

Tsav (Give An Order)

Shabbat Morning

April 3, 2004

Torah: Leviticus 6:1 - 8:36

Haftarah: Malachi 3:4-24

Our parashah for today is Tsav (give Torah reading). It is also Shabbat Hagadol, the Great Shabbat. It is called by this name because of the greatness of Passover which closely follows it. Traditionally, much of the sermon for this day is about the laws and rituals of the Pesach holiday. It is also called Shabbat Hagadol (with tongue in cheek) because of the length of the rabbi's message, one of the longest of the year. But never fear. We're not going to follow tradition completely today. We will touch upon some of the things of Passover and a bit from Parasha Tsav, but I promise to have you out at least by 3PM.

I think probably that the best explanation for this Shabbat being called the Great Shabbat comes from the special holiday haftarah. It is Malachi 3:4-24, and the next to last line of these verses says this: *Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Adonai.* "Hinei anochi sholeiach lachem et Eliyahu Navi, lifnei bo yom HaShem, hagadol, u'hanorah." The mention of Elijah here ties in with our tradition of setting a place for him at our seder table, the singing of Eliyahu HaNavi, Elijah the Prophet, and of course our final statement: "Next year in Jerusalem," the great hope that we would be in Jerusalem with Messiah for next Passover. We spend quite a bit of time focusing on the Exodus Passover and Yeshua's Passover, as we should. But, shouldn't we also be fully aware of the Elijah message? As the scripture just quoted says: *before the coming of the great and terrible day of Adonai.* This is the day of judgment to which is being referred. Elijah will come: *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land with complete destruction.* So, this is something which we have to look forward to; the coming of Elijah. We don't know if it will actually be Elijah himself, or someone in the spirit and power of Elijah. You recall that Yeshua told his talmidim in Matthew 11 that Yochanan, John the Immerser fulfilled the prophecy regarding Elijah? Then in chapter 17 we see Yeshua on a high mountain talking with Moses and Elijah. The disciples Kefa, Ya'akov, and Yochanan are in awe and wish to build three sukkot for them. Later, as they come down the mountain this is what we read in verses 9-13: *...Yeshua ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." The talmidim asked him, "Then why do the Torah-teachers say that Eliyahu*

must come first?" He answered, "On the one hand, Eliyahu is coming and will restore all things; on the other hand, I tell you that Eliyahu has come already, and people did not recognize him but did whatever they pleased to him. In the same way, the Son of Man too is about to suffer at their hands." Then the talmidim understood that he was talking to them about Yochanan the Immerser. So, even though the Elijah message has already come through John, we are still expecting Elijah to come in the last days and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. We need that terribly today. Never before has there been so much alienation between parents and children. This is a wonderful thing to look forward to: that there would be a restoration of the relationship between parents and children.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests in Parasha Tsav also brings back to mind this statement from last week's message: Exodus 19:6 states: *"...and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart."* We are to be a nation of priests. This points out our role in HaShem's divine plan. In the days of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, only a very small portion of one tribe, the Tribe of Levi, ministered as priests. But in the latter days we have been made a nation of priests. As we've read before, I Kefa 2:9, First Peter, tells us why: *But you are a chosen people, the King's cohanim, a holy nation, a people for God to possess. Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Harry Ginsberg from Staten Island, New York was on business in Tokyo on a Jewish holiday. He asked the Japanese hotel clerk, "Excuse me. Would you happen to know if there is a Jewish synagogue here in Tokyo?" "Synagogue?" replied the clerk. "Ah so, Ginsberg-san. Ah yes? Is synagogue! Leave hotel, walk down street two blocks, turn left--banzai!--is synagogue!" So, Mr. Ginsberg left the hotel, followed the clerk's directions, and lo and behold, there was a synagogue. He entered. All of the worshippers were Japanese, as was the rabbi and the Purim service had begun. Mr. Ginsberg happily joined in. When the services were over, he approached the rabbi and said, "My name is Ginsberg. I'm from America. I just want to tell you, Rabbi, how very happy I was to be with you tonight." The Japanese rabbi beamed. "Is honor! But excuse, you Jewish?" "Certainly," replied Mr. Ginsberg. "That's funny," said the rabbi. "You not look Jewish."

And that's not too far-fetched today because we have Messianic Jewish congregations in Japan and Taiwan. *But you are a chosen people, the King's cohanim, a holy nation, a people for God to possess. Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his*

wonderful light. What does this tell us? Several things. First, we are a chosen people. HaShem has chosen us not because we are any more special than any other nation. We are chosen because our ancestor Abraham believed Adonai and he credited it to him as righteousness. And HaShem chose his descendants; chose us to be a nation of priests. We were chosen for a purpose, not just to be in the world and be preoccupied with the things of the world, but to carry out the role of priests. And this applies to all from the nations who have attached themselves as sojourners to the God of Israel; those who have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel by trusting in Yeshua as Messiah.

Second, this scripture tells us that we are "the King's Cohanim," the priests of the King. Yeshua HaMashiach, Yeshua our Messiah is that King. When he was on this earth and died for us he had not yet come into his kingdom, and he told the people as much. But now he has been anointed King and sits at the right hand of HaShem awaiting the time to return to earth. As Malachi 3:23 says: the great and terrible day of the Lord is coming. And it is in preparation for this that we have been called as priests to the nations.

Third, we are a holy nation, a people for HaShem to possess. Actually, this is the same as "a chosen people." A holy nation refers to a nation set apart; separated for HaShem's purposes. As His possession He expects us to behave in the manner which he has shown us. Not many are doing this. Yeshua told us: "Wide is the road to destruction, but narrow is the path to salvation, and few find it." We must remain committed to our calling. We were bought with a price; that of Yeshua's death, and our lives are not our own to do with as we choose. Actually, it is our choice, but the rewards differ. The reward for living our lives for ourselves ends in death while living our lives for him leads to life. We must remain committed to our calling. We were bought with a price, that of Yeshua's death.

And fourth, we are to "declare the praises of the One who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light." We all were in darkness before Yeshua illuminated our spirits. Darkness represents ignorance or lack of truth, but also is indicative of a spiritual state, one which is identified with the ruler of darkness, HaSatan.

Kefa was called the emissary to the Jews, the apostle to the Jews because this was his primary mission, just as Sha'ul's primary mission was to the Gentiles. And Kefa wrote to the Jews, at least his first letter was directed to us. It is hard to tell if that is the case with his second letter, but definitely the first. He writes in I Kefa 1:1-2: *From Kefa, an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah to God's chosen people living as aliens in the diaspora, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bythinia--chosen according to*

the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Yeshua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood.

This letter is written to "God's chosen people living as aliens in the diaspora." It was written to the Jews who were not living in eretz Israel, the land of Israel. This letter is to us today. We are Israel living in the diaspora, the dispersion of Jews scattered all over the world. We have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. Before we were born He chose us. That is, He knew that we would choose Him. The reverse is also true. Those who do not choose Him are not chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. This does not mean that He causes us to choose Him. We have free will to make whatever choice we desire and HaShem being omniscient, all knowing, knew from the foundation of the earth which choice we were going to make. Praise HaShem that we made the correct choice!! Grandma took little Marvin and Melvin with her to the corner drug store to buy them a soda. They were walking along the street, two chubby hands clutched in Grandma's, when the rebettzen approached. "Such lovely boys," she crooned. "Tell me, how old are they?" "The doctor is four," explained Grandma, "and the lawyer is six." Grandma hopes that these will be their professions, but doesn't have Ha'Shem's foreknowledge. He knows what we will be and whether or not we will serve Him.

This scripture also tells us that we have been set apart by the Spirit for obeying Yeshua and for sprinkling with his blood. The Spirit of HaShem, the Ruach HaKodesh, enters us when we repent and turn to Yeshua. Thus, we have been set apart, or made holy, for the purpose of obeying Yeshua. He is the one who gives us our orders. And he has done this throughout the gospel books. He has opened our eyes to the truth of the Torah and further explains it to us. What does "set apart for sprinkling with his blood" mean? It's again that holy calling. We don't like to use the word holy because it sounds so super-spiritual, but it just means set apart. We have been designated for his use only; and in this case, designated to be sprinkled with his blood. And once we've been sprinkled we are to call others to him to be sprinkled.

Rackman and Fleisher, partners in the garment industry, had just suffered through their worst season ever. Ten thousand madras sports coats were hanging on the rack unsold, and bankruptcy was looming closer. Out of the blue, in walked a buyer from Australia. "I say there," he began. "You boys wouldn't have any madras sports coats, would you? I've been looking for them everywhere!" Rackman allowed as how there just might be a few left, and soon a deal was made whereby the ten thousand jackets would be shipped to Australia at a handsome profit. "There is one thing, though," said the buyer. "for an order this large, I'll have to get a confirmation from my home office. I don't anticipate any problem, and

unless I send you a cable by the end of the week, the deal goes through. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday passed slowly, with the partners nervously waiting to see if the Australian would change his mind. Friday morning went by without incident. Rackman and Fleisher were closing up shop when at ten minutes to five, there was a knock on the door: "Telegram!" The partners froze. Trembling, Fleisher grabbed the cable and opened it. Suddenly his face lit up: "Benny, great news! Your sister died!" This is not intended to show any lack of respect for the dead or to place financial gain before spiritual matters, it is just a very good example of Jewish humor.

As we prepare to celebrate Passover, let's remember HaShem's great deliverance from slavery. And let us also remember what Yeshua our Passover lamb did for us. Through HaShem's glorious plan we have been made right with Him through Yeshua. And we look forward to "the great and terrible day of the Lord." For us it will be a wonderful day because Yeshua our King will judge those who have not obeyed his words. I Kefa 4:7-10 says: *The accomplishing of the goal of all things is close at hand. Therefore, keep alert and self-controlled, so that you can pray. More than anything, keep loving each other actively; because love covers many sins. Welcome one another into your homes without grumbling. As each one has received some spiritual gift, he should use it to serve others like good managers of God's many-sided grace...* The goal is close at hand and we are to "keep loving each other actively." This means that we do things which show our love. We are not just have a good feeling toward each other. Yes, that too, but also we must have action. Just as Yeshua's brother, Ya'acov, James, says: "Faith without works is dead." And just as we read about the sacrifices of the Tabernacle, we too are commanded to be sacrifices. Romans 12:10 says: *I exhort you therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God.* As living sacrifices we are to continue to approach the goal of "total commitment." As we grow in Messiah, we give him more and more of ourselves. Our goal is to give him all.

Kefa closes his letter by telling us in 5:8-11 to: *Stay sober, stay alert! Your enemy, the Adversary, stalks about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Stand against him, firm in your trust, knowing that your brothers throughout the world are going through the same kinds of suffering. You will have to suffer only a little while; after that, God, who is full of grace, the one who called you to his eternal glory in union with the Messiah, will himself restore, establish and strengthen you and make you firm. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.*

As we prepare ourselves for the Passover and the Feast of Matzah, let's focus on the whole message:

1. HaShem's grace to bring us out of Egypt and give us the Torah, our marriage ketubah,
2. His mercy from before the foundation of the world to send us Yeshua our Messiah as a way of salvation, and
3. The acceptance of our roles as priests in His holy Nation to prepare not only our own brothers and sisters, but all of the nations for coming of the "great and terrible day of the Lord," when Yeshua our Messiah will sit on his throne in Jerusalem and rule the nations in justice.

As we celebrate Passover Monday evening let's let each of these "issues of life" sink deeply into our spirits.

Praise Him who sits on the throne. Amen.