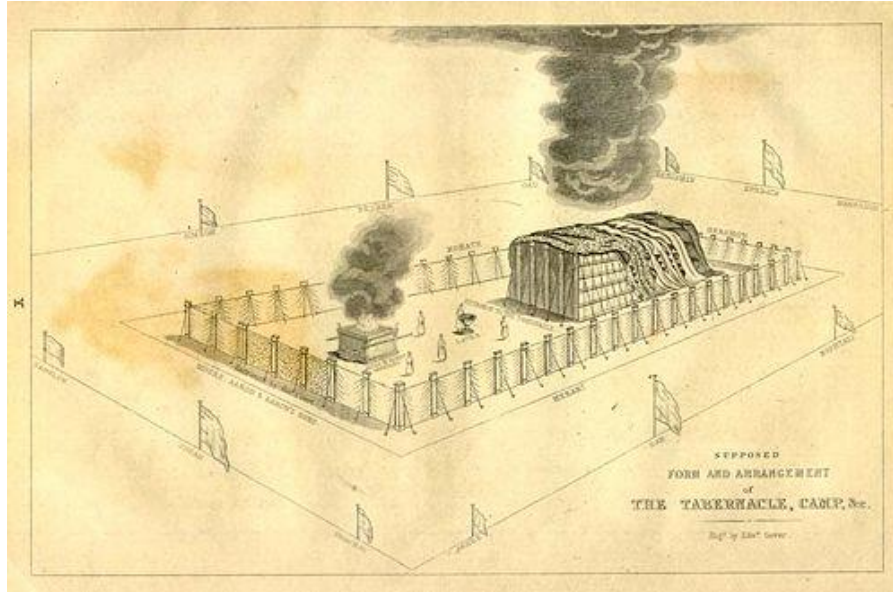


TZAV { צַו } (COMMAND!)

Leviticus 6:8 (1)¹-8:36, Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-23, Hebrews 10:19-25

A Messianic Commentary

By Hannah Neshar www.voiceforisrael.net



The Tabernacle and the Camp (19th Century drawing)

**“Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.”** (Psalm 119:35)

“The LORD said to Moses: “Command (Tzav צַו) Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the law of the burnt-offering:” (Leviticus 6:8-9)

This week’s parashah is entitled ‘Tzav’, which means ‘to order or command’. What was God instructing Moses to command Aaron and his sons? The Jewish priesthood (lineage of Aaron) was being commanded regarding the obligatory sacrifices on behalf of all the nation of Israel.



Photo: Consecration of Aaron and His Sons (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

¹ Parashat Tzav begins at verse 1 in Hebrew Bibles but verse 8 in English translations

This word, Command (Tzav!) can be used as a military term. If there's one thing that Israelis learn, it is to obey the commands of their superiors in the military. All young men and women are required to serve in the Israeli army (IDF) when they finish high school. This may be why many of the young children are often allowed to have more freedom and independence than we are accustomed to (as Canadians) – parents are assured that the army is going to straighten them out all too quickly once they grow up! ☺



Israeli soldiers on a day off at a water park in Tel Aviv

The IDF is a highly organized and courageous group of young men and women, trained to obey commands, even at the risk of their own lives to defend this tiny nation.

This obedience was demonstrated in a tragic way during the removal of Israeli settlers from Gaza (which began August 17th 2005). Even with tears streaming down their faces and sorrow filling their eyes, these young Israeli soldiers, men and women, obeyed the commands given them to remove (by force if necessary) their own people from the land that God has given us by Divine Covenant. They didn't want to do it – but most of the Israeli soldiers obeyed the command of their superiors.²



Female IDF soldiers

And yet, although in some ways Israelis are trained to be highly obedient; there is at the same time a real sense of looseness with regards to rules and regulations. There is a joke about how you can tell who the Israelis are on your airplane when flying. When the stewardess gives the announcement that the aircraft is on its final descent and will be landing shortly, asking that

² Some IDF soldiers did choose to disobey orders and refused to remove fellow Israelis from their homes in Gaza and were severely disciplined for their protest.

everyone stay seated until the aircraft comes to a full stop – the Israelis are the ones standing up, pulling their luggage out of the overhead compartment. ☺ (Did I mention that Israelis are also usually in a hurry?)

Here's a real example we observed of Israeli '*chutzpah*' (nerve) with regards to obeying the commands of authorities. During Passover break, I took the kids skating. Well, we Canadians may not even consider it '*real skating*' but yes, the innovative Israelis lowered the temperatures in a make-shift tent, put down some sort of frozen material, rented out skates for 40 shekels per half hour and let the inexperienced skaters have fun.

But when the end of the half hour was over, the guard blew his whistle and everyone was supposed to get off and make way for the next shift of would-be skaters. I really had to laugh at the shenanigans going on while trying to get everyone off the ice. There always seemed to be those who simply refused to obey! They skated over and around and under and any which way but off the ice, to the frustration of the security guards. I witnessed one guard actually chase a girl down and drag her bodily off the ice! Incredible! ☺



Liat & Avi go skating at 'City of Ice' Jerusalem

OBEDIENCE – IN THE SPIRIT

We might laugh at this; but seriously, there's something in each one of us that just doesn't want to obey –right? At least until we receive a new heart and a new spirit – which causes us to desire, in our innermost being, to walk in obedience - in a way that pleases the Lord.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. ...I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them.”
(Ezekiel 36:26-27)

It takes the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) to cause us to be obedient; because really, we just cannot obey God in the flesh, can we? Like Paul, we can say that we know that the Torah is holy and the commandments are holy and good and just, and that our ‘inward man’ delights in the Torah of God.

But oye...there is another Torah within us which wars against the Spirit and this is our carnal nature. (Romans 7:12, 22-23) **“The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law (Torah) of God, nor indeed can be...”** (Romans 8:7)

Really, honestly, I want to be obedient. Truly I do, but....

After having the kids all home over Purim for several days, my patience was already wearing thin. Added to this was a whole comedy of errors that resulted in us going skating at 7:00 P.M. Besides the fact that the next day was school and kids would need to wake up early, something was already telling me that this was not one of my better ideas. We ended up getting lost and stuck in the middle of Mea Shearim, which, if any of you don’t know, is the most religious neighborhood in all of Jerusalem. This is where they have been known to stone people for wearing what they consider ‘immodest dress’.



‘Modesty Sign’ in Mea Shearim religious neighborhood of Jerusalem)

Not only are the streets narrow; but they were completely filled this night with Purim partiers - and the Orthodox religious Jews really believe in partying it up in the fullest sense of the word on Purim.

So there we were, stuck up to our bumpers with religious men, women, and children dressed in costume.... Finally making it to the skating rink, we went to the ticket booth to cough up the 40 shekels each for half an hour, only to find out that there were no tickets available until a much later time (advance tickets are the best idea – now I find out!)

So I had two very disappointed kids on my hands, but Timothy was able to skate since his youth group had wisely bought the advance tickets. Smart. After sitting waiting for him to finish, we drove home, only to discover that the last night of Purim is NOT a good time to be driving.

We got stuck in traffic backed up all the way to Mevasseret Tzion, which made it a very late night for kids that have to be up with the rooster to get to school on time in the morning.

It was then that I lost it. I really had an emotional meltdown: “*Great woman of faith and self control*” that I am, “*full of the Spirit, powerful example of trusting God in every circumstance*”, (ya, right...). I ranted and raved and cried like a baby all the way home. For this I repented before God, before my children, and now even before you! This is what happens when we don’t listen to that still, small voice of the Spirit of Elohim.

Thank God for His mercy and love that covers a multitude of sins³... But the point is, I was doubly disobedient. First of all, the Holy Spirit was trying to prevent me, in every which way, from going this night. And secondly, when I overrode this voice and stubbornly went my own way, I disobeyed the warning I had received in the morning to avoid giving in to my flesh and stay walking in the Spirit. Double Oye. Perhaps, by the grace of God, you can benefit from my mistakes.

Obedience Rather than Sacrifice

This Parashah is all about obedience and the futility of all our sacrifices if given with guilty hands. God cares a lot about our conduct in everyday life. He cares about how we treat people – especially the poor and needy – the defenseless and broken.

God cares about what is going on at home behind closed doors more than our performing our ‘religious duties’ at church or congregation. Proverbs 21:3 says **“To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”**

It remains a central teaching of the whole Torah that God desires obedience and a right heart rather than empty compliance to the sacrificial system. So what is the answer to the longing of our hearts to be obedient and pleasing to God? Wrong question. We should ask, “*WHO is the answer?*” His name is Yeshua. The writer of the book of Hebrews, written primarily to Jews who were either new or struggling in their faith in Yeshua, encourages all of us to know that God’s grace is sufficient for us in the Messiah. He is not looking for perfection in us; but only a heart that seeks to do His will.

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body prepared for me, with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, “Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do Your will, O God.” (Hebrews 10:5, Psalm 40:6-8)

Yeshua came to do the will of God, as is written in the Holy Scrolls, to open up a new and living way through his own flesh, that we may gain free access to God.

“Therefore, brothers (and sisters) since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain; that is,

³ 1 Peter 4:8

His body, and since we have a Cohen Hagadol⁴ over the House of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.” (Hebrews 10:19-22a)

Yeshua gave his body on the cross for us in a sacrifice that is completely and wholly acceptable to God. As we sing, *“I’m forgiven, because He was forsaken; I’m accepted; He was condemned. I’m alive again, His Spirit dwells within me, because He died and rose again. Amazing love....”*⁵ It all comes back to this one thing, doesn’t it? – God’s amazing love in Messiah Yeshua who died for our sins.

Torah of the Burnt Offering

The burnt offerings, blood sacrifices of innocent animals, served to impress upon the sinner the seriousness of their sins before a holy God.

Parashat Tzav opens with the **‘Torah of the burnt offering’** (Leviticus 6:9).

The word, Torah, translated ‘law’ in English, actually means *‘direction or instruction’*. The sacrifices described in Chapter 1 (Vayikra), are free will offerings of an individual; whereas here in chapter 6, the burnt offerings are the continual sacrifices brought every morning and evening in the name of the entire community of Israel. Therefore, they are called the *‘tamid’* (which means ‘always’) – it is the ‘perpetual offering’.



“Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually; it shall not go out.” (Leviticus 6:13)

The prohibition from kindling a fire on the Sabbath⁶ did not apply to the Sanctuary. The fire was to be kept burning all through the night and day to represent the eternal flame of God who is called a ‘consuming fire’ (Deuteronomy 4:24)

As priests of the Lord, we are also to keep a fiery enthusiasm burning in our hearts for the things of God. It is natural that there are times when the fire burns down to a lower level, but we must never let the fire totally go out, lest all our spiritual activity becomes routine and lacking in zeal. May His fire never go out in our hearts but burn ever brighter – until the world knows that Yeshua is Adonai!

⁴ High priest

⁵ Amazing Love (You are my King) Hillsong, recorded by Chris Tomlin

⁶ Exodus 35:3

Suffering Outside the Camp

Interestingly, the Cohanim (priests) were instructed to carry forth the ashes of the burnt offerings outside the camp. Yeshua also gave himself as an offering, burned in the fire of God's wrath and judgment, outside the gates of the camp.

“The Cohen Hagadol carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Yeshua also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.” (Hebrews 13:11-12)

Just as ‘whoever touched the offerings of fire would be made holy’, so too are we made holy through being touched by Yeshua's blood. Although we may be required to go ‘outside the camp to Yeshua’ and be considered unclean, we are in God's sight made holy as He is holy.

“Let us, then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore.” (Hebrews 13:13)

As followers of Yeshua, we are sometimes called upon to voluntarily ‘leave the camp’ – to be willing to bear the disgrace that sometimes accompanies declaring our faith in Him. I personally know of Messianic Believers who have been forced out of their apartments, lost their jobs, had their children ridiculed at school or worse, beaten...and had their pictures posted all over the community, like the old ‘wanted posters’, for the supposed crime of being a hated ‘Christian missionary’. We may be rejected by men, but we are deeply accepted by God.

Accepted in the Beloved

There is something within us that deeply longs to belong and to be accepted – to be part of the ‘*in group*’. I remember very little of my childhood; but this one memory sticks with me. It was an instance in elementary school, a private Hebrew school called Talmud Torah, where I so wanted to fit in with the other kids but somehow just seemed ‘*different*’. A ‘clique’ of the ‘popular’ kids sat in a group, talking about something and I sat just beyond, listening intently.

Suddenly, one boy turned to me with a scowl on his face and said, “*Go away. You are not a part of our group!*” The pain of childhood rejection can cut deeply into the heart and soul of a sensitive child. Many people are so love-starved they would do anything to feel like they are an accepted member of a group. This is how gangs and cults flourish.

Some Gentile Messianic Believers long so deeply to be accepted by the Jewish community, that they compromise their faith in Yeshua to a dangerous degree. Through this desperate search for acceptance by the traditional Jewish community, and in the context of unhealed wounds of rejection, many have been unwilling to ‘go outside the camp’ and suffer Yeshua's disgrace along with him. Instead, they may hide their faith, staying within the ‘gates of the camp’, joining synagogues that hate Yeshua, and sometimes even trading their very precious eternal salvation

for a morsel of ‘semi-acceptance’.⁷ May God so fill us with the deep knowledge that we are ‘accepted in the Beloved’ that we will be willing to suffer outside the camp and ‘stand alone’ in the Truth if need be.

Thank Offerings – The Sacrifice of Praise

God is so good, merciful and faithful; He has done so much for us. There are times when all we can do is stand in awe and say, ‘Thank you’. Sacrifices of ‘peace-offerings’ were presented for thanksgiving, which is regarded by the Rabbis are a supreme type of sacrifice. It is believed, according to Rabbinic tradition, that in the Messianic Era, all sacrifices will have completed their educational mission – all except the one duty of gratitude. This sacrifice of thanksgiving is to remain and continue forever.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Church New Orleans

This is, perhaps, the greatest sacrifice of all – to offer up our thanksgiving and praise to God – especially when things don’t seem to be going our way and our flesh doesn’t feel like singing praise. **“Through Yeshua, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.”** (Hebrews 13:15)

Gratitude is so important! No, I believe it is much more than this – becoming a truly thankful person can be life-transforming! John Henry Jowett, Presbyterian Preacher and author (1864-1923) wrote, *“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic.”*

We need to begin to notice all the good things that God does for us each day, bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits! We can be thankful for our health, for our pets, for running water and an indoor toilet, for the rain, for the beautiful flowers and all of God’s creations.... The list is endless.

We need to remember to say ‘thank you’ to people for all things they do for us and to express how thankful we are that they are in our life. I am so thankful for you – my ‘chaverim’ (friends) and ministry partners - people who love God, the Jewish people, and Israel; who are determined to stand faithfully with us even unto the end.

⁷ See article, Falling Away, www.voiceforisrael.net/articles

We can either complain (kvetch) or we can praise and give thanks. When the Israelites complained in the wilderness, God allowed venomous snakes to bite them and many people died. Complaining opens the door to the enemy and leads to death – spiritually if not physically. Offering up the sacrifice of praise gives God glory! **“Whoever offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice (zevach todah) honors Me;”** (Psalm 50:23)



Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 – 1945), Lutheran Pastor who was killed by the Nazis in WWII for his stand for the Jews, wrote, *“In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”* It has been said that Albert Einstein practiced giving thanks a hundred times a day!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1930

So great is the peace offering of thanksgiving that when King David brought the ark of God back to its place in the tabernacle, the first thing he did was to offer burnt offerings and the peace offerings.⁸

He then appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the Lord God of Israel with stringed instruments, with harps, and even with cymbals; and they blew the shofar (ram’s horn) regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. *Photo: Timothy as a young boy blowing the shofar at the Kotel, Jerusalem*



“Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him, talk of all His wondrous works!” (1Chronicles 16:1-9)

I think we just need to talk about God more; talk to people in our everyday lives about all the wondrous things He has done for us! When God is so good to us, we shouldn’t keep it to ourselves. That’s why I just love giving my testimony to people. God has been so good to us – why shouldn’t we boast about His goodness just a bit more? People can argue with our theology and doctrines but no one can refute our personal experience.

I’ve been keeping a ‘Gratitude Journal’ for years in which the first thing I do each morning or the last thing at night, I record in this hard cover beautiful book all the wonderful things God has

⁸ 2 Samuel 6

done for me each and every day. Sometimes I just open up the gratitude journal in the morning to a blank page and leave it open with the expectation before the Lord that I will soon have something wonderful to write. “His goodness and mercy shall surely follow me all the days of my life.” (Psalm 23:6)

We can suffer from spiritual amnesia. God does something so great and I think, “*Oh, God, thank You, thank You! You have answered my desperate prayer. I will never doubt you again, never doubt Your love and goodness, never become weak in my faith or let my fervency for You decrease...*”

And yet the next time a crisis comes, I may find myself in the pit of despair once again. This gratitude journal helps me to remember all the great things God has done for me and I am comforted and strengthened. This is what the Psalmist said when God heard and answered his desperate plea for help,

“I will go into Your house with burnt offerings, ... Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul; I cried to Him with my mouth...But certainly God has heard me....

He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.” (Psalm 66:13-17, 19-20)

Even unto eternity, we will be singing with the angels, ‘Give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures forever.’ “Hodu l’Adonai Ki tov; Ki l’olam chasdoh.” (Psalm 107:1)



Consecrated Unto the Lord

“Moses took the blood of sacrifice and put it upon the tip of Aaron’s right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.” (Leviticus 8:23-24) And the same was done with Aaron’s sons. Symbolically, this represented the consecration of the whole body.

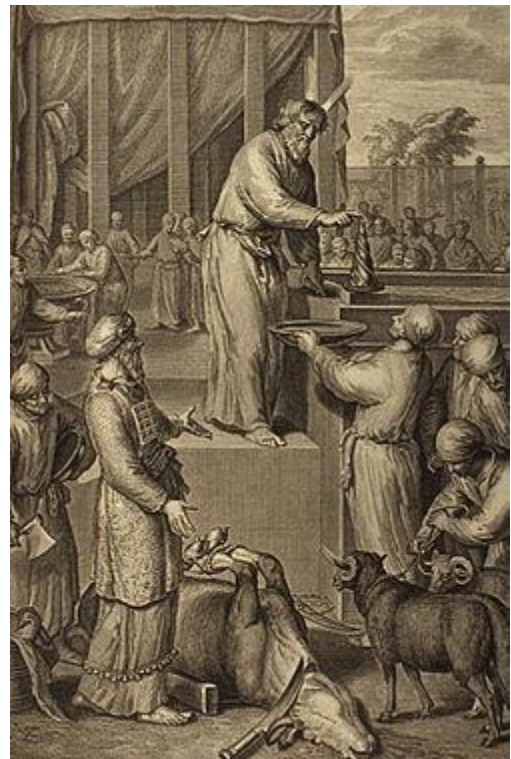


Moses Put the Blood on Aaron's Right Ear (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Sweet Publishing)

As priests and Levites unto the Lord we must also have consecrated ears to be ever attentive to the voice of God (My sheep hear My voice....); consecrated hands to at all times do His will and the good works He has pre-appointed for us to perform (being fruitful in every good work...); and consecrated feet to walk forever in His holy ways (The steps of the righteous are ordered by the Lord..). Amen v’ Amen.

Let us, even right now, consecrate ourselves anew to the Lord, as Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons to serve the Lord with joy and gladness. We are exhorted, as disciples of Yeshua, to be ‘living sacrifices’ – our whole life should be a willing sacrifice unto the Lord.

“ I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God’s mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical “Temple worship” for you.” (Romans 12:1 CJB)



Moses Consecrates Aaron and His Sons and Offers Their Sin Offering (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Biblical Dietary Laws - Kashrut

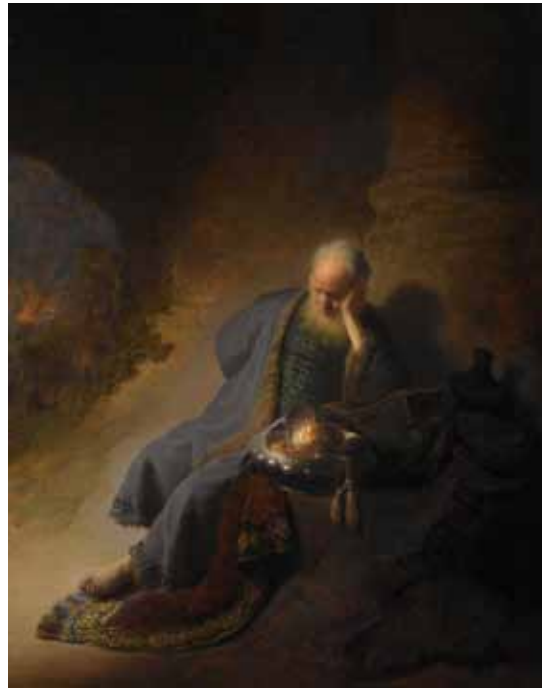
This parashah, Tzav, also introduces us to the Biblical dietary laws, called ‘kashrut’. These commandments are not strictly about health, but rather about obedience. The Rambam, in his Guide to the Perplexed, on dietary laws said, “*They train us to master our appetites and not consider eating and drinking the end of man’s existence.*”⁹

⁹ For a full study on this topic see Hannah’s book, Kashrut, Biblical Dietary Laws, available through website: www.voiceforisrael.net

The basic rules of kashrut are that a kosher animal is one that has split hooves and chews its cud. A kosher fish has both fins and scales. This rules out pork and shellfish as being unfit for consumption by 'holy people'. The restrictions on our diet is only one way in which God disciplines us into becoming a 'goy kadosh' (holy nation). Rebellion against God's dietary laws goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Chava (Eve) ate the one fruit that God said was forbidden. Many of God's people are committing the same sin today in eating those foods that God has said in His Word are abominable and not to be eaten. God is the same today, yesterday and forever. He has not given us His word on this subject and then changed His mind.

The Haftorah (Prophetic) portion of Tzav proclaims, through Jeremiah, the uselessness of worship when combined with unholiness and unrighteousness. Jeremiah spoke to the people gathered in the Temple area in 608 B.C.E., denouncing their mechanical performance of acts of worship.

Yeshua brought this same rebuke against the religious Jews of his day by quoting the prophet Isaiah, **“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”** (Matthew 15:8-9; Isaiah 29:11)



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (1630 painting by Rembrandt)

Are we honoring God with our lips, speaking super spiritual lingo, singing the right songs, while our heart is cold and far from God? The people of Israel held an almost superstitious belief that Temple rituals would guarantee their spiritual security, even while being divorced from God's moral laws regarding justice and righteousness.

I remember clearly a Jewish businessman, owner of a busy local restaurant, who had terminal cancer of the brain (who has since passed away). He joined my family for a few minutes at our table, and said that he would see my parents at the synagogue on Shabbat, since he hoped to score a few more *'brownie points with God'*.

We can be the same way, trying to *'buy God's favor'* by putting in our time at Church or congregation. Worshipping God is so much more than punching in and out of the time clock at church; it is much greater than a song; God wants to be the center of our lives, our beginning and

our end, our guide even unto death and beyond; not letting anything come between us and Him, and not depending on religious ritual to justify or save us.

Jeremiah's predictions of national disaster only served to infuriate both the priests and the people who didn't want to listen to a message of repentance. Today, national disasters are on the increase, as Yeshua predicted would happen before the end. We just witnessed a devastating tsunami that hit Japan, causing terrible loss of life and property damage.

In 2006, I visited Japan and loved the country. My son, after all, is half Japanese; but the population of Japanese Believers is minute. Abortion is rampant in Japan. When I became pregnant in 1992, the family in Japan continually pressured me for an abortion, even offering to fly me to Tokyo for a free abortion up to the end of the ninth month.

Today, as in Jeremiah's day, many people only wanted their 'ears tickled'. They don't want to hear a message that warns people to REPENT! For the Kingdom of Heaven is near!

Have you ever tried to bring correction to a child, maybe even a teenager, and you know what you are telling them is for their good, for life and blessing, but they will not receive it and even hate you for it? I hope I'm not the only one who has experienced this parental frustration. Thankfully this doesn't happen often, but when it does, don't you just want to 'shake some sense into them'?!?"

This can apply to anyone – a spouse, a friend about to do something disastrous like going for an abortion. Haman's wife tried to tell him that if Mordechai is of Jewish descent, then he will never prevail against him, but he wouldn't listen.¹⁰

King Solomon said it well, “**Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.**” (Proverbs 23:9)

We really need to have the humility to listen when a person with wisdom from above is trying, for our own good, to bring correction. We are not to withhold correction from our children, for in using the rod of correction, we can actually deliver his soul from hell (She'ol).¹¹

Who loves his child more – the parent who allows the child to do what he or she wants even if it will harm him or her? Or the one who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help them learn right from wrong. God will also discipline us as a good Father because He loves us. Therefore let us not lose heart or become discouraged when He rebukes or disciplines us, His

¹⁰ Esther 6:13

¹¹ Proverbs 23:15

children. (Hebrews 12:5 & 6) Let's pray right now for each of our children, that they will be wise children who are willing to receive godly correction; in whom we delight and rejoice.¹²

God wanted obedience rather than sacrifice but the people of Israel would not take it to heart. **“Hearken unto My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.**

“But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels even in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.” (Jeremiah 7:23-24).

If we want to make progress in our spiritual journey, to move forward, and not backward, then we simply need to listen to God and obey His word. I think that one of the greatest lies being promoted in our day is that we should *‘follow our hearts’*. Because as Jeremiah has stated as truth, the heart can be wickedly deceitful¹³; therefore, we dare not let be led by our emotions or feelings. We must set the word of God as ‘True North’ for our lives and hearken to the voice of our God.

Yeshua ended the old covenant sacrificial system; He fulfilled the Torah with His own blood – but He absolutely did not do away with God's Moral Law. Our righteousness is even to exceed that of the Pharisees and scribes! (See Matthew 5:17-20)

Whereas the Torah simply states, Thou shalt not murder, Yeshua taught us that even if we hate someone in our heart we have, in essence, committed the sin of murder.¹⁴ And the Torah says Thou shalt not commit adultery, but Yeshua taught us that if we lust after someone in our heart, we are guilty of the sin of adultery.¹⁵ Under the New Covenant, it is our inner person, what is in our mind and heart that God wants to deal with, not just an outward compliance with ritual.

We need not become discouraged when we fall (perhaps again and again) into the same sins or be surprised, ashamed and shocked when we see the same faults and weaknesses surfacing time and time again either in ourselves or others. We need to be tenderhearted and forgive freely, over and over again, just as God in Messiah has repeatedly forgiven us.

It is a paradox that while we have been made perfect (whole, complete) through the blood of Yeshua, and are justified and sanctified freely through His sacrifice; yet we are in the process of being ‘made holy’ (kadosh) as God is holy (kadosh).

¹² Proverbs 23:14

¹³ Jeremiah 17:9

¹⁴ Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:22a

¹⁵ Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:28

We do not need to be down on ourselves or reject ourselves for not being perfect, knowing we are a ‘work in progress’ on the Master Potter’s wheel. At the same point, rather than trying in vain to cover them up or hide our sins from an all-knowing, all-seeing God, we need to admit our sins, confess and renounce them.

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

We can remember that God is faithful and just that when we confess our sins to Him, He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Our Abba will receive us warmly, put a white robe back on our shoulders, and throw a party!

The Spirit of the Torah

The Prophet Jeremiah warned the people that even the highest of offerings is less important in God’s eyes than our personal every- day conduct. Heaven judges, not so much by the letter of the Torah (law), but by the spirit.

“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you.’ ” (Jeremiah 7:21-23)

What was God saying to His people here? He said, *“If you’re going to offer me sacrifices and burnt offerings, you might as well eat the meat yourselves because it is worthless and detestable to Me because of your disobedience!”*

When God appeared to them on Mount Sinai, He did not come with instructions about sacrifices and offerings, but with the Ten Commandments on stone tablets that teach us how to conduct ourselves towards God and in relationship with one another.

“Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders [his] conduct [aright] I will show the salvation of God.” (Psalm 50:23)



Noah's Sacrifice (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Sweet Publishing)

In the original Hebrew, the word translated here as ‘conduct’ is actually **derech**, which means ‘way’. Instead of obeying God’s commands, Israel followed their own stubborn ways.

“But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward.” (Jeremiah 7:24)

We also have a choice – to either ‘follow our hearts’, as we are so often told to do in our modern day culture – or to obey God. Oftentimes, foremost in our mind is our own personal happiness but God is more concerned with our obedience, which leads to strength of character and holiness.

Following the stubborn inclinations of our own stubborn hearts takes us backwards and not forwards in God. We sometimes find an emphasis in the Old Testament on ‘law and obedience’; and a greater focus on the grace and mercy of God in the New Covenant; however even here, our obedience matters!

What is our demonstration of love for God? It is to keep His commands: **“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”** (1 John 5:3) Yeshua the Messiah said, **“If you love me, keep my commands.”** (John 14:15)

Originally, the disciples of Yeshua were called ‘*People of the Way (derech)*’, from His word, **“I am the way, the truth and the life.”** (John 14:6) When we follow Yeshua, He shows us the way in which we should go.

What, specifically, were the people of Israel doing that so offended God? They were following the detestable practice of the pagan nations to burn their children in the fire as sacrifices to false gods. **“They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.”** (Jeremiah 7:31)

For this terrible sin, God vowed to punish the people of Israel by banishing them into exile and to cause the Land to become desolate.

“I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate.” (Jeremiah 7:34)

Although this prophecy of doom did come to pass for the Jewish people, Jeremiah is often called the Prophet of Hope because even with all that came upon his people, he never completely lost hope in the mercy and lovingkindness of God.

The re-birth of the modern nation of Israel, the return of the exiles and the agricultural revival of the land itself, is proof positive that our God is loving and merciful.

“Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

I want to end with this scripture from the end of the book of Hebrews which sums it all up beautifully,

“May the God of peace (shalom), who through the blood of the eternal covenant (brit olam) brought back from the dead our Lord Yeshua, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us whatever is pleasing to Him, through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13: 20-21)

Tzav Study Questions

1. Did you find yourself desiring to be obedient to God and His Word after you came to faith in Yeshua? What struggles do you have with obedience? Discuss.
2. How can we keep the ‘fire burning’ continually in our hearts for the Lord? What do you do when you feel your heart’s fire for the Lord starting to diminish? Share.
3. Do you sometimes find it difficult to be open about your faith in Yeshua when it means rejection or ‘suffering outside the camp’? Do you feel accepted by God?
4. How easy is it for you in your present circumstances to offer up the ‘sacrifices of thanksgiving’? Are you overcoming the tendency to ‘kvetch’?
5. What does it symbolize that Moses put the blood on Aaron’s right ear, right thumb and right toe? Do you desire to be consecrated more fully unto the Lord?
6. What is your view on the dietary laws of ‘kashrut’? Do you follow the Biblical guidelines? Why or why not. Discuss common objections to keep kashrut and answers.
7. Can you accept being a ‘work in progress’ while still striving for obedience?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshet 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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