

# Shavua Tov



*A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary*  
By Glenn McWilliams

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**Torah Portion:** *Naso*      נשא      “Make an Accounting”

God spoke to Moses, saying: Vayedaber Adonay el-Moshe lemor Also make an accounting of Gershon's descendants by families, following the paternal line

**Naso** et-rosh beney Gershon gam-hem leveyt avotam lemishpechotam

**Scripture for study:**                      *Bamidbar (Numbers) 4:21 – 7:89*

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The book of Bamidbar begins with the command to take a count of the children of Israel.

*Numbers 1:2* Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls;<sup>3</sup>from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

After the counting of each tribe was completed, it was made clear that the Levites were not counted among the children of Israel.

*Numbers 1:47* But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. <sup>48</sup>For YHWH had spoken unto Moses, saying, <sup>49</sup>Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel.

*Numbers 2:33* But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as YHWH commanded Moses.

This is not to imply that the descendants of Levi did not matter or count. In fact, the Levites were counted twice. The first counting was of the children of Levi from the age of one month old and upward, and the second counting was of those between the ages of thirty and fifty.

*Numbers 3:14* And YHWH spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, <sup>15</sup>Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male

*from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. <sup>16</sup>And Moses numbered them according to the word of YHWH, as he was commanded.*

***Numbers 3:39** All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of YHWH, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.*

***Numbers 4:2** Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, <sup>3</sup>from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.*

***Numbers 4:21** And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>22</sup>Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; <sup>23</sup>from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.*

***Numbers 4:29** As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; <sup>30</sup>from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

We may ask why the Levites were counted twice when the bulk of the children of Israel were counted only once. Within the double counting of the Levites we witness two special callings and purposes for the descendants of Levi. Clearly the reason for counting the children of Israel was for the purpose of organizing an army. Thus we witness that among the children of Israel it was only men twenty years old and older who were capable of soldiering that were counted in the census.

***Numbers 1:2** Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; <sup>3</sup>from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.*

We should also remember that within the Hebrew of this verse the calling upon the whole of the children of Israel was revealed.

***Numbers 1:2** Se-u ET (ALEPH TAV) ROSH col a-dat beney Yisra'el.*

***Numbers 1:2** Lift up ALEPH TAV the HEAD of all the congregation of the children of Israel.*

We have already revealed that the untranslated word ET (spelled ALEPH TAV) is in this case a reference to the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it is implicit that in the counting of the children of Israel is the calling upon the children of Israel to lift up Messiah as the head of all the congregation of Israel. By lifting up Messiah the children of Israel fulfill their calling to the royal priesthood that was extended to them at Mount Sinai.

*Exodus 19:5* Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: <sup>6</sup>And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

This royal priesthood of the children of Israel is none other than the Melchizedek priesthood. We should recall that when Abraham returned from rescuing his nephew Lot he was met by Melchizedek, who is described as being both the king of Salem as well as the *cohen* of El Elyon.<sup>2</sup>

*Genesis 14:18* And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the *cohen* of El Elyon.

This order of *cohanim* is the priesthood of both the firstborn and the Messiah. David wrote in one of his prophetic psalms:

*Psalms 110:4* YHWH hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a *cohen* for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews also made this connection and expounds upon it repeatedly in his letter.

*Hebrews 5:5* So also Messiah glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto him, Thou art My Son, to day have I begotten thee. <sup>6</sup>As He saith also in another place, Thou art a *cohen* for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

*Hebrews 5:8* Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; <sup>9</sup>and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; <sup>10</sup>called of Elohim a *cohen gadol* after the order of Melchizedek.

*Hebrews 6:20* Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Yeshua, made a *cohen gadol* for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

*Hebrews 7:12* For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. <sup>13</sup>For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. <sup>14</sup>For it is evident that our master sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. <sup>15</sup>And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another *cohen*, <sup>16</sup>who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. <sup>17</sup>For He testifieth, Thou art a *cohen* for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

This Melchizedek priesthood is a royal priesthood, or priesthood of the king. This priesthood belongs to Messiah and to his body. Therefore all who belong to the body of Messiah belong to the Melchizedek priesthood, with Messiah Yeshua as its head or *Cohen Gadol*. It is this the reality that both Kefa and Yochanan write about.

**1 Peter 2:9** *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

**Revelation 1:5** *And from Yeshua Messiah, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, <sup>6</sup>and hath made us kings and cohanim unto Elohim and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Revelation 5:8** *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. <sup>9</sup>And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to Elohim by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; <sup>10</sup>and hast made us unto our Elohim kings and cohanim: and we shall reign on the earth.*

The mission of the Melchizedek priesthood is to manifest the presence of YHWH before the eyes of the nations. By being the body of Messiah, who is the head and *Cohen Gadol* of the Melchizedek priesthood, all the children of Israel make visible the invisible Elohim. Messiah Yeshua likewise made reference to this calling upon the children of Israel when he taught:

**John 3:14** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: <sup>15</sup>that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

**John 12:31** *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. <sup>32</sup>And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

It is interesting that when the children of Israel heard these words from the Messiah they questioned their meaning.

**John 12:34** *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Messiah abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*

Answering this question for the children of Israel is clearly a part of the calling extended to the descendants of Levi. With all of this as background, let us now again turn our attention to the unique calling extended to the tribe of Levi.

The children of Israel were counted for the sake of warfare and given the commission to lift up Messiah, the head of all Israel, before the eyes of the world. In this all the children of Israel are to partake of the royal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. This they are to do as the firstborn of YHWH Elohim.<sup>3</sup> By counting the tribe of Levi separate from the children of Israel, it is clear that the Levites are to fulfill a unique calling separate from, yet within the midst of children of Israel. By counting the descendants of Levi separate from the children of Israel, YHWH has in fact sanctified them among their brethren. While the ministry of the Melchizedek priesthood is directed toward the nations of the world, the Levitical ministry is for the sake of the children of Israel. This mission is confirmed for us in several ways.

We should take careful note that just as the children of Israel were called to lift up Messiah, so too are the descendants of Levi. Levi had three sons that became large families or clans within the tribe of Levi; Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. Let us now look as their commission is revealed. As we mentioned earlier, this revelation is to be found in the separate counting of the Levites.

*Numbers 4:2 Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers.*

*Numbers 4:22 Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families.*

*Numbers 4:29 As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers.*

Just as the children of Israel were called to lift up ALEPH TAV, the HEAD; so too are the sons of Kohath and the sons of Gershon.

In both of these instances we witness a very similar declaration in the Hebrew.

*Numbers 4:2 Naso ET (ALEPH TAV) ROSH beney Ke-hath.*

*Numbers 4:2 Lift up ALEPH TAV (Messiah) head of the sons of Kohath.*

*Numbers 4:22 Naso ET (ALEPH TAV) ROSH beney Gershon.*

*Numbers 4:22 Lift up ALEPH TAV (Messiah) head of the sons of Gershon.*

Again we see the same commission as was given to the children of Israel, "lift up ALEPH TAV," as found in Numbers 1:2. The only differences in these verses are the names of the families: in Numbers 1:2 it is the whole congregation; in Numbers 4:2 it is the Kohathites; and in Numbers 4:22 it is the Gershonites. We may recall that the counting of the Kohathites was included in last week's portion with the counting of the rest of the children of Israel. The name Kohath means "assembly." Thus the ministry of Kohath is to lift up Messiah to the assembly of the children of Israel.

Just as the children of Israel were counted for the purpose of warfare, we note that the Levites are likewise counted for a practical purpose. It is the Levites who were given charge of the tabernacle.

*Numbers 1:50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.*

Each of the three families of Levites would be given responsibility for a specific portion of the tabernacle. The Kohathites would be the bearers of all the furnishings of the tabernacle, including the Ark of the Testimony, the Menorah, the Table of Presence, the Altar of Incense, the Brass Altar, and the Laver. In many ways the Kohathites were responsible for the very heart of the tabernacle.

The second family commissioned to lift up Messiah is Gershon. The name Gershon means "exile." I believe that this title "exile," or "stranger" would eventually be applied to the House of Israel, who would later be exiled to the four corners of the earth. We should note here that the Gershonites' camp was in the west between the tabernacle and the camp of Ephraim.

*Numbers 2:18 On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud.*

*Numbers 3:23 The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward.*

The Gershonites would be given responsibility for bearing the curtains, veils, and coverings of the tabernacle. We should recall here that we have many times said that the tabernacle is in many ways an object lesson for the children of Israel. We have also previously talked about the anthropomorphic nature of the tabernacle. We have noted in the past the threefold division of the tabernacle which compares to the three-part being of man, as well as the many revelations of Messiah contained in the tabernacle. Thus we may say here that as the Levites bear the tabernacle, they are bearing the revelation of Messiah. If this is so, then the Gershonites are bearing the very skin, or flesh of Messiah. Together, the Kohathites and Gershonites represent and bear the very heart and body of Messiah for the sake of the children of Israel. But what, we may ask, of the third family?

The third family is Merari, whose name means "bitter." It is interesting to note that in Hebrew there is no mention of lifting up the ALEPH TAV; instead, Moses is instructed to merely number the children of Merari.

*Numbers 4:29 As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers.*

Any time we see a break in an established pattern we must ask why the sudden change. I believe that there are numerous messages to be found in this particular change of the pattern. First let us focus upon the meanings of the names. We have already seen that the responsibility of Kohath (assembly) and Gershon (exile) is to lift up Messiah, but clearly Merari (bitterness) cannot lift up Messiah. Jealousy, anger, resentment, bitterness, and other such negative emotions have no place in the praise and exaltation of Messiah. Thus we learn that to lift up Messiah means that we are to exalt and praise him. If we are to fulfill our calling as the Melchizedek priesthood we must remove from ourselves the negative emotions of jealousy, anger, resentment, and bitterness.

The Brit Chadasha likewise warns of the danger of bitterness.

**Acts 8:20** But Kefa said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of Elohim may be purchased with money. <sup>21</sup>Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of Elohim. <sup>22</sup>Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray Elohim, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. <sup>23</sup>For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

**Romans 3:10** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: <sup>11</sup>there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after Elohim. <sup>12</sup>They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. <sup>13</sup>Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: <sup>14</sup>whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

**Ephesians 4:30** And grieve not the holy Spirit of Elohim, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: <sup>32</sup>and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as Elohim for Messiah's sake hath forgiven you.

**Hebrews 12:15** Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of Elohim; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

If we wish to truly exalt Messiah and lift him up before the world, we must do so with a spirit of joy and not of sorrow. But is this what Messiah meant when he prophesied that the Son of Man would be lifted up? Yochanan clarifies this point by his own commentary on the words of Yeshua.

**John 12:32** And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. <sup>33</sup>This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Clearly Yochanan understood the lifting up to be referring to Yeshua's crucifixion, not his ascension or exaltation. I would suggest that the children of Merari will prophetically play a part in the lifting up of Messiah, but not in the same sense as their brethren. We have already seen that the Kohathites are to bear the heart and soul of Messiah, and that the Gershonites are to bear his very flesh and body. The Torah tells us that the children of Merari are to carry the wooden beams, posts, and sockets that everything hangs on. Is it possible that it was the bitter and jealous ones that lifted up Messiah on the wooden beam?

One final possibility to consider is the fact that Merari was camped just outside the courtyard of the tabernacle on the north side of the camp of the Levites. If the traditional site of the Garden Tomb and Golgotha in Israel are correct, then Yeshua would have been crucified or lifted up just outside the northern corner of the Temple Mount.

One further revelation of the Messiah found in the calling of the Levites is witnessed in their first counting. We have already stated that the Levites were counted twice. We have already covered the second counting, which was for the purpose of serving the tabernacle. But the first counting should not go unnoticed, for it too bears revelation. In last week's portion Moses was

instructed to count all of the Levites from one month old and upward and to likewise count all the firstborn of the children of Israel. This counting was followed by a great exchange.

*Numbers 3:12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be Mine.*

In this exchange the Levites were taken as a redemption price for the firstborn of the children of Israel. Remembering that all of Israel is YHWH'S firstborn, we thus witness the Levites as they bear the revelation of Messiah as the kinsman redeemer.

The purpose of the Levites' calling within the calling of the children of Israel is to provide an example for the children of Israel to follow. It may seem unfair to us that one of the families, Merari, bears a somewhat negative revelation. But it is important to realize that as a covenanted people, we have given ourselves to the service of YHWH ELOHIM for however He sees fit to use us.

We may here recall that prior to entering the promised land the children of Israel were divided between two mountains. The tribes placed upon Mount Gerizim were to declare blessings, while the tribes located upon Mount Ebal were to declare curses.

*Deuteronomy 11:29 And it shall come to pass, when YHWH thy Elohim hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.*

*Deuteronomy 27:12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: <sup>13</sup>and these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.*

I am sure that all of us would prefer to stand on Mount Gerizim rather than upon Mount Ebal. But if we are truly submitted unto the Holy One we will be happy to serve Him, regardless of whether it is through our positive actions or our negative ones.

We may likewise recall the example of Nadab and Abihu, who in their zeal disobeyed the commandments of YHWH and were consumed by a holy fire. Moses responded to this tragic event by declaring:

*Leviticus 10:3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that YHWH spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

It is difficult for some to understand the idea that we sometimes serve and exalt YHWH in what we say and do, while at other times we glorify and exalt YHWH by not saying or not doing. This is certainly the case at present when the Temple, Priesthood, and Altar are not functioning. While the Torah commands us to offer specific sacrifices at specific times,<sup>4</sup> it also commands

that we should only offer them at the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Therefore we do truly keep the Torah by not doing what it commands; that is, making specific offerings at appointed times. This same principle is at work in the teaching concerning the cleansing of the camp.

While the purpose of both the Melchizedek priesthood and the ministry of the Levites is to cause men to draw near to YHWH, it is also clear that we cannot do so in any manner, fashion, or state of being. This is especially so for the children of Israel. Since the children of Israel are to be the bearers of the very image of YHWH, the body of Messiah, it is essential that they neither add to nor diminish this image. It is also important that whatever does not belong to the image be removed from the camp.

We have talked in previous portions about the distinctions between *tamei* and *tahor*. While generally translated as “unclean” and “clean,” this is not the best understanding of these words. It would be better if we understood *tahor*/clean to mean “useful or acceptable to being the image of YHWH,” and *tamei*/unclean as being “not useful or acceptable for being the image of YHWH.” Since the whole camp of the children of Israel is to lift up Messiah before the eyes of the nation, it is important that when members of the community are in an unacceptable state to be useful as the image of YHWH that they be removed from the camp.

*Numbers 5:1 And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: <sup>3</sup>both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell. <sup>4</sup>And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as YHWH spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.*

There are several important features to this commandment that we should mention. First we need realize that there is not one camp but three camps. If we remember from last week’s portion, Moses was commanded to organize the children of Israel into an army. The camp is actually in three sections. At the very center is the camp of the *Shekinah*, which is the courtyard of the tabernacle and everything in it. Next is the camp of the Levites, which surrounds the camp of the *Shekinah*. Finally, surrounding these two camps is the camp of the Israelites. These three camps are what Moses is referring to when he says “defile not their camps.”

Each one of these camps has a different level of sanctity, just as there are various states of being *tamei*. For example, one who has eaten non-kosher food or has come in contact with the dead is *tamei*, but does not transmit the state of *tamei* to anyone else. A woman in the midst of her menses is *tamei* and a source of defiling others. Therefore the removal from the various camps is to be understood by degrees. What is important to understand in this is that sometimes we lift up Messiah, or manifest the image of YHWH, by removing ourselves rather than by drawing near. Thus while it may be difficult or even painful to separate ourselves from our brethren, family, or even prayer, it should also be our joy to know that even in our separation we honor, protect, and lift up the Messiah, the image of YHWH.

Just as certain emotions, such as jealousy, anger, and bitterness do not lift up Messiah and therefore must be removed from our lives, so too when our spiritual, physical, or emotional

states do not embody Messiah we should absent ourselves from the camp. We should not understand this separation as being punishment, but a service out of love for the Holy One. It is our love for YHWH that would cause us to remove ourselves from Him, even temporarily, that His name and countenance not be tarnished.

It is hoped also that the absence from the camp, and especially from the camp of the *Shekinah*, will cause the heart to grow even fonder. It is the hope that whatever caused the need for this separation will be remedied quickly so that the separated one may be reconciled to the body of Messiah. It is for this reason that the teaching about being removed from the camp is followed by a teaching concerning repentance, confession, and restitution.

*Numbers 5:5 And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>6</sup>Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against YHWH, and that person be guilty; <sup>7</sup>then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. <sup>8</sup>But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto YHWH, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him. <sup>9</sup>And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his. <sup>10</sup>And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.*

To truly understand this connection we must likewise understand that what causes us to be *tamei* is sin. At the root of all of the *tamei* designations is sin and death. We have already studied in the book of Vayikra<sup>6</sup> all of the offerings and sacrifices that are to be made for unintentional sins. It is these offerings that make atonement for us and reconcile us to our Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior.

But in our portion this week we see another process at work. Here we are given the means of dealing with intentional sin. While unintentional sins require only an offering when the sin is realized, intentional sin is something quite different. Within the above verses we recognize that if we have been separated from our family, friends, and Elohim and now desire to return to fellowship within the body of Messiah, we must follow a procedure. This process of reconciliation begins with a heart to repent, followed by confession and then restitution. We see in this that there is no such thing as “cheap grace” in the Torah. How often I have heard Christian preachers declare that the Old Testament is all about “the law” while the New Testament is all about “grace.” Nothing could be further from the truth. But unlike the message of the church, YHWH’S grace contains within it justice for those who have been hurt by sin, and therefore the real possibility of reconciliation.

There are numerous witnesses throughout the Tanach of YHWH’S mercy, grace, and desire for reconciliation with even the most wretched and wicked of men.

*Ezekiel 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith Adonai YHWH: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

*Ezekiel 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith Adonai YHWH: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

*Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Adonai YHWH, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

The fact that YHWH desires reconciliation with those who are separated is given great evidence in the very next teaching in our portion. What follows the teachings concerning the process of making restitution for intentional sin is the teaching concerning the jealous husband. These instructions are often referred to as the “*Sotah* Laws.”<sup>7</sup> The word *sotah* (Sin, Tet, Hey) is the Hebrew word for “turn aside.” Within this ritual we see that YHWH has made provision for a husband and wife who are separated from each other by jealousy to be reconciled. There are a number of important features to this ritual that should not be overlooked. It is often the case that when we begin to read things in the Scriptures that don’t seem to pertain to us, we skim over them or ignore them. It would not be uncommon for those who aren’t married or those who are happily married to simply read right over this passage.

So let me give warning – if you consider yourself as one of the children of Israel or a part of the body of Messiah, then this teaching is specifically for you. We have often illuminated the details of the wedding at Mount Sinai between the Creator and the redeemed children of Israel; how Israel is wife and YHWH is her husband. From the start YHWH has described Himself as a jealous Elohim.

*Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy Elohim am a jealous Elohim, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.*

*Exodus 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other elohim: for YHWH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous Elohim.*

*Deuteronomy 4:24 For YHWH thy Elohim is a consuming fire, even a jealous Elohim.*

*Deuteronomy 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy Elohim am a jealous Elohim, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.*

*Deuteronomy 6:15 (For YHWH thy Elohim is a jealous Elohim among you) lest the anger of YHWH thy Elohim be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.*

We know that we have been a guilty and unfaithful wife; therefore it seems almost ludicrous that YHWH would implement such a ritual concerning us. And yet, His desire to be reconciled is so great that it would appear we are being given the benefit of the doubt. What is frightening is that since we know that we are guilty, we know that the outcome could only be our slow and painful death by rotting from the inside out. We should truly fear to drink the bitter water of this curse. But once again, this is not just about us, it is also about the Messiah. For it is Yeshua

Messiah that came to take our place. Messiah exchanged his glory for our humiliation, his righteousness for our wickedness. It was Messiah who became the uncovered head of the defiled bride and drank the bitter cup containing the curse. Let us look at the connection between the words of Messiah and the ritual contained in the *Sotah* Laws.

*Matthew 20:22* But Yeshua answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

*Matthew 26:39* And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

*Matthew 26:42* He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Yeshua knew the outcome of drinking this cup when full of guilt. But he drank it for our sake, so that we would be exonerated and reconciled with our husband.

A second revelation contained within these laws concerns the name of YHWH. We have already stated that the calling upon the children of Israel is to be the bearer of the image of YHWH. As the image of Elohim, YHWH'S name is associated with us. So Aaron was instructed:

*Numbers 6:27* And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

We should remember that the children of Israel were instructed to swear oaths only in the name of YHWH.

*Leviticus 19:12* And ye shall not swear by My name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy Elohim: I am YHWH.

*Deuteronomy 6:13* Thou shalt fear YHWH thy Elohim, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name.

*Deuteronomy 10:20* Thou shalt fear YHWH thy Elohim; Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His name.

Therefore when the *cohen* wrote the oath that the suspected wife would agree to, it would have to contain the name of YHWH. This oath or curse was then blotted out and put into the bitter waters, desecrating the name of YHWH. We should appreciate how greatly YHWH desires reconciliation between husband and wife (Himself and Israel) by the fact that He would allow His written name to be desecrated. But we should also realize that the Hebrew word for "husband," or "man," is *ish*, spelled Aleph, **Yod**, Shin. The Hebrew word for "wife" is *ishah*, spelled Aleph, Shin, **Hey**. Each of these words contains one letter unique to itself. In the case of

“husband,” or “man,” it is the letter YOD. In the case of the word “wife,” or “woman,” it is the letter HEY. When man and woman come together these two letters join together also, spelling the word YAH, the shortened form of YHWH. We should also note that when YAH is absent from man and woman coming together, all that is left is *esh*, spelled Aleph, Shin, which is the Hebrew word for “fire.” Thus when YHWH is removed from our relationships, we are sure to be burned. What I want to emphasize here, however, is that fact that YHWH desires reconciliation in order that His name and image be restored to the children of Israel.

In every aspect of this portion the message is the same. YHWH desires that His name and image be exalted and lifted up before the eyes of the children of Israel as well as the nations in order that they may know His mercy, compassion, and grace, and that His creation would draw near to Him and be reconciled through the life, death, and resurrection of Messiah. This hope and desire for an intimate response to His mercy and grace is seen in the teaching concerning the vow of the Nazarite<sup>8</sup> and the voluntary offering of the leaders.<sup>9</sup>

These two teachings are important for us to understand. All too often those of us who strive to keep Torah are accused of teaching that we must keep the law to be saved. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. While we witness in the opening teachings of this portion YHWH’S provision for reconciling the world to Himself through Messiah, the concluding teachings of this portion teach us that our response to the Holy One’s generosity is voluntary. In other words, we do not keep the Torah to be saved, but rather we keep the Torah out of love and gratitude for the one who has made the provision for our salvation.

Salvation is the work of YHWH through Messiah, who has opened the door for us to enter the covenant. We do not enter by keeping Torah; observing Torah is our righteous response to this gift of salvation. Entering the kingdom of heaven means living by the laws of the King. We enter through Messiah, but it is impossible to enter the kingdom without submitting to the King.

I cannot help but to think of the story of Yeshua healing the ten victims of *tsara’at*.<sup>10</sup> Ten men were cleansed of this divine affliction and went as Yeshua instructed them according to the Torah to show themselves to the *cohen*. All ten were healed, and yet only one, a stranger, returned to give thanks to YHWH, to “give glory to Elohim” for his healing. In response to this one man’s return, Yeshua declared:

*Luke 17:17 And Yeshua answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? <sup>18</sup>There are not found that returned to give glory to Elohim, save this stranger.*

In many ways this may be Yeshua’s response to the Christian church, who claims to have received healing, forgiveness, salvation, and gifts of the Spirit from Yeshua, and yet at the same time lives as if completely devoid of gratitude. For the same Yeshua that brought forth their redemption declared:

*John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

While some may say that this means that we show our love and gratitude by keeping only Yeshua's commandments, we should recall that the same Yeshua taught:

*John 7:16 Yeshua answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.*

YHWH'S calling upon the children of Israel is one of phenomenal grace. He has invited us to share in His plan to reconcile the world to Himself, and through Him, to one another. Such love and mercy is to be received and responded to with a sincere heart and a willing and obedient spirit. Therefore, like the Nazarite, we set ourselves apart from the world that we may better manifest the love, mercy, glory, and reconciling spirit of YHWH ELOHIM to the world around us.

SHAVUA TOV!

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<sup>1</sup> See my study on Bamidbar. Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, while Tav is the last letter. We may assume that when the Jewish Messiah spoke to Yochanan his Jewish *talmid* (disciple) on the Isle of Patmos, he spoke in Hebrew, not in Greek. Therefore instead of saying "I am the *alpha* and *omega* (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet), he most likely said, "I am the ALEPH and TAV, the first and the last." Cp. Revelation 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13.

<sup>2</sup> El Elyon is Hebrew for "El Most High," "Most High God."

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 4:22

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 29:39

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 12:1-15

<sup>6</sup> The book of Leviticus

<sup>7</sup> Numbers 5:11-31

<sup>8</sup> Numbers 6:1-21

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 7:2ff

<sup>10</sup> Luke 17:11-19