

	Command	Shabbat HaGadol	Wholesome Holiness
Tsav			
Torah:	Leviticus 6:8 (1)-8:36		
Haftarah:	(Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:23,24 [22,23])	Malachi 3:4-24 (3:4-46)	
Brit Chadashah:	Hebrews 9:11-28		

Our portion today, continues to outline the amazing array of offerings which the priests had to supervise. The passage begins with a special kind of nocturnal burnt offering, which was offered at the end of the sacrificial day. It was placed on the altar and burned all night, as a sign that the people's sacrificial link with JHVH was never severed, even as they slept. In the morning, the ashes of this special offering were collected and placed in a clean place outside the camp. Once this was done, the altar was open for business for another day.

Next comes an unleavened grain offering and the portion of it which was burned, was mixed with both oil and incense. The remainder was cooked and was eaten by Aaron and his sons. Some offerings were entirely consumed by fire, while others gave a portion to the priests. There were also offerings which were eaten by those worshipers who were making the offering.

The soon to be mobile camp, was going to be set up around the tabernacle and the people's lives were to revolve around both the regular cycle of sacrifices and the annual festival cycle. Unless we keep G-d at the centre of our lives through corporate worship, our lives will begin to spin out of control and we will lose victory in every area of our lives.

When the High Priest and the priests were anointed, there was a special grain offering which was cooked and cut up and offered every morning and every evening during the seven day consecration process. This offering was to be entirely burned and not eaten, because the priests belonged entirely to YHVH. We are called to the same level of belonging.

No offerings were ever eaten in the tent of meeting itself, but in a clean place close by. A portion of each atonement offering and of every guilt offering was eaten by the priests, whether it was meat or grain. The L-rd always takes care of His own.

The portion also speaks about various types of Thanksgiving offerings. The first kind was a grain offering which included some leavened bread. This was waved before YHVH and then was given to the priests to eat. It was not burned on the altar because no leavened bread was ever offered as a burnt offering. The meat portion of a thanksgiving offering could be eaten by the worshiper over a three day period. What was left over was to be burned and not eaten on the fourth day, because rot would have set in. No unclean person was allowed to eat the meat or the grain of a thanksgiving offering.

No fat or blood of any sacrificial animal was allowed to be eaten, it all had to be offered to the L-RD. The fat of a dead animal which was not offered, could be used for any useful purpose, but it could neither be eaten nor offered as a sacrifice. Only animals killed by the priests could be offered. Finally, a portion of every thanksgiving offering was always given to the priests. The L-rd still wants spiritual leaders to live off the people's offerings.

Chapter seven ends with a note that all the instructions about sacrificial rituals were given to Moses on the mountain and then transmitted to the people, likely from Moses' tent when it served as a temporary tent of meeting outside of the camp.

Just before the first sacrifices were offered in the newly completed tabernacle, the priests and their special clothing had to be consecrated. This process lasted over seven days and daily entailed anointing oil, an atonement bull, two rams and a basket of unleavened bread. This process was undertaken by Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Every day, Moses anointed the priests and the tabernacle, along with all of its holy furniture (the ark of the covenant was likely excluded from this process because this part of the tabernacle could only be accessed once a year by the High Priest alone).

Next, the blood of the atonement bull was sprinkled over the tabernacle, followed by the blood of one of the rams, designated the atonement ram. The blood of the second ram was first put on Aaron, then on his sons. It was placed on their right ear lobe (so they would always listen to the L-RD), then on the thumb of their right hand (so they would always work for the L-RD), and finally on the big toe of their right foot (so they would always walk with the L-RD). The rest of the blood was sprinkled over the altar. Are you also set apart for the L-RD?

Next, a portion of the contents of the grain basket were waved before the L-RD and burnt on the altar. The breast of the second ram was given to Moses as his portion. It was cooked and eaten by the newly consecrated priests, along with the remainder of the grain from the basket. Biblical spirituality is always practical and is designed to meet our needs.

This ritual of consecration was repeated daily for seven days. During this time, Aaron and his sons remained at the entrance to the tent of meeting, where they also ate and slept. It is not directly mentioned that provision was made for them to regularly evacuate their body wastes, but this would have been done in such a way as neither they, nor the sanctuary was defiled. I extrapolate this from the provision of a potty shovel which was later used to cover excrement at a place outside the camp when they went to war (Deut. 23:9-14). The Bible is practical.

The rituals of the sacrificial system were an integrated system of worship and offerings, which were made at the entrance of a very beautiful tent of meeting, by specially anointed men, wearing beautiful clothing. It was intended to inspire awe and was part of the wholesome holiness which the people were required to practice. G-d was to be both present and also separate, with the rituals bridging the gap and keeping the channels of communication open between the L-RD and His people. How are your channels doing?

The daily, weekly and monthly sacrifices were all geared to an annual harvest cycle and as the people came to sacrifice, they were fed as they drew close to the G-d who dwelt in their midst. The sacrificial animals were not tortured as part of the sacrificial ritual and the rabbis tell us that they had to be killed painlessly, in order for their bodies to be used in the sacrificial rituals. There is no room for any kind of cruelty, as we walk with the L-RD.

The otherworldly presence of YHVH which was to dwell in their midst, was full of glorious wonder. There was none of the gross, sexualized and perverted rituals which were practiced by the nations which Israel was going to displace. There is a big difference between the respectful awe which the House of Israel felt towards the Presence which was to dwell in our midst and the terror which pagan worshipers felt towards the abominations they worshiped.

YHVH required the practice of a wholesome holiness, totally devoid of the grotesque paganism of the Canaanites, which they were forbidden to copy or emulate. The devotion of Israel towards their majestic G-d, was orderly, and decent. How is yours doing?

Sermon: It is Written: His Marvelous Word

I am quite disappointed that we are not having our annual community Passover Seder this year. We enjoy ourselves so much and it is a very meaningful spiritual experience. Having said that, I am just glad that His Word clearly outlines a beautiful ceremony which can be celebrated in the safety of our own homes. As you make preparations, be flexible, be creative, be joyful, because, as Messianic Jews and Gentiles, this memorial ceremony has a double significance for us, because we are celebrating a double deliverance. First we are remembering our people's exodus deliverance from Egypt under Moses and then the believers deliverance from the Egypt of this world in our beloved Messiah.

Once a year, we put the L-rd's Table back in its original Seder context. It was during this Seder, that our Saviour was preparing to be offered up on the cross for the sins of the world. The angel of death passed over Jewish homes and now, in the Messiah we have escaped death altogether and possess everlasting life because of what our Messiah did on the cross.

Everything we believe about our Messiah and everything we practice, as we express our faith, needs to be firmly and fully based on His Word, which is our only authentic guide to faith and practice. As we get ready, this morning, I want to give you a threefold teaching about this unique document, so that the house of our faith does not sink into the shifting sands of the folly of this darkening age. It is based on three questions. Here they are:

1. First, how was our Bible put together and is it complete?
2. How was it transmitted over the centuries and is it reliable?
3. How should it be studied and is it stuffed full of secret messages beneath the actual words of the text?

As we proceed through this teaching, time will not permit me to go into as much detail as I would like. However, since we now have all this extra time self isolating at home, I hope to stimulate a great hunger and thirst for this divinely inspired spiritual guide book, which we should also be digging into deeply. This being said, there are kernels of truth scattered in other sources, but only the Bible speaks with G-d's voice to show us how to access life everlasting in our resurrected Messiah. How is your digging going?

It is true that the Bible is a very ancient book which was compiled over thousands of years. The first eleven chapters of Genesis form the oldest piece of writing which humanity possesses, and along with the rest of Genesis, it was passed down by our people until it became part of the documents which Moses put together.

After our people were taken in captivity in Babylon, we lost everything of value except the sacred writings, which many of our people brought with them. Sadly, some 400 documents which are mentioned in the Old Testament did not survive to be included in this amazing collection. This does not mean that we have an incomplete Bible.

While our people were in Babylon, a scholarly man named Simon the Righteous (Shimon haTzedek) gathered all the surviving documents and with the later help of people like Ezra and Nehemiah, this collection took its final form shortly after our people returned from captivity. If any of the lost books were to surface, they would not contradict anything which is written in the amazing document which we possess. Some details may have been lost, nothing more. We have the whole truth at our finger tips. What about the New Testament? If the truth be told, the New Testament is a Messianic commentary on the Old Testament and

nothing which it teaches contradicts anything which this foundational document teaches. Even though over history, many attempts were made to suppress our Bible, both the Old and the New testament come down to us as if their contents were written only yesterday.

Well, how was the New Testament put together? Once Messianic Jewish believers were put out of the mainline churches, most of the Roman Empire eventually converted to a Gentile version of our faith, but they had a big problem. There were many versions of early Christianity, but which one was authentic and how could you tell?

The answer is that just like G-d raised up a donkey to warn and instruct the prophet Balaam, he also raised up another one by the name of Constantine and used this ambitious man to drive the completion of what we call the New Testament. He wanted to use it as a weapon to enforce his version of Christianity. Thousands of documents were brought to the city of Nicaea and he also assembled 3,000 church leaders and scholars from every part of the empire. Their job was to examine all the documents and see which ones they recognized as inspired.

They established three criteria to identify which documents were recognized as inspired. The first was authorship. It had to be written by an apostle or the disciple of an apostle or, at least, by the disciple of an apostle's disciple. Nothing which was more than three generations from the original was accepted. Next, they looked at the books' content. Nothing was allowed to contradict the oral apostolic traditions which the church had received from the apostles. Lastly, they looked at how the documents had been circulated. Unless this circulation included all the churches throughout the empire, the document was rejected.

They waded through several thousand documents, including 200 Gospels, before they settled on the 27 books we have today. Again, not everything which the Apostles and their disciples taught survived to be included in the New Testament, but if any document did surface, it would not contradict that which the New Testament teaches. We lost nothing of importance.

Once the Roman world began to crumble, manuscripts of the New Testament survived the barbarian invasions, secure in fortress monasteries scattered across Europe. Scholarly monks copied these documents for generations and for the most part, they were not made available to the common man. You see, the power of the Catholic and Orthodox churches was exercised by their priests who controlled nearly every aspect of people's lives.

Once people wanted to read the Bible for themselves in their own languages, over several generations, a whole series of translations were made into nearly every modern language. Scholars could check their work against the older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to make sure that nothing new was added and that nothing old was lost. However, languages change and most translations have about a 50 year effective life span, before they need to be revised and updated. How can we tell how good a job they have been doing? A good question.

Just after WWII, the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered and a comparison was made between the Dead Sea scroll's book of Isaiah and the King James Version Book of Isaiah. Of the slightly over 20,000 words of the prophecy, only seven were different – that is a change of about .0035%. Our Bible is purer than Ivory Soap. So by making comparisons with the oldest manuscripts we can show definitively that most translators have done a good job.

Well, we are in possession of a document divided in 66 books in two major collections, called

the Old Testament and the New Testament. How should we study this amazing collection and how can we know it is not bursting with secret hidden meanings?

I could use many different passages to demonstrate our point. Here are a few: All Scripture is inspired of G-d and is useful for teaching, for conviction, for correcting in order to give instruction about righteousness, so that the man of G-d would be completely equipped and lacking in nothing (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Study to show yourself a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly interpreting the word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15). You shall put these words into practice, taking nothing away and adding nothing (Deut. 4:2). We made an example of ourselves so that you would learn to not go beyond that which is written (I Cor. 4:6). and here is my favorite: the secret things belong to G-d, but the things which He has revealed belong to us and to our children, forever, that we may put them into practice (Deut. 29:29).

Briefly stated, we can firmly establish that the meaning of the verses of the Bible are found in the usual, ordinary meaning of the words which were used. These words are explained by the contexts they are used in and in some cases we also have to look at the historical and cultural situations these words were uttered in, to get a firm grip of the meaning of certain passages. All in all, the Bible says what it means and means what it says. Nothing more and nothing less. There are no hidden or encoded, secret messages lurking under the surface.

We should always be engaged in serious Bible Study so that our faith is not overthrown and does not become infected with the unreliable traditions of men. We need to draw a firm line between the opinions of men and the teachings of the Bible. Along the way, we need to seek honest answers to our sincere questions within the limits of all that G-d wants us to understand in all that which His Word teaches. Most of the critics of the Bible attempt to destroy its credibility, not because they have found flaws and mistakes in our Bible, but because they do not like what it says and want to try and shut it down. It has never been shut down and it will never be shut down. Sticks and stones will not break its bones!

These people who do not accept the authority of the Bible have tried to extinguish the only light capable of penetrating the spiraling darkness of our fading, foolish world. It can be shown that our Bible contains no errors when it speaks on matters of faith and practice. It can also be shown that it is a very accurate historical document, within the limits of its purpose of writing. We know where all the events mentioned in the Bible occurred and we know a lot about the people who lived through them. Real people living in real time.

Passover is next week. It is a very exciting time of the year where freedom is proclaimed, both from the slavery of Egypt and from the slavery of the Egypt of this world. The Scriptures say it is the beginning of the New Year in the L-rd. Will you let His matchless Word be your guide in how you celebrate the arrival this annual transition? It is not a complicated ceremonial meal to put together, even when we have prepared for over 100 people. Go to our website and access the links on how to hold a Seder and what you need as you prepare for it. Let us know if you have any questions. G-d will bless you as you do your best!

It is both a solemn and a joyful celebration and we know that just as our Messiah delivered His people from Egypt and from the Egypt of this world, He is able to deliver us, again and again from all and any snares which try and trap us, or cause us to stumble as we wander through this life on our way home to our Father's house in glory.

Along the way, I remain a convinced biblical creationist who proclaims that the worldwide flood in the days of Noah actually occurred and shaped our world and gave it its present form. I also fully affirm that our people walked out of Egypt under the very capable leadership of Moses. There are no fairy tales or myths in the Bible. The use of poetry is not the same as the use of myth. A figure of speech can tell the truth just as powerfully as stating a fact.

I also affirm the virgin birth, the sinless death and amazing resurrection of our beloved Messiah. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. One day He will return to overthrow all the powers and principalities of our current age, as He ushers in His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind. He is G-d the Son and with G-d the Father and G-d the Holy Spirit, forms one G-d and there is no other. This is the consistent testimony of the Bible from cover to cover. One G-d who is a plural singularity (echad).

How firm is your grip on the truths of G-d's Word? How fully do you accept its authority in every area of your life? How deeply and firmly is your heart and soul anchored to the teachings of this immaculate document? Are you overcoming the attacks of the flesh, the world and the enemy, so that your faith does not wither or get choked on your pilgrimage through this life? Do you live your life according to the teachings of G-d's Word, without allowing any of the dark folly of this age to pollute your faith and how you live your life? How much of your life is based obeying the Bible alone, as you refuse to allow the twisted traditions of flawed and untrustworthy men to take root in your heart and life?

Walking with our Messiah according to His Word will not always be an easy path to take, but in light of eternity there is no life like it and it is truly the only worthwhile show in town. One day, when we stand before our King and His holy fire devours all the hay, the wood and the chaff that has clogged your life, how much of how you have lived your life will be left?

We may all suffer loss on the Day of Judgment, as the problems we have been unable or unwilling to deal with, vanish before our eyes. But there is a big difference between minor collateral damage and seeing most of what you have given your life to, catch fire and burn into oblivion, leaving you with very little that is of heavenly value. How well are you prepared?

Many churches which have strayed from the truth of the Bible will suffer loss. Many synagogues will suffer the same fate. People from all walks of life and from all religious backgrounds will stand before the Messiah from Nazareth and be judged according to the stipulations of His eternal Word. You can either encounter His Word in this lifetime and walk in its light, or you can encounter it in the next life, when it consumes all the darkness which you have allowed to lurk in the dark corners and deep recesses of your heart and soul. People who are not heavenly minded are of no earthly good. Where is your mind at?

Contact us with your comments and questions. I know I have covered considerable ground and I hope you will have many questions as you seek to align your life with the Word of G-d. Let us know how we can help, as you allow His Holy Word to enrich your life and fill it with all the treasures which are found in this singular source. Sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. Let it be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

Have a good week. Stay safe and rejoice and join us again for our next live stream next week. Same place, same station. Same Word, same message. Same Messiah.

Shabbat shalom to you and yours and may His provision and protection be the place where you dwell, especially in these trying times. It is so good to walk with our King the Messiah.