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| Tetzaveh | You Shall Command | Bringing Heavenly Glory Down to Earth |
| Torah: | Exodus 27:20-30:10 | |
| Haftarah: | Ezekiel 43:10-27 | |
| Brit Chadashah: | Hebrews 13:10-16 | |

Just a quick note on the passage in Ezekiel. Many people speculate that because the Second Temple was not built according to the specifications outlined in Ezekiel, that a future third temple will be built according to Ezekiel's model. The promised temple described by Ezekiel would have been built if the people had repented and fulfilled the prerequisites stipulated by G-d. They did not and Ezekiel's temple was not built. However, you cannot lift the description of this temple out of its original context and say that it applies to today.

Both the tabernacle and the two temples, and Ezekiel's proposed temple, were built with dimensions which reflected the heavenly temple. No earthly temple can ever contain the immense glory which the Heavenly Temple contains. There is no prophetic need for a third temple to be built on the site of the first two. Believers are the only temple which YHVH will acknowledge and the sad thing was not that Ezekiel's temple was not built, but that the people did not repent so it could be built.

Our Torah portion today begins with a description of how the menorah was to be lit in the holy place. The lamps were lit and allowed to burn from the time between sunset and full dark (between the two evening) until dawn, because no darkness was allowed in the holy place.

When it came to the descriptions of the priestly garments, I had a lot of fun looking things up on line. Be careful of your sources. While I might read and appreciate rabbinic sources, I will never allow their traditional content to hijack my understanding of what the Bible really says. The High Priest wore eight different kinds of clothing when he was ministering in the Holy Place and when he came out to supervise the sacrifices on the meat altar.

There were two altars. One for meat, blood and grain offerings and the other for the burning of incense. The incense was to burn from sunset until sunrise, but only the priests were allowed to burn incense and to see it. The people would have been able to smell it and it would have given me a massive allergic reaction. Incense symbolizes the prayers which rise up to YHVH as a sweet smelling offering.

I was both amused and troubled by all the additional meaning which many try to add to symbolic passages, when none of this new meaning is intended. Attaching meaning to biblical symbols which are not intended by the passage is the same as trying to add content to the Torah which it does not intend. This kind of nonsense is called Kabbalah or gnostic mysticism and it is not permitted by the Bible (Deut. 29:29).

The basic meaning behind the various articles of clothing which the priests and High Priest wore was that the glory of Heaven came down to dwell in our midst. And though it is totally separate from us, this glory is also totally accessible through the ceremonies which the priests performed. The priestly clothing was both colourful and majestic and speaks of the heavenly glory that wants to take up residence in the midst of the people of Israel. The clothing was to be fashioned from donations made by the people whom YHVH had set free.

The ephod, or priestly apron, was to be worn over top of a white linen robe and it was quite colourful. The names of the tribes of Israel appear twice on this garment. First on the two shoulder pieces which were onyx stones. The tribes were inscribed according to their birth order and the two shoulder clasps were joined by a golden chain. The third last and second last names on the second stone, would have been Manasseh and Ephraim. There is no tribe of Joseph in the Bible.

The second place the names of the tribes of Israel are mentioned is when they were placed on the breastplate of judgment, which was worn over the ephod. This breast plate was folded kind of like a napkin and inside were the yes and no stones – the Urim and the thummim. Questions addressed to G-d through the high Priest had to be formulated in a yes or no format. Somehow, the priest's hands were guided to the right stone and in this way, the people could hear directly from YHVH. With either a yes or a no.

This breastplate had four rows of gold encrusted precious stones, three to a row. Each gold encrusted gem represented one of the tribes as a means of reminding the people that each of us is precious in YHVH's eyes. At the bottom of the ephod were coloured pomegranates, with golden bells interspersed around the entire ephod. These bells could be heard when the High Priest went behind the veil, so the people would know that he was not dead. According to the rabbis there were 72 golden bells on this colourful garment.

Along with this colourful outer garment, the High Priest also wore a bonnet (turban) made of white linen and equipped with a golden plate, which was inscribed with the phrase: holiness unto YHVH. The High Priest's clothing also had a linen belt and under the inner white linen robe, the priests had a linen under garment which was worn like a pair of shorts and was not visible when the priests were fully dressed.

It was quite a spectacular set of garments and acted as a kind of bridge between the heavenly realm and the camp where the people dwelt. The garments were made of fine linen and were decorated both with lots of gold and the colours of the sky (blue, purple and crimson). It was a tangible link between YHVH and His people and showed the people how amazingly beautiful YHVH was. There was nothing grotesque or sensual about the priestly garments or about the sacrificial system which the priests were to supervise.

Aaron's sons also wore special garments and the consecration of both the priests and the High Priest was a three part process. They ministered on two different altars and both the tabernacle furniture and the priests had to be consecrated. Once the priests were anointed with oil, a bull was offered and his blood was sprinkled on the four horns of the meat altar. His fat and guts were burnt of the altar, while His body, hide and excrements were taken outside the camp to also be burnt.

Next, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on two sacrificial rams. The first ram was cut up and his blood was sprinkled on the meat altar, then his flesh and entrails were burnt on the newly consecrated altar. The next ram was also slaughtered and before its body was waved before the L-rd with unleavened cakes, its blood was used in a threefold consecration of the priests. They were anointed with blood on their right ear lobe, on their right thumb and finally on their right big toe. Once this was completed the waving ceremony occurred, and then the body of the ram and a basket of unleavened cakes was burnt on the meat altar as an agreeable odour to YHVH.

Before the corpse was burnt, the shoulder and the breast of the second ram were given to Aaron and his sons as food, along with some of the unleavened cakes. When the High Priest first put on his garments, it was part of a seven day consecration where the entire consecration ritual was repeated seven times.

The priests were not allowed to leave the tabernacle for seven days, so a clean place was probably set aside for them to sleep. They did not stay awake for seven days and any of the ritual food which they were given and did not eat, was burnt on the altar of meat. The whole process was considered holy and the Bible uses a strange saying that anything which touched the altar was holy. This was a cultural way of saying that only holy people and holy things should touch the altar.

Once the initial consecration was completed, there were to be two perpetual burnt offerings, offered every day. Two, one year old lambs were burnt, one in the morning and the other at sunset. They were offered on the meat altar which stood at the entrance to the tent of meeting. The Bible is careful to say that it was the presence of YHVH which sanctified the tent of meeting, so that He could dwell in the midst of His people. He was both totally separate and yet entirely accessible by the ritual processes which were put into play.

The altar of meat stood at the entrance to the Holy Place and the second altar of incense stood in front of the veil at the entrance of the Holy of Holies. This second altar was made of gold covered acacia wood and had two poles so that it could be transported whenever the camp moved. As the menorah was being prepared to burn all night, incense was offered on the second altar in the interval between sunset and full dark. The portion concludes with the first mention of Yom Kippur as the only time when the High Priest would go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies.

Be careful not to add meaning to this ceremony and to these clothes which the passage does not intend. Both the sacrificial ceremonies and the priest's clothing acted as a bridge between the Heavens where YHVH dwelt and the camp where His people dwelt. Once he was fully dressed in his robes, the High Priest must have looked amazing, but my favourite part of this portion was blood which was applied to three body parts of the priests.

Are your ears anointed so that you can hear the Word of G-d? Are your hands anointed so that you can handle the Word of G-d? Are your feet anointed so you can take and apply His Word into every part of your life? Also, holiness is incredibly beautiful because it bridges the gap between the wonder of Heaven and the earth we are travelling through as pilgrims and strangers.

I looked up several drawings of the High Priest in his ceremonial robes and both the Orthodox priests and the Catholic priests wear garments which approximate priestly clothing in the Bible. Colourful beauty needs to be a part of our lives as we walk with YHVH.

Sermon: There is no Room for the Abuse of Authority: Eph. 6:1-9

Our passage deals with two authority structures – the family and the work place. We are called to obey our parents and to obey our bosses. The passage does not intend that either submission should be a blind obedience that would oblige us to obey, even when we are being told to do horrible things or to engage in criminal behaviour.

The fifth commandment requires that we honour our fathers and our mothers and in so doing we are told we will extend our borders in the land. Alongside this requirement, fathers are told not to irritate the children or to provoke them to anger, but to raise them, correct them and instruct them according to the Messiah.

Our society does not encourage children to obey their parents as much as it does for them to stand up to authority and protect their rights. The family is no longer seen as the basic building block of our society and we are told that we only have to listen to our parents when they tell us to do things which our modern secular society agrees with. Even mild corporal punishment is frequently seen as a form of physical abuse and children are encouraged to explore their own identity and not give heed to the traditional family values which some feel cramp their style.

Now, we understand that obeying our parents should be done according to the Lord and what He teaches in His Word. Parents should not bully their kids or frustrate them or provoke them to anger. As our children grow up, their autonomy should increase as they make good choices which they see modelled by believing parents. When bad things are modelled by bad parents, the biblical model still stands, as we learn to break free from the evil things some parents teach their children.

When a child strays from the faith he or she was raised in, it should be because bad choices they are making for themselves and not because of the bad example they saw in their parents. The best way to raise children is to teach and uphold the biblical model. We need to raise our kids, correct our kids and instruct them in the things of the Lord.

This kind of peaceful submission to our leader's mandate is what will keep our society from falling apart or from self destructing. We do not blindly obey all and any laws as if our leaders have the right to always tell us what to do. Sometimes, our faith may cause us to exercise forms of civil disobedience, because we will always uphold biblical standards, even when our leaders do not.

Let me pause here and speak about the situation with the various truck convoys which are travelling throughout our land and calling for an immediate, complete removal of all and any Covid restrictions we have been following for the last couple of years. There are many ways to express our disapproval of laws which we feel are unjust. The Canadian constitution does allow the government to impose health restrictions during times when our health is being threatened. The current government Covid restrictions are not a violation of our constitutional rights. The masks do not always prevent the spread of Covid and neither do gathering restrictions and social distancing.

These measures are not intended to give the government dictatorial powers over our lives and the current mask mandate does not infringe on our human rights. If we only followed the restrictions we agreed with, does that mean that speed limits and the paying of taxes should only occur when we agree with them? What do you do when you feel that some government restrictions violate your human rights? Prohibition, segregation and giving women the right to vote were long battles that we eventually won. Shouldn't we be concentrating on ending racism and the abuse of women and children? Having said this let me take my remarks in a different direction.

I agree with the masking mandate, social distancing and the limits which were placed on gatherings. But what does the Bible say about how we should act when our government is doing things we disagree with? The truckers have a legal right to protest and to have their voices heard, as long as they do not resort to violence and vandalism and other extreme behaviours. Also engaging in character assassination is not a valid way to protest.

I have some red neck, right wing friends who have resorted to name calling when anyone disagrees with them. Mr. Trudeau has been called a Nazi and a dictator – even a pharaoh who doesn't feel the need to listen to the voice of the people. I am a firm believer in negotiation so that opposing points of view can be expressed and even reconciled. The government should be meeting with the truckers and listening to their demands.

The truckers should also be listening to those who disagree with them. When communication breaks down, it is almost impossible to find common ground and a solution. This protest seems to have taken on a life of its own and those who do not support the truckers, face name calling and all kinds of negative pressure, because, supposedly, they are not taking a stand for freedom. It is unfair and illogical to compare the Covid restrictions to what was happening in Germany under the Nazis. No matter where we stand on this issue, our stance should be a reflection of our biblical submission to our Saviour as the final boss.

We are not seeing a totalitarian state taking over Canada and making a stand for freedom does not mean you have to support the truckers and their demands. I am praying for a peaceful dialogue to be established, so that no one gets bullied and so that no violence occurs. The supply train of goods going to and coming from our American neighbours should not be cut off and issuing ultimatums is not a good way to begin a negotiation. I am not a supporter of our current federal government, but I am a strong supporter of law and order.

The American Revolution was a good thing, but I do not know if I could say the same about the French Revolution. Taking stands and making protests is both our democratic right and sometimes even our democratic duty, but you have to pick your battles. Current Covid restrictions are not a violation of our human rights by a government which wants to act like a dictatorship. I am saddened and troubled with how the crisis is being handled, both by the protesters and by the government.

We need to pray that the violence does not escalate to the point that lives are lost and property is damaged. We all have the right to protest, but there is a right way and a wrong way to express our disagreement with what the government is doing. There are many governments around the world which are abusing the rights of their citizens. The government of Canada is not among them. Our voices can still be heard, even if what we want is not forth coming. Being heard is not the same thing as getting people to do what we want.

There is no room in any society for the abuse of authority and I am uneasy about how things are heating up with the protests. I pray for peace and for dialogue in such a way that the rule of reasonable law is upheld. There are limits placed on what the government can tell us to do and there should be limits on what we can tell the government to do. I do not want things to get worse and I do not want to see anyone get hurt. I would like to see the truckers go home and protest through their elected politicians and not say that the only way they will go home is if and when they get their own way. Being heard is not the same as being listened to.

There is really only one boss we should be serving because all of us, leaders and followers, will all one day stand before the Judge of the Ages and we will be judged according to both what we have done and how we have done it. We need to see ourselves as servants of the Messiah and govern our lives according to His Word.

You all know that I am violently opposed to abortion. I am also violently opposed to racism and violence against women and children. The sexual abuse of children is a horrible crime and we should not treat people according to the colour of their skin. We are all the children of Adam and Eve and we are all on an earthly pilgrimage through this life.

Our world is darkening globally and submission and obedience to any kind of authority is being increasingly challenged. We are all connected through our multimedia society and spiritual deception is escalating as it did in the days of Noah. Civil disobedience is being hijacked by radicals to encourage anarchy to the point that our society breaks down and no rules are enforced or required. This is not what we want to see happen with the truckers.

The architect behind this growing darkness is the enemy of our souls and he is doing his best to overthrow spirituality and righteousness, because he wants to fill the earth with violence and immorality. I do not think that the truckers are bad people. I do not think that all federal liberals are corrupt. I do not think that either the right wing or the left wing favours biblical spirituality. Biblical spirituality is the place I want to live.

I am not convinced that all Democrats are liars who want to set up a socialist dictatorship south of the border. I also do not think that all Republicans are good people who support biblical morality and biblical spirituality. I do not support the idea that there is an international communist plot to take over the world. What does the term: "fake media" even mean?

I want peace and law and order, so that we can live our lives free from fear and not be on red alert all the time. Messianic Judaism is not a form of deception which blindly supports the status quo and discourages people from thinking for themselves. We are called to make straight paths for our feet and to never allow abusive authority to ruin our lives. I realize that any political system will always be in need of constant scrutiny and frequent reforms and that believers are called to be good citizens whether they live with political freedom or have to live under political oppression.

First and foremost, I am a citizen of the coming kingdom and will only let the Word of our King tell me how to live. I am patiently waiting for Messiah's Kingdom to be set up on earth and do not want any lesser objective be a driving force in my life, whether I agree with the mask mandate or want it abolished. How we handle ourselves in any protest which is calling for our support is the most important thing for any protester to be aware of.

I will always speak up against racism and the criminal murder of babies in their mother's womb. I will never be a supporter of evolution and our world is not secretly being ruled by secret societies who are really running the show. I want to live with a clear conscience and be a supporter of law and order, even if what that means is constantly changing. The Bible should remain the foundation of every believer's life and we should never indulge the works of the flesh in how we deal with any conflict or problem we encounter. We all need to serve our heavenly master in the way which His Word stipulates because we know that judgment is coming and this old world will soon pass away. Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov!