

We Must Plead With God

Parashat Ki Tisa



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This week's Torah portion, like the previous ones, deals with the construction of the Tabernacle as well as the appointment of Bezalel, the chief craftsman, who crafted the holy vessels. We begin this parasha with instructions for the census of the population, which was actually a call for order on a national scale.

This portion talks about the oil of anointing. God dictated to us the formula for this special oil - which is essentially olive oil mixed with perfumes. With the help of this oil, they anoint the holy vessels, the altar, and Aaron and the priests. Like the oil we were also given the formula for the incense used in the Holy of Holies. Despite all of the intricate instructions we receive in this portion, the most central story, and the most difficult and painful one, is the Israelites' creation of the Golden Calf.

The Sin of the Golden Calf - What Really Happened?

I think that the Golden Calf has become an international symbol of sin and

rebellion towards God, almost at the same level as the partaking in the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

What actually occurred during the time of this unfortunate event? Moses went up to Mount Sinai for 40 days; think about it for a moment, that's a whole month and a half. There was no voice nor response from him during this period. The people of Israel were asking - what's going on, what happened to Moses?

It's easy for us to judge the Israelites - what were they thinking? I do not justify the sin here, but 40 days went by, the leader went to meet God and, as it is written: "Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain." Moses was gone, he hasn't returned, what do we do now? Do we move on? Do we wait longer? How much longer should we wait? One more week? Another month? A whole year? These questions must've consumed the minds of the Israelites.

The children of Israel sinned by building the Golden Calf. This act interrupts the encounter between Moses and God, so God sent Moses down from the mountain. As I said, I am not trying to justify the sin of the people, but I'd like to ask you to understand that this is not as simple as it sounds. In the wake of this sin, God sought to destroy the people - to destroy Israel and to start anew through Moses.

We are Called to Plead With God

In Genesis, Abraham stood before God and made a rational plea before the Almighty:

"Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" - Genesis 18:23 [NIV]

Abraham succeeded in having a dialogue with God, which ended with a search for ten righteous people in Sodom, which were not found.

Moses stood before God, similar to Abraham, and pleaded with Him, bringing up arguments that were seemingly reasonable. Moses claimed that God had brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with honor, in order so that the whole world would see that there is only one God - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But if

God were to destroy Israel in the desert, what would the nations think? That He took the Israelites out of slavery only to destroy them in the desert? Moses continued to plead with God to forgive the people, if not for the sake of the people, then for the sake of our fathers, the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses succeeded:

“Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.” - Exodus 32:14 [NIV]

Yeshua Tells Us to Never Give Up

This is an amazing passage from the Torah, which calls us humans to dialogue with God. The Torah teaches us that we have the power to change the world and that we possess the means in which to talk with God. Even more so, from now on we have the responsibility to talk with God. Our job is to lift up those around us, our community, friends, and of course, our children. We have the privilege to speak with God and the power to effect change.

There are other examples in Scripture about fasting, prayer, and pleading that led to reconciliation with God.

For instance, we read about the people of Nineveh proclaiming a fast for every man and beast, as a way of showing complete repentance. In the end, the city of Nineveh was saved and not destroyed, according to God's original plan (Jonah 3:5).

This can also be seen with the instruction of Yeshua. In the parable of the widow and the judge (Luke 18), Yeshua teaches us, that due to the widow's incessant pleas, the judge gave her justice, even though the judge himself was not interested in doing so. Actually, he didn't even want to help her and administer justice; he was just sick of the old widow's constant nagging. Using this parable, Yeshua teaches us that we must persist in prayer, and in the end, we will receive our answer. To persist in prayer means to continue praying, pleading, and not letting go until the long-awaited reply is evident.

The parable begins with the following:

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” – Luke 18:1 [NIV]

When we gather together and pray in one heart for a good cause, be it 30 people or three people, in the name of Yeshua the Messiah, we obtain the capability to bring about change.

The Call to Watch on the Walls of Jerusalem

We have the power to influence our environment, family, the way our friends see Israel and even more importantly, the way they view our faith. Especially in the age of social media, our impact, message, and thoughts are able to reach hundreds of people.

God uses people to carry out His will, we are tools in the hands of God. We can be used for honor and serve to build the kingdom of heaven, or we can serve as tools of destruction and be like a curse. This idea is true for every aspect of our lives and the lives of those around us.

God is sovereign and His will shall be done, for better or for worse. However, throughout history, including biblical history, God used people to carry out His divine plan.

With this thought, I want to turn to Isaiah chapter 62. The entire chapter is of much importance:

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.” – Isaiah 62:1 [NIV]

Simply put, this means that I will not stop praying for Jerusalem's sake, I will not stop talking about it. I will not stop sharing on Facebook, regardless of it being politically correct or not, even when it is not necessarily pleasant for me. I will raise up Jerusalem and will not rest until it's light and it's salvation is seen by all. That's my job as a believer and my God-given responsibility.

“I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes

*Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.” – Isaiah 62: 6,7
[NIV]*

Verses 6 and 7 discuss those who are faithful to God and pray to Him, those who are watching on the walls of Jerusalem. These individuals must not remain silent, neither day nor night - do not be silent, pray always. You are the watchmen, if not you, then who will do so? You have the power and responsibility to do two crucial tasks: first, you have the ability to pray to God and to not give Him rest, to always remind Him of His promises and the prophecies about the restoration of Jerusalem. Second, you have the means to break the cycle of lies that are being spread about Israel and to spread the righteousness of our path in the world as well as the vindication of our faith, and we must do so, actively.

Verse 7 actually asks us not to let God rest -- to nag in a way and to always be in prayer until He answers. This verse reminds us of the parable of Yeshua about the need to persevere in prayer, to endure in being watchmen.

In conclusion

God cares about our opinion; our prayers are important. Yeshua taught us that when we meet as a group, even when just two or three are gathered in His name, He will be among us (Matthew 18:20).

God says He placed watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, who exactly are these watchmen? They are you and I. We are on duty and we must be on guard on several fronts: first, to intercede in prayer and remind God of his promises.

Second, to guard against the attacks of the world on Israel and Jerusalem and to spread the truth in a sea of lies. We must be a ray of light, similar to a lighthouse, that strives to spread the love of Yeshua the Messiah.

**The Teachings of
Messiah Yeshua
*in a Jewish Context***

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