

3-11-23 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Ki Tisa* – when you elevate
Torah Portion: Exodus 30:11 – 34:35
Haftarah: 1Kings 18:1-39
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Col 2:13-15

Convergence and Confluence

Central question of this message: Do you see many important theological concepts of the gospel coming together?

Today we are in parasha *Ki Tisa*. The name comes from the first two words of the second verse of the parasha, which is “When you lift (or bring forth) the number of the sons of Israel, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the L-rd,”

Ex 30:11-13

11 The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them. 13 This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the Lord.

¹¹ וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־ מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:						
And spake	the Lord	unto	Moses,	saying,		
1696	3068	413	4872	559		
¹² כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־ רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־ יִשְׂרָאֵל ³ לִפְקֹדֵיהֶם						
When	thou takest	the sum of	the children of	Israel	after their number,	
3588	5375	7218	1121	3478	6485	
וְנָתַנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַיהוָה בְּפָקֶד						
then shall they give	every man	a ransom for	his soul	unto the Lord,	when thou numberest	
5414	376	3724	5315	3068	6485	
אֹתָם וְלֹא־ יִהְיֶה בָּהֶם נֶגֶף בְּפָקֶד אֹתָם:						
that no	there be	among them,	plague	when thou numberest	them.	
3808	1961	871a	5063	6485	853	
¹³ זֶה יִתְּנוּ יִתְּנוּ כָּל־ הָעֹבֵר עַל־ הַפְּקֹדִים מִחֲצִית						
This	they shall give,	every one	that passeth	among	them that are numbered,	half
2088	5414	3605	5674	5921	6485	4276
הַשֶּׁקֶל הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ עֶשְׂרִים גֶּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל מִחֲצִית						
a shekel	after the shekel of	the sanctuary:	is	twenty	gerahs:)	an half
8255	8255	6944	9999	6242	1626	4276
הַשֶּׁקֶל תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה:						
shekel	shall be	the offering	of the Lord.			
8255	9999	8641	3068			

There are very many important theological convergences in this passage, and I wish to briefly touch on a few of them. Then at the end I will show how they come together.

Picture in your mind the light of the sun shining everywhere, but then we take a magnifying glass and take that wide-spread light and focus it on a single

spot. When we do that, the light of the sun becomes concentrated and burns that which it touches.

In this passage, G-d takes His holy magnifying glass, and puts together a number of concepts which then focus to a single point of holiness. This concentrated holiness does not burn, but it shines more brightly with His plan of salvation for those who belong to Him.

Half Shekel Tax. Let's begin with the half-shekel annual tax. This annual tax was dedicated for the maintenance of the Mishkan, and later the Temple. This was not for the sustenance of the priests, for their support is to come from tithes and offerings.

The important concept here is that the atonement price is the same for all of us, regardless of our job, our level of holiness, or our level of personal wealth. Your soul, placed in G-d's scales, weighs precisely the same as that of every other person.

How much, in today's dollars would that atonement tax be? We can calculate it today.

In ancient civilizations, weights were reckoned using readily-available things of fairly uniform size which could be placed upon scales to measure weight.

Grains of wheat or barley were used by Mediterranean traders to measure different weights of other commodities. Interestingly, the seed of the carob tree which is common along the Jordan River, is the definition of a carat, used to define the weight of diamonds today.

Maimonides wrote in *Laws of Shekalim* (1:5) that this annual tithe amounted to 160 grains of barley in weight.

A single grain of barley weighs 0.00228568 ounces. 160 times that weight comes to 0.366 ounces.

The current value of silver on the spot market in dollars as of last Thursday is \$20.10 per ounce. $\$20.10 \times 0.366 = \$7.36$. This is then today's value of the annual Temple tax to be paid in US dollars.

Bible scholars will notice that the repeated use of the word “ransom” and “atonement” in this short passage is troubling. There isn't even a mention of a sin which is to be atoned for. And beyond that, isn't there a passage in Hebrews which says that atonement comes by the shedding of blood? Let's look at that passage. The author of Hebrews discusses the Mishkhan and how it was inaugurated by the sprinkling of blood, then he says,

Heb 9:22

22 And according to the Law, almost all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The translators in the NAS actually added some words to this passage, which you will see in italics, which they believed helped the reader understand it better. However, I believe that those added words changed the meaning. So, I have omitted those added words to restore the meaning.

Not “all things”, it seems, are cleansed with blood. Possibly what the author was thinking about as an exception was the half-shekel atonement found in this passage.

Further, the passage actually *does* contemplate that sin has occurred which requires the *kaper* – the covering – of the half-shekel atonement. We find the description of that sin in a nuance of the Hebrew which the English translation obscures, by its translational choice.

The Hebrew word *tisa*, which is universally translated as “take a census”, “lift” or “bring forth” can *also* be pointed as *tisha*, and translated as “lead astray”, “delude”, or “seduce”. How you translate that one word depends entirely on how you pronounce that word.

The pointing system, guiding the pronunciation of Hebrew, was established by the Masoretes, long after Yeshua's sacrifice, and we know that the anti-messianic Masoretes pointed certain phrases in Tanach which changed the pronunciations of many words. That one act served to obscure, if not completely remove, messianic references and prophecies. So, I cannot trust them in every respect.

There are actually several words in this passage that can have alternative translations, and in the interests of time I won't go into them, but suffice it to say that this passage, when freed of the Masoretic pointing, can have a very different meaning.

With only a few changes in how the Hebrew words are pronounced, the passage can easily be read to say,

“When you lead astray the heads of the sons of Israel, in the authority of your leadership over them, then every man among them shall give a ransom, an atonement covering, for his soul unto the L-rd, in your charge over them, so that there shall not be in them a plague when you lead them astray.”

This instruction seems to be well-placed at this point of the Torah, because what we see just a little later on is the sin of the golden calf. But at the time of this great sin, there was a great intercession as well.

Intercession with G-d Averts the Harsh Decree. We see what was happening down in the camp, but as the passage continues, we see an entirely different scene unfolding on the mountain.

Ex 32:7-14

7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" 9 The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

11 Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

The important thing we see from this is that when there is an intercessor, offering up a sincere petition, G-d will change His mind on calamity and judgment.

We saw some intercession occurring with Abraham as he bargained with G-d for the lives of the people of a single evil city, Sodom. Genesis 18:22-33. Here, Moses is interceding for the lives of millions of people at the foot of the mountain, he is asking to provide redemption for an entire people group.

The Golden Calf. Here we have recorded a grievous national sin against G-d, for which there will be consequences for our people until the end of this age.

Ex 32:1-6

32 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 And Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." 6 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.

We recall that Moses was on the mountain all this time. But when Moses saw what was going on, he threw down the tablets G-d had created, and broke them to pieces.

Then Moses confronted Aaron.

Ex 32:21-24

21 Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?" 22 And Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. [it's all their fault!] 23 For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 24 "And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

In the first account, Aaron fashioned it with an engraver's tool a *heret*, and the *egel masecha* (molten calf) was formed.

In the second account, Aaron simply gathered the gold, put it into either a napkin (or a fire, depending on what translation you choose), and ... poof... out popped this animated golden calf – surprising him greatly.

Clearly, both accounts cannot be correct. Either Aaron fashioned the calf himself... or he did not.

Can we blame this entire debacle on Aaron? Our sages say, “No.” And they use rejection of Masoretic pointing to make their point.

In the Talmud (Shabbat 89a), Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:

Why is it written, 'And when the people saw that Moshe delayed [boshesh] [to come down from the mount]? Read not boshesh [delayed] but ba'u shesh [the sixth hour had come]. When Moshe ascended on high, he said to Israel, 'I will return at the end of forty days, at the beginning of the sixth hour.' At the end of forty days Satan came and confounded the world. Said he to them: 'Where is your teacher Moshe?' 'He has ascended on high,' they answered him. 'The sixth [hour] has come,' said he to them, but they disregarded him. 'He is dead,' but they disregarded him. [Thereupon] he showed them a vision of his bier [place of Moses'

dead body], and this is why they said to Aharon, 'for this Moshe, the man, etc.'

According to this interpretation, Moses delayed on the mountain, missed his appointment with the people, and they lost heart. His failure to be true to his word, and return to the people when he said, gave Satan an opportunity to take the people in an evil direction.

This assignment of joint responsibility to Moses, Aaron, and the people seems to support my suggested alternative interpretation of the first passage.

Given this interpretation, it seems that *everyone* was in sin, and *everyone* in the camp would need to pay a half-shekel as atonement – *including* Moses.

And every generation after that would annually do the same, as a memorial of that great sin. We are supposed to remember this event, and not do likewise.

But that was not the end. There was to be punishment for this sin. That punishment, according to Rashi would be two-fold.

The first punishment was after the division of Israel into “those who for G-d”, and those who did not come forward in answer to that call. The first

punishment was the slaying of 3,000 who were not publicly standing with G-d. A second part of that first punishment is that G-d will also erase the names of those who rebelled against Him from His book. Ex 32:25-35.

The Malak Adonai. The second punishment, is that no longer will G-d go with them personally, but would send “His angel” before us from that point forward.

Ex 32:34-35

34 "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." 35 Then the Lord smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

וְעַתָּה	לֵךְ	נְתַה	אַתָּה	הָעָם	אֶל	אֲשֶׁר־	34
Therefore now	go,	lead		the people	unto	which	
6258	1980	5148	853	5971	413	834	
וְדִבַּרְתִּי	לָךְ	הִנֵּה	מֵאֲכִי	יֵלֵךְ	לִפְנֶיךָ	וּבַיּוֹם	
I have spoken	unto thee:	behold,	mine Angel	shall go	before thee:	nevertheless in the day	
1696	3807a	2009	4397	3212	6440	3117	
פְּקֹדִי	וּפְקֹדֹתִי	עֲלֵיהֶם	חַטָּאתָם:				
when I visit	I will visit	upon them.	their sin				
6485	6485	5921	2403				
וַיִּגַּף	יְהוָה	אַתָּה	הָעָם	עַל אֲשֶׁר	עָשׂוּ	אֹתָהּ	35
And plagued	the Lord		the people,	because	they made	the calf,	
5062	3068	853	5971	834 5921	6213	5695	
אֲשֶׁר	עָשָׂה	אַהֲרֹן:					
which	made.	Aaron					
834	6213	175					

Yes, G-d might be standing further back from us, because of our sin, but a part of Him would be with us... and that part is very special. Let me suggest it might not be a mere “angel” as the English suggests.

Let’s look at what the Hebrew suggests is happening, for I think it might give us an insight.

The Hebrew in verse 34 says, “*hiney malachi yelik l’paneicha*”. I want to focus on the word *malachi*. Here, G-d is telling them His “*malach*” will go before them. Literally, “before your faces”.

This Hebrew word *malach* seems to be universally translated as “angel”, but it I think that translation misses something important. *Malach* certainly means “messenger”, but it almost always means much more.

In the pre-Babylonian Hebrew, the language in which these words were originally penned, the word carries with it the concept of “King”, *melech*, but with an added character – the *aleph* – imbedded in the middle of the letters for the word “king”.

The letter aleph, in pictographic Hebrew, has many meanings. It can mean “first”, “powerful”, “strong”, or “chief”.

What do you get when you put these concepts within the idea of a “king”.
You get the “first”, “powerful”, “strong”, or “chief” king.

You get the “King of Kings”.

Has this *Malach*, appeared before? Yes, and to Moses.

Ex 3:1-7

3 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the Lord [*malach Elohim*] appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now, and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Will this same being stay with our people as we begin conquering the Land?
Yes.

Josh 5:13-15

13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14 And he said, "No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15 And the captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

There is no doubt in my mind that is the same being (*Malak Adonai*) which has been leading them from that point forward. This is the same being that spoke to Moses at the "burning bush" in Exodus 3.

And there should be no doubt. This being is no mere angel. Angels will not accept worship. Angels don't speak with the very words of G-d. Angels don't declare themselves to be the G-d of the patriarchs.

So, Yeshua Himself is now leading us the rest of the way. Not a bad punishment. We have at least a piece of the triune G-d with us.

The Rock. After all this happens, and it is clear that G-d is going to distance Himself somewhat from the people, Moses wants to see G-d's glory now. I think he does so because he is afraid that he will never get another chance. He urges G-d to show His glory.

Ex 33:17-23

17 And the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" 19 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." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" 21 Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you

shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

I have a longer study on the Rock, and how it is no ordinary chunk of stone, but rather it is Yeshua. I will not extend this message by including that study, but would recommend it to you for a more full understanding.

Let’s examine just how Moses was “in” the Rock.

Ex 33:21-23

Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

בְּקִרְתָּ	וְשַׁמְתִּיךָ	כְּבוֹדִי	בְּעֵבֶר	וְהָיָה	22
in a cleft of	that I will put thee	my glory	while passeth by,	And it shall come to pass,	
<u>5366</u>	<u>7760</u>	<u>3519</u>	<u>5674</u>	<u>1961</u>	
	עָבַרְי:	עַד-	עֲלֶיךָ	כַּפִּי	וְשָׁכַתִּי
	I pass by:	while	thee	my hand	and will cover with
	<u>5674</u>	<u>5704</u>	<u>5921</u>	<u>3709</u>	<u>5526</u>
					הָצֹר
					the rock,
					<u>6697</u>

The English word “cleft” is often considered to be a natural crack in the Rock. I think that is an unfortunate translation. The word most often translated as “cleft” is *nikrat*. The Strongs number is 5366 in this case, but I think if one looks at the root, at Strongs 5365, we can see the better rendering.

OT:5365 נִקְרַח **naqar** (naw-kar'); a primitive root; to bore (penetrate, quarry):

In its ancient form, it *does not* signify a natural fissure, or crack. It signifies something *intentionally excavated*, a mine, a quarry, a hole. If this Rock is Yeshua, then it didn't just “crack”.

There was a Moses-shaped excavation into which Moses climbed, and when the “arm of the L-rd” (Yeshua) was placed over the opening to that cavity, Moses was completely protected from G-d's cleansing fire of judgment – which always precedes His coming – and Moses then was able to see the goodness of G-d, which always follows after Him.

Our Sins are Carried. Our sages believe that following this incident, and Moses pleading for mercy for the people, G-d revealed to Moses His thirteen attributes of mercy.

One of those is “*noseh avon v'pesha v'chataat*”, normally translated to read G-d “forgives iniquity, willful sin and error.”

But the word *noseh* literally means “carries”. Does G-d really *carry* our sins? It seems so, and here is where the concept of G-d Himself “carrying our sins” enters Hebrew theology. That theology found a voice in the prophet Isaiah.

Isa 53:4-5

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

Maybe Rb. Shaul was talking about this concept in his letter to the Colossian church,

Col 2:13-15

13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions [carried all our

sins], 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Convergence and Confluence. Let's list the remarkable theological intersections we have seen coming together in this parasha.

- The concept of the equal payment for atonement for the rich and the poor is established forever.
- The leader Moses is jointly responsible for the sin of the golden calf. *All* have sinned and fallen short.
- Aaron makes excuses and dodges responsibility for his sins in leading the people to turn away from G-d, following the pattern of Adam in the garden.
- Intercession by a righteous man will avert the harsh decree. Yeshua will intercede for us all in a special way several generations later.
- Yeshua, as the *Malak Adonai* is commissioned to be G-d's representative before the faces of the people, to lead us to the Promised Land. He will undertake that same ministry in a greater way a few generations later, to lead us to Heaven, on the other side of death's door.
- Moses has an intimate encounter with the Rock – Yeshua – which shields him from G-d's judgment, and only goodness may be seen.

Moses is “in Yeshua”, literally. Likewise, we can be “in Yeshua” if we take refuge from G-d’s judgment by this singular mechanism.

- G-d carries our sins. Yeshua did precisely that and took those sins to the cross. Our sins have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west.

I believe this parasha gives us a clear presentation of the “gospel message” as our brothers in the church describe it.

The idea of G-d carrying our sins, and providing atonement is not new. It is clearly presented here. Let us rejoice in His Salvation, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.