



*Parasha Tzav*

April 1, 2023

*Torah:* Leviticus 6:1-8:36

*Haftarah:* Malachi 3:4-24

*Ketuvim Sh'lichim:* Hebrews 9:11-28

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha!* Our *parasha* today is *Tzav* which means “command.” It begins: *1 Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the Torah of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall remain on the hearth atop the altar all night until the morning, while the fire of the altar is kept burning on it.”* (Leviticus 6:1-2 TLV). *Parasha Tzav* is about the sacrifices and offerings ADONAI commanded to be offered in the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Last week, in *Parasha Vayikra*, the same sacrifices were described as instructions regarding the way the people were to carry them out, but this week in *Tzav*, the instructions are directed to the *kohanim*, with the additional details that they needed to carry them out. The final subject in *Tzav* is the ordination of Aaron and his sons as *kohanim*.

Last *Shabbat*, we observed the first *Shabbat* of the month of *Nissan*, a very important month in the Hebrew calendar. Why is it important? Because it is the beginning of months. *1 Now Adonai spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, “This month will mark the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.”* (Exodus 12:1-2 TLV). Have you ever thought about what the calendar was before the Book of Exodus? We know that ADONAI set up days during Creation and the total number of days, seven, became what we know as a week. But, He did not give any specific information about months or years other than to say: *14 ...., “Let lights in the expanse of the sky be for separating the day from the night. They will be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.”* (Genesis 1:14b TLV). What calendar did the Israelites follow before ADONAI gave them this month? They followed the calendar of the nation in which they were living. In Canaan, they may have followed the Gezer Calendar, an agricultural calendar based upon the seasons for planting and harvesting of different crops. In Egypt, they must have followed the Egyptian calendar for they had no other. The Egyptian calendar was a year of 365 days, with twelve months and each month having three ten day weeks. That was a total of 360 days with the last five days corresponding to the birthdays of five of their gods, Osiris, Isis, Horus, Seth and Nephthys.

But, ADONAI now told Israel that they will follow His calendar. Why was *Nissan* the first month? Actually, it wasn't *Nissan*, it was *Aviv* (Exodus 34:18). That's what ADONAI called it. Originally, only four months had names and the others were referred to by the number of their order. The first month was *Aviv*, the second, *Zif*, the seventh, *Et'anim* and the eighth, *Bul*. The names of the months used in the Hebrew calendar today are Babylonian month names brought back to Israel from captivity. But, why was *Aviv/Nissan* the first month? It was because, before that time there were no Hebrew months. Essentially, ADONAI told the Israelites that they were to stop following other nations calendars, calendars devised by men and sometimes honoring false gods, and to follow His calendar. His calendar not only marked time, but also identified His festivals which He would reveal to them in days to

come. But, in the Hebrew calendar, there is today the name of a false god. It is Tammuz, a Mesopotamian fertility god, one of the names brought back from an idol worshipping nation.

Have you thought about today's date? What is it? Yes, April 1<sup>st</sup>. Don't worry, I'm not going to fool you. What is the Hebrew date? It's *Nissan* 10, a day to which ADONAI specifically referred in the next verse: 3 *"Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family one lamb for the household."* (Exodus 12:3 TLV). Immediately after ADONAI established His calendar, He began carrying out His plan to expose and defeat the final Egyptian god. Nine plagues had already occurred and nine powerless false gods had succumbed to ADONAI's power. We don't know for certain which gods the plagues were directed against, but here is one suggestion: *Hapi*, god of the Nile (water turned to blood), *Heket*, goddess of fertility, water and renewal (frogs coming out of the Nile), *Geb*, god of the earth (lice from the dust), *Khepri*, god of creation (depicted with the head of a fly- swarms of flies), *Hathor*, goddess of love and protection (depicted with the head of a cow – death of cattle and livestock), *Isis*, goddess of medicine and peace (ashes became boils and sores), *Nut*, goddess of the sky (hail in the form of fire), *Set*, god of storms and disorder (locusts from the sky), and *Ra*, sun god (three days of darkness).

The tenth and final plague, the passing over of the destroying angel, was against Pharaoh himself. This last plague could have been designed by ADONAI to be against *Amun*, the god of the sky who they thought created himself and then everything else. He is sometimes combined with Ra, the sun god and known as *Amun-Re*, the father and protector of the Pharaoh. One of *Amun's* depictions is as having the head of a ram, a sheep. ADONAI's plan was that the blood of a lamb would protect the people of Israel from His Destroyer which would pass over Egypt. The irony of this is that the blood of a baby ram was used to show both Amun and Pharaoh powerless. Pharaoh, supposedly a god himself, the firstborn of *Amun-Re*, was shown by ADONAI's mighty power to be no god. He was unable to prevent the death of the firstborn of men and animals in Egypt that did not have the life-giving blood of a lamb on their doorposts.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan* in the year 30 CE, Jews in Jerusalem did just as the Israelite families had done in Egypt so many years before. They selected their lambs for the coming Passover. *Torah* told them: 5 *Your lamb is to be without blemish, a year old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You must watch over it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight.*" (Exodus 12:5-6 TLV). They selected their individual lambs for their families to be watched over and for four days, but one special lamb was also being selected and examined. Just as *Shabbat* today is the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*, so also was that 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan* in 30 CE a *Shabbat*. The special lamb being examined on that day was Yeshua, the lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. (Revelation 13:8). Now it was His actual time.

Periodically, certain calendar patterns reoccur. The layout of Hebrew days this year is exactly as it was in 30 CE, the year that Yeshua died for our sins. Regarding what happened on that 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*, Scripture says: 9 *The crowds going before Him and those following kept shouting, saying, "Hoshia-na to Ben-David! Baruch ha-ba b'shem Adonai! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hoshia-na in the highest!" 10 When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" 11 And the crowds kept saying, "This is the prophet Yeshua, from Natzeret in the Galilee."* (Matthew 21:9-11 TLV). The crowds placed their clothing and palm branches on the ground to welcome Him. They thought He was going to be their king and save them from the Romans. He was their king, but He had to first be a

lamb. After He entered Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*, Yeshua, the Lamb of G-d, taught daily in the Temple and was thoroughly examined by the *kohanim* and *Torah* teachers.

ADONAI used His calendar to show when the Passover lamb was to be killed. He said: 6 *“You must watch over it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight.”* (Exodus 12:6 TLV). Four days later, *Nissan* 14 in the year 30 CE, was on a Wednesday, just as it is this year. That Wednesday, outside the city gate of Jerusalem, Yeshua died on the stake at around 3 PM. The Passover lamb was to be slaughtered at twilight. The word translated as twilight is *bein ha-arbayim*, בֵּין הָאַרְבָּעִים, literally, between the two evenings. This was not an exact time, but a period of time. It was from the sun’s beginning to go down after 12 PM, noon, and the setting of the sun. In other words, the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*. Matthew 27 tells us that Yeshua died at about the ninth hour, the ninth hour after sunrise, about 3 PM. He died “between the evenings,” a period of time which allowed the Jews to have their lambs slaughtered and also to cook them before sunset. At about 3 PM on a Wednesday in 30 CE, Yeshua died for our sins. At about 3 PM, our time, this coming Wednesday, *Nissan* 14, it will have been 1,993 years since Yeshua gave His life on the cross for us. On Wednesday evening in our Passover *seder*, we will commemorate the death of Messiah Yeshua, remembering and honoring the amazing gift which He gave us. Traditional Jews have observed Passover for thousands of years and Yeshua attended yearly *seders* Himself, including the one we are told about when He was twelve years old. (Luke 2). At His last *seder*, he used its elements to tell us how through His body and blood, He would become the Passover lamb for us. At our *seder*, we will do as He commanded us, His followers, drink His symbolic blood and eat His symbolic flesh as our recognition of His sacrificial death for us.

As Passover draws nearer, our thoughts turn more and more to Yeshua’s sacrifice. While we do understand the effect that His sacrifice had for us, perfect atonement for our sins, we don’t always understand everything His death represented and how it fits ADONAI’s perfect system of atonement. There are types and shadows shown in the *Torah* and there is one in our *parasha* today which foreshadowed Yeshua’s sacrifice: 1 *“This is the Torah of the trespass offering. It is most holy. 2 In the place where they slaughter the burnt offering, he is to slaughter the trespass offering. And he is to splash its blood around on the altar”* (Leviticus 7:1-2 TLV). The Trespass Offering is also known as the Guilt Offering, אֲשָׁמָה, *ha-asham*. Isaiah prophesied: 10 *Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise Him. He caused Him to suffer. If He makes His soul a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the will of Adonai will succeed by His hand* (Isaiah 53:10 TLV). Isaiah was prophesying about ADONAI’s suffering servant, Yeshua. That’s pretty clear isn’t it? Yeshua willingly gave up His soul. But, soul is not what you think. In Hebrew, soul is *nefesh*, נֶפֶשׁ, and it means “a living being.” That was what Yeshua did. He gave His human life as a guilt offering for us; and He has seen His offspring. He has seen the millions who trusted in Him, living and dying through the centuries, even us here today.

But, there is also a paradox, in Yeshua’s death. Moses wrote: 22 *“Suppose a man is guilty of a sin with a death sentence and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree. 23 His body is not to remain all night on the tree—instead you must certainly bury him the same day, for anyone hanged is a curse of God. You must not defile your land that Adonai your God is giving you as an inheritance”* (Deuteronomy 21:22-23 TLV). By hanging on a tree, the cross, Yeshua became a curse for us. In accordance with ADONAI’s *Torah* requirement, He was taken down from the tree before sundown. (Luke 23:54). But, there was also a second paradox, one described by the writer of Hebrews: 12 *“Therefore, to make the people holy*

*through His own blood, Yeshua also suffered outside the gate*” (Hebrews 13:12 TLV). He was not sacrificed in the Temple as the sacrifices of the First Covenant were, but outside the city in disgrace. According to Galatians 3:13, He became a curse for us. He died under circumstances which men considered disgrace. The paradox of the Red Heifer in *Torah* is a picture of what Yeshua did by His death on the stake. The body of the heifer burned outside the camp made people and things unclean, but its ashes made them clean. (Numbers 19:1-10). Yeshua’s died as a sacrifice outside the camp, His body a thing of impurity according to *Torah*, but which through His death gave life.

What is our response to Yeshua’s great gift to us? Most all of us have already trusted Yeshua. But even so, in this season of Passover, each of us must examine ourselves. Regarding eating and drinking the Passover elements, *Sha’ul* said: *28 But a man must examine himself, and then let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For the one who eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.* (1Corinthians 11:28-29 TLV). It’s not too soon to take stock and begin considering our lives and whether or not we are recognizing Yeshua’s body with our lives? What should be our response to our Messiah’s gift of life to us? *Sha’ul* tells us: *1 “I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable to God—which is your spiritual service”* (Romans 12:1 TLV). Yeshua died for us. We must also die for Him, die to self. As living sacrifices, Yeshua calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. Taking up our cross daily as we are told in Luke 9:23, means to walk in obedience to His commands. It’s something we do after we trust in Yeshua. It has nothing to do with works salvation. We are already saved by grace through faith. Now, after salvation, by obeying His commands in Genesis through Revelation, those which we can keep today, we are taking up our cross daily.

Taking up our cross daily is our response to our Bridegroom who bought us with His blood? What’s another way of saying “take up your cross daily?” It is to be “faithful to Yeshua’s *ketubah*,” our marriage contract with Him, our Bridegroom. Just as the *Torah* at Sinai symbolically was a *ketubah*, a marriage contract with ADONAI, so is the New Covenant a *ketubah*, a marriage contract with Yeshua? He is our Bridegroom who will soon return from His Father’s house for His bride, a obedient bride, a bride without spot or blemish. *Sha’ul* used the imagery of a husband loving his wife to show how Yeshua loves His ecclesia, His holy community, His bride: *25 Husbands, love your wives just as Messiah also loved His community and gave Himself up for her 26 to make her holy, having cleansed her by immersion in the word. 27 Messiah did this so that He might present to Himself His glorious community—not having stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and blameless.* (Ephesians 5:25-27 TLV). Can we be without stain or wrinkle without immersing ourselves in the Word, knowing what He requires of us? Absolutely not! Unless we take up our cross daily and are obedient to what Yeshua has commanded us, we cannot. Yes, our salvation was a gift of grace, a free gift. His response to our repentance and statement of faith is His free gift of salvation. But afterward, we must live for Him with obedience and wholehearted love.

We have seen that Yeshua was an *asham*, a guilt offering for us. He was also the fulfillment of the *Yom Kippur* goat, and took His own blood into the Tabernacle in heaven. He is the fulfillment of the Scapegoat who died in the wilderness on *Yom Kippur*. All of these things had to do with atonement, ADONAI’s ways of maintaining fellowship with a sinful people under the First Covenant. Under that covenant, it was the covering of blood which protected Israel from ADONAI’s wrath. To provide the blood, something had to die. Under

the Covenant at Sinai, it was animal blood. Under the New Covenant, it is human blood, Yeshua's blood, the only sacrifice required. His blood not only covers us, but also completely washes away our sins, protecting us from ADONAI's wrath: *8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. 9 How much more then, having now been set right by His blood, shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him.* (Romans 5:8-9 TLV).

But, in this season of Passover, we think especially of Yeshua as the "Lamb of G-d who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29 TLV). In this season, it is His death as a sacrificial lamb on which we focus. In Egypt, ADONAI said: *13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. So there will be no plague among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*" (Exodus 12:13 TLV). Just as the blood on the doorposts of the houses in Egypt protected those inside, Yeshua's blood marks our hearts, our spirits, for protection from eternal separation from G-d. At His last *seder*, Yeshua said: *20 .....*, "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.*" (Luke 22:20b TLV). When our time comes, Yeshua's blood on us is a sign for the destroyer to pass over us that we might receive the life of the world to come and not eternal separation from ADONAI.

Change is coming. Malachi reported it: *23 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of Adonai. 24 He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers—else I will come and strike the land with utter destruction."* (Malachi 3:23-24 TLV). We look each year in our Passover *seders* for the coming of Elijah. Yeshua said that *Yochanan*, John the Immerser, was the Elijah for His day, the 1<sup>st</sup> century (Matthew 11:14), but there is yet another coming of the spirit of Elijah. How do we know? We just read it in Malachi. Elijah will come before the great and terrible day of ADONAI. In this coming, Elijah may or may not be a human being. It could be the spirit of Elijah, a spirit of repentance such as was seen in John which manifests in our revival which is just beginning. The spirit of Elijah will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers. In our secular, worldly culture, our children are far from their parents. Generations Y and Z, those born between 1981 and 2012, will return in humility to their fathers. The spirit of Elijah will also turn the hearts of the Gentiles back to their fathers, the Jews. The separation between Jews and Gentiles which began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century will be reversed and the Jews will be recognized as priests to the nations, their original calling by ADONAI. (Exodus 19). The whole body of Messiah, Jew and Gentile together, will welcome Yeshua when He returns.

There is something very important which everyone needs to understand about Yeshua's blood sacrifice. It has an expiration date. *27 And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, 28 so also Messiah, was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation.* (Hebrews 9:27-28 TLV). Yeshua died once for sin. His offer of salvation is open now while He is in His Father's house. But, when He returns to earth, it will be for judgment and too late for salvation for those who rejected Him. His return will be for us, to claim us, His Bride, those already having the promise of salvation and who are eagerly awaiting Him. Next *Shabbat*, the Resurrection! *Shabbat shalom!*