

## A Discussion on Willful Disobedience

In this weeks reading from *Parashat Ki Tisa* (*Shemot / Exodus 30:11-34:35*) there is a lot that takes place. The Scripture opens with the Lord instructing Moshe to take a census of the people (*30:12*). The Torah states that and each person is to give a ransom (half-shekel) to the Lord when he is numbered. Moshe provides details on the construction of the bronze laver (*30:17-18*), and the ingredients for the spices used in making the incense to be used to make the cloud for use in the tabernacle (*30:23-33*). Moshe went up the mountain of Sinai (*32:1*) and spent a considerable amount of time on the mountain. The people saw that Moshe was away for 40 days and asked Aaron to make gods for them to worship. Aaron took gold from the people and made a golden calf for them to worship (*32:2-6*). The Lord tells Moshe to descend the mountain because the people have corrupted themselves, and He seeks to destroy the people for their sins. Moshe reminds the Lord of the covenant promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*32:7-13*). Moshe descends the mountain and destroys the two tablets (Aseret Hadibrot) because of the people's sin (*32:14-19*). Moshe grinds the golden calf into fine powder, mixes it with water, and causes the children of Israel to drink it. He then instructs the people to dedicate themselves to the Lord as he returns in an attempt to make atonement for their sins (*32:29-30*) and it is interesting how Moshe ascends the mountain without a sacrifice. Moshe asks to be blotted out of the book of life if the Lord will not forgive the people (*32:31-34*). He also asks that the Lord's presence come with the Children of Israel (*33:12-17*) and he asks to see God's Glory (*33:18*). The Lord shows Moshe His glory and declares who He is, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, and having grace, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin for thousands (*34:6-7*).

Reading through the Torah portion this week, in the opening paragraphs the Lord provides instructions regarding the Shabbat. The Lord says that the Shabbat is to be an everlasting ordinance. The Sabbath rest is to be a sign of the covenant that God is making with His people. In addition to this, the Lord speaks of intentional disobedience as opposed to the Torah's descriptions to unintentional disobedience to the command.

**ספר שמות פרק לא** *Shemot / Exodus 31:12-18*

יב ויאמר יהוה אל-מֹשֶׁה  
 לאמר: יג ואתה דבר אל-בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לאמר אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי  
 תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵין-  
 נִיכְמֹת לְדוֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי  
 יְהוָה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם: יד ושמרתם  
 אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לָכֶם מִ-  
 חֲלִילָהּ מוֹת יוּמָת כִּי כָל-הָעוֹשֶׂה  
 בָּהּ מְלָאכָה וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ  
 הַהִוא מִקֶּרֶב עַמִּיהָ: טו שֵׁשֶׁת  
 יָמִים יַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשִּׁבְעִי  
 בִיעֵי שַׁבָּתוֹן קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה  
 כָּל-הָעוֹשֶׂה מְלָאכָה בַּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
 מוֹת יוּמָת: טז וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 רְאֵל אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-  
 הַשַּׁבָּת לְדוֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם:  
 יז בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת  
 הוּא לְעֹלָם כִּי-שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה  
 יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ  
 וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹשׁ:  
 ס [שני] יח ויתן אל-מֹשֶׁה  
 כְּכִלְתּוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי  
 שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת לַחַת אֶבֶן כְּתוּבָה  
 בִּים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים:

*31:12 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 31:13 'But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 31:14 'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 31:15 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 31:16 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 31:17 'It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.' 31:18 When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God. (NASB)*

Reading through the Torah portion this week, the Lord speaks of the “*sign*” of the covenant as being the Sabbath Rest, ויאמר יהוה אל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לאמר אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵין-נִיכְמֹת לְדוֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם: *31:13 'But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. (NASB)* The Shabbat is meant to indicate that it is

the Lord God in heaven who sanctifies (makes holy) His people. Is this interpretation consistent with the Christian interpretation of the Jewish observance of the Shabbat? The Lord says that the Shabbat is to be an everlasting sign (אֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם). The Shabbat rest is a sign of the covenant that God is making with His people. When studying the Torah it is important to note how intentional disobedience is connected to the Shabbat, as opposed to the Torah's descriptions of unintentional disobedience with regard to bringing the Sacrifices before the Lord at the Tabernacle (*Vayikra / Leviticus 5*). Let's look at how the rabbis interpret these verses, and then discuss.

### ***Mishnah Shabbat 7.1***

*They [the Sages] stated a major rule they with respect to Shabbat: [If] one [entirely] forgot the principle of Shabbat, and performed many Melakhot [constructive activities forbidden on Shabbat and festivals] on many Shabbatot, he is only liable for one Chattat [an offering brought to expiate sin]. [If] one was aware of the principle of Shabbat, but performed many Melakhot on many Shabbatot he is liable for [one Chattat] for every Shabbat. [If] one knew it was Shabbat and performed many Melakhot on many Shabbatot, he is liable [to bring a separate a Chattat] for every principal Melakhah. [If] one performed many Melakhot all of which stem from the same principal Melakhah, he is bound to bring but one Chattat.*

The Mishnah speaks of the mitzvah to rest from work on the Shabbat, and if one had forgotten this command, performing many acts of work (Melakhot) on the Sabbath, he is only liable for one Chattat, as opposed to the one who knows the mitzvah, and does the same, is guilty of one Chattat for every Shabbat he worked. The Mishnah then describes the atoning sacrifice, the one who knew is to bring many, as opposed to the one who did not know is to bring one. The point is that it is the Lord God who brings rest to our souls, and the work of this world has the capacity to draw us away from the Lord and to weigh down on our soul. The significance of Sabbath rest is described in the Torah as, וְשִׁמְרָתֶם אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת, יֵד כִּי קָדֵשׁ הוּא לָכֶם מִחֻלְלֶיהָ מוֹת יוּמָת כִּי כָל-הָעֹשֶׂה בָּהּ מְלָאכָה וְנִכְרְתָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא

מקָרַב עֲמִיהָ: 31:14 ‘... you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. (NASB) And טז וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם כְּרִית עוֹלָם: 31:16 ‘So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’ (NASB) The Sabbath is to be celebrated as a period of rest that has been given as a gift from God, and the Torah describes this covenant of the Shabbat as עוֹלָם and everlasting covenant.

Shney Luchot Habrit, Vayakhel, Pekudei, Torah Ohr 16 has the following to say concerning these Scriptures.

***Shney Luchot HaBrit, Vayakhel, Pekudei, Torah Ohr 16:***

*While the Sabbath with its gift of the נשמה יתירה, the additional soul which inhabits every Jew on that day, represents one sixtieth of what the Sabbath in the future will hold, the Tabernacle too is conceived of as affording us a glimpse of one sixtieth of what the World to Come will be like. This is the deeper meaning of the statement in Shabbat 10 where G'd is quoted as telling Moses that He had a wonderful gift for him and the Jewish people called Sabbath. This is the reason for Exodus 31,13. G'd announced that He was going to bestow that gift. From this Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel derived the rule that one must inform the mother of a child if one wishes to give the child some bread (ibid.). The Talmud challenges this deduction, citing Rabbi Chama who wants to prove that one does not need to inform the recipient of a gift he will receive. He points out that upon his descent from Mount Sinai Moses was unaware of G'd's gift and only covered his forehead -which by then was emitting rays of light- after he became aware that the people had become afraid to approach him (34,29 32). The Talmud does not recognize a contradiction here, saying that matters which become common knowledge need not be announced by the donor beforehand. This argument is challenged by a scholar who asks: "Is not also*

*the Sabbath something that becomes common knowledge, and yet the prohibition of work had to be announced?" The answer given to this is that the reward for observing the Sabbath is certainly not something that becomes common knowledge without being announced. [Rashi assumes that the reward, though not spelled out in the text, was announced by Moses orally. Ed.]*

According to Shney Lichot HaBrit, the Shabbat is paralleled to being given an extra soul, represents 1/16 of a future Shabbat, and is a glimpse of the Olam Haba (World to Come). This is why we are told in the NT that in Yeshua we are given rest because he is the one who ushers us into the Olam Haba. The deeper meaning of the Shabbat is that it is a gift to God's people. If the Shabbat is a gift, why do Christians act as if it is a burden? The commentary speaks of a reward for obeying the Sabbath rest, even though it is not spelled out in the Torah. The reward appears to be the Lord giving us a portion of His glory, indicated by the comments of the gift that was given to Moshe, and his having to cover his head due to the glory of God shining forth from his forehead. The Shabbat rest may also be a description of the Lord giving us a portion of Himself, to rest and to be at peace.

Sefer Kuzari has the following to say concerning these Scriptures.

***Sefer Kuzari 2:34:***

*34. The Rabbi: Do not believe that I, though agreeing with thee, admit that we are dead. We still hold connection with that Divine Influence through the laws which He has placed as a link between us and Him. There is circumcision, of which it is said: 'My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant' (Genesis 17:13). There is further the Sabbath, 'It is a sign between me and you throughout your generations' (Exodus 31:13). Besides this there is 'the covenant of the Fathers,' and the covenant of the law, first granted on Hōreb, and then in the plains of Moab in connexion with the promises and warnings laid down in the section: 'When thou shalt beget children and grandchildren' (Deuteronomy 4:25). Compare further the*

*antithesis: 'If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven' (Deuteronomy 30:10); 'Thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God' (Deuteronomy 30:2), finally, the song: 'Give ear' (Deuteronomy 32:1); and other places. We are not like dead, but rather like a sick and attenuated person who has been given up by the physicians, and yet hopes for a miracle or an extraordinary recovery, as it is said: 'Can these bones live?' (Ezekiel 37:3). Compare also the simile in the words: 'Behold my servant shall prosper'; 'He has no form nor comeliness,' 'Like one from whom men hid their faces' (Isaiah 52:13; which means that he is, on account of his deformity and repulsive visage, compared to an unclean thing, which man only beholds with disgust, and turns away; 'Despised and rejected of men,' 'A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' (Isaiah 53:3).*

The commentary speaks of having a connection with the Lord, and speaks of Circumcision in the flesh, the Shabbat, and the covenants related to these two things. The rabbis are making an argument of being dead or alive in relation to the covenant and keeping the Shabbat. Their question is with regard to the blessings of God, and remaining in the covenant, and being alive or dead. The rabbis believe keeping the faith is synonymous to being obedient to these two things, circumcision and the Shabbat. By keeping the faith, he believes they remain alive in the covenant with the Lord God in heaven, even though they are acquainted with grief, due to the manner in which they are being treated by the nations and by others.

Sforno states the following concerning these Scriptures:

### ***Sforno on Exodus 31:13, Part 2***

*אות היא ביני וביניכם, a symbol serving as a reminder of our mutual relationship. If you were to ignore this symbol by building a residence for Me on this day, there would be no point in doing so as I would not then take up residence in that Tabernacle.*

The Shabbat is an outward sign of a mutual relationship with the Lord God in heaven. By disregarding the command, the Lord's response is that

He will not reside in the Tabernacle that is built. The reason being, the Lord is seeking those who have faith, and who are willing to live out their faith according to God's Word.

The Mekhilta has the following to say concerning these Scriptures.

***Mekhilta 31:14, Part 1***

*(Exodus 31:14) "for it is holy to you": We are hereby apprised that the Sabbath confers holiness upon Israel. "Why is that man's shop closed?" "Because he is a Sabbath observer." "Why is that man not working?" "Because he is a Sabbath observer." He testifies about Him who spoke and brought the world into being that He created His world in six days and rested on the seventh. And thus is it written (Isaiah 43:12) "And you are My witnesses, says the Lord, that I am the Almighty."*

According to the Mekhilta, the Shabbat is what causes Israel to be holy, this is in agreement with the Torah text. By obeying the Shabbat, one bears the testimony of God in heaven, and bears witness that the Holy Scriptures are true.

Akeidat Yitzchat states concerning these Scriptures.

***Akeidat Yitzchak 55:29***

*3. How can the words "whosoever desecrates it will be executed," (i.e. by a human tribunal) be followed by "whosoever performs work on that day, his soul will be cut off from his people," (suggesting death by Heavenly tribunal Exodus 31:14-15) How does one statement lead to the other?*

The idea here is related to the willful disobedience to God's Word. If one is willfully disobedient, is there a way to obtain atonement? The author of the book of Hebrews is in agreement with Akeidat Yitzchak saying,

***Hebrews 10:26-31***

*10:26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacri-*

*fice for sins, 10:27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. 10:28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 10:29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 10:30 For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (NASB)*

The author of the book of Hebrews speaks of willfully sinning, and having knowledge that there is no sacrifice for willful sins. This is a pretty weighty matter if we consider that is being said according to the Torah portion this week and the comments of the rabbis. The Torah makes note of “*if a man sins,*” in *Vayikra / Leviticus 5* regarding the atoning sacrifices. This suggests that the Lord God in heaven is seeking a people who do not sin but provides a way for forgiveness for those who find that they have been disobedient. Note that repentance and faith are the prerequisite to bringing the proper sacrifice before the Lord at the Temple.

As we see here in Hebrews chapter 10, for those who are acquainted with rabbinic literature, it is very easy to find texts in the NT that parallel rabbinic thought. It is always interesting to note just how similar many NT teachings parallel those of the rabbis. For example, Yeshua is quoted in Mark as coming to the defense of some of his disciples who had been criticized by the Pharisees for breaking the laws of the Shabbat. Yeshua said that they had done no wrong since “*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*” (*Mark 2:27*). Some readers over the centuries have concluded that Yeshua was making an antinomian statement by devaluing the Shabbat. However, students of rabbinic literature will recognize that Yeshua’s words sound very similar to those of Rabbi Yonatan b. Yosef in the Talmud, explaining why the Sabbath may be desecrated to save a human life (*Talmud Bavli Yoma 85b*): “*‘It [the Sabbath] is holy for you’ means that the Sabbath was handed over to you and you were not handed over to it.*” This is not to say that Yeshua and Rabbi Yonatan

would necessarily agree with the criteria that justifies the breaking of the shabbat, but Yeshua's response to the Pharisees appear much more orthodox rabbinic when read beside those of Rabbi Yonatan.

Take another example, the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*) reads, on a rhetorical level, like an anti-rabbinic text. In it Yeshua argues that the righteousness of "*the Scribes and the Pharisees*" is insufficient and he challenges his followers to strive for what he considered a higher level of morality. Also, note how the "*Lord's prayer*" (*Matthew 6:9-13*) is introduced by Yeshua with a charge to his followers not to pray the way the hypocrites pray in synagogue. The interesting fact is every phrase that Yeshua taught his disciples to pray can be found in rabbinic literature and in the siddur. For example the opening phrase, "*Our father who art in heaven*" is simply the Hebrew phrase "*avinu she-ba-shamayim*," found in the beginning of many rabbinic prayers. And the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount are, on most points, very similar to those of the rabbis. Another example Yeshua said in *Matthew 19:9* that divorce is permitted only in a case of adultery and his position is presented there as being in stark opposition to that of the Pharisees. Students of Mishnah know that a great rabbi in the generation before Yeshua said the same thing according to the opinion given by the house of Shamai in the *Mishnah Gitin 9:10*.

The point of this weeks Torah portion is focused upon what the Lord says to Moshe and to the people, the "*sign*" of the covenant is the Sabbath Rest, יג וְאֵתָהּ דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי:

31:13 וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' הַזֶּה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם: *'But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. (NASB)* The Shabbat is meant to indicate that it is the Lord God in heaven who sanctifies (makes holy) His people. The Lord says that the Shabbat is to be an everlasting sign (אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם). The Torah speaks of the everlasting nature of the mitzvot due to the everlasting character of God and His holiness, righteousness, and truth. Do the mitzvot pass away with the coming of the Messiah? Or is the Messiah One who teaches Torah and encourages others to do the same? The Shabbat rest is a sign of the covenant that God has made with his people, and we are told in the Messiah Yeshua, we are given rest, a direct parallel to the mitzvah on the Shabbat, just as the author of the book of Hebrews states in *Hebrews 4:9 So there remains a*

*Sabbath rest for the people of God. (NASB)* The Lord God in heaven is the One who sanctifies us. This is connected to what we have been discussing on intentional disobedience and the Shabbat, as opposed to the Torah's descriptions of unintentional disobedience with regard to bringing the Sacrifices before the Lord at the Tabernacle (*Vayikra / Leviticus 5*). It is imperative that we seek to live as the Lord wants for our lives, to live in righteousness, justice, truth, and holiness and to seek the Lord God in heaven for His help to do so. This is what the Lord wants for our lives, and this is what He has given us in Yeshua the Messiah, the capability to be overcomers and to bear the testimony of God's grace!

