).

Paul later asked the Corinthians to test and examine themselves. He told them to make sure that Yeshua the Messiah was *in them*, unless they found out that they really did fail the self-administered tests:

“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? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test” (2 Corinthians 13:5-6).

No matter how rigorous a test you conduct, do not hide behind a veil of self-deception. *Make sure that there is no veil or barrier separating yourself from the Lord*. The ramifications for deceiving yourself could have eternal consequences. **Do not fail the test!**

Until the restoration of all things...

² For a further discussion, consult the article “What is the New Covenant?” by J.K. McKee.

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