

How do we learn to balance the value of these two aspects of our faith? How do we remember the many imperatives we see in the Scriptures to demonstrate love toward others (i.e., 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Romans 12:9-17)?

Many generations of Jewish people faithful to the Lord's ways have experienced the blessings of *Shabbat*, and we can hope that many who truly pressed into Him on the seventh-day were supernaturally revealed the truth of Messiah Yeshua as they sought God for answers. Similarly—and whether or not today's Messianics really want to admit it—many generations of Christians faithful to the Old Testament have also experienced the blessings of the Sabbath, albeit they have observed it on the first day. Even though a “Sunday Sabbath” was not our Father's original intention, He has still honored the dedication of many Christians in past history who strived to make Sunday a day of abstention from work and commerce—something which only in the latter-half of the Twentieth Century was really lost.

In our day as the Father restores His people through the growth of the Messianic movement, not only will Jewish Believers get to experience the blessedness of the Sabbath by their faith in Messiah Yeshua—but many non-Jewish Believers will get to experience some of the things that have made Jewish remembrance of *Shabbat* so special. The edifying traditions that enable us to really focus on who the Lord is, and which bring us together as families and communities where He dwells, can help focus our remembrance of the Sabbath as we consider who we all are as His *redeemed* people. We all await the return of our King, and the much greater rest He will bring to us in the future (Hebrews 4:9-11).⁴²

V'yakheil וַיַּקְהֵל
He assembled
“Stirred and Willing Hearts”

Exodus 35:1-38:20
 1 Kings 7:40-50 (A); 7:13-26 (S)

V'yakheil describes the beginning phases of the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. You should recall that the specific description of the *mishkan* (מִשְׁכָּן) or Tabernacle had been given to Moses several months earlier, as recorded in previous Torah portions. *Terumah* (Exodus 25:1-27:19) has detailed the offerings and contributions that were made by the people for its construction. *Tetzaveh* (Exodus 27:20-30:10) goes into great elaboration about worship related articles and the specific dedication instructions. *Ki Tisa* (Exodus 30:11-34:35) relates the trials endured by the Israelites, as they could not patiently wait for Moses to come down from the mountain with this wealth of information. Our reading for this week begins with the word,

“Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, ‘These are the things that the LORD has commanded *you* to do: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy *day*, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death’” (Exodus 35:1-2).

⁴² For a further discussion, consult the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

If you attempt to understand the chronology between the end of *Mishpatim* (Exodus 21:1-24:18) and the beginning of the construction phase, you see that two forty-day periods had passed (Exodus 24:16-18; 34:28), and probably a number of other days. Various Jewish sources have noted that the construction began on the 11th of Tishri, right after Moses had descended from Mount Sinai after the second set of forty days and forty nights. It occurred on what would later become the Day of Atonement:⁴³

“The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights... So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exodus 24:16-18, 28).

Without dissecting the specifics about the actual timing, the Israelites were certainly being prepared for the Lord to dwell in their presence. They had already experienced the trauma at the base of the mountain when the thunder sounded, the lightning flashed, the ground shook, and the blast of *shofars* issued great warnings. They had already determined that Moses needed to be their spokesperson and representative before the Creator.

In recent weeks, they had impatiently rebelled against the Lord and had worshipped a golden calf. Upon Moses’ first descent from the mountain, judgment came in the form of death by either sword-wielding Levites or the ensuing plague. After Moses’ second descent, the hearts of Israel were definitely prepared for making an offering for the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. At this point in the narrative of Exodus, our Torah portion *V’yakheil* begins.

A Shabbat Reminder

Interestingly, as Moses assembled the people of Israel to begin bringing their freewill offerings and start the construction of the Tabernacle, the admonition to remember *Shabbat* is declared and further defined.⁴⁴ In spite of His dwelling being built, the Lord is very concerned about the need for the people to have a weekly day of rest so they do not get worn out, otherwise He would not have instructed Moses to mention the Sabbath again.

Even a project as significant as the construction of the Tabernacle, and the other implements of worship, does not take precedence over the observance of *Shabbat*. The Lord declares *Shabbat* to be a holy day or *yom qodesh* (יִּום קֹדֶשׁ), and told the Ancient Israelites that those working shall be put to death. The Lord further defines work for them by stating that the kindling of a fire in one’s habitation was also a violation. We see some of the instructions from our previous *parashah* (Exodus 31:12-18) repeated:

“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. 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’” (Exodus 31:13-14).

Is the Lord trying to make Ancient Israel aware of the importance of *Shabbat*? For those of us who are studying the Torah today, the constant repetitions about

⁴³ A. Cohen, ed., *The Soncino Chumash* (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 565.

⁴⁴ Exodus 35:1-3.

Shabbat should begin to sink into our hearts. Obviously, our Father is very serious about this sign that is supposed to set His people apart. Even though the sacrifice of His Son may have taken away the physical death penalty originally prescribed to ancient Sabbath-breakers, by not taking a day of rest—could we find that we are cutting ourselves off from being able to rest and bask in His presence?

Collection for Construction

After the *Shabbat* warning, the whole community of Israel is assembled and the collection of articles for the construction project begins.⁴⁵ It is evident from the outpouring that is recorded, that the hearts of the people were tenderized for the moment of giving. Certainly, a degree of solemnity circulated among the people as their hearts were beginning to stir toward their freewill offerings. Just where was their treasure going to be found? *It was surely going to be with the purposes of Israel's God.* We can consider the applicability of Yeshua's later word: "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Throughout Exodus 35, the Hebrew term *lev* (לֵב) or "heart" is used nine different times.⁴⁶ This is very significant, because as we know, the Lord is most concerned about the hearts of His people and how they are to be turned toward Him. Of course, the "heart" is very complicated to understand because it has multiple meanings or an array of applications throughout the Scriptures. The word *lev* is "usually rendered as heart but whose range of meaning is extensive...it usually refers to some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of one's inner nature as well as one of its components" (AMG).⁴⁷

In these passages we are introduced to at least two different kinds of hearts, if not more. First, we see the "willing heart" that is inclined to make offerings without any strings attached. Here, the Hebrew verb *nadav* (נָדַב), or a derivative like the adjective *nadiv* (נָדִיב), is coupled in some way with *lev*. *Nadav* means "voluntary desire of the heart to give of oneself or of one's resources to the service of the Lord" (AMG).⁴⁸ The following verses bring forth the absolute willingness of the people of Israel to freely offer all that was necessary for the construction project:

"Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing [adj. *nadiv*] heart, let him bring it as the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze...Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved [verb *nadav*] him came and brought the LORD's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments. Then all whose hearts moved [adj. *nadiv*] them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so *did* every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD...The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved [verb *nadav*] them to bring *material* for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD" (Exodus 35:5, 21-22, 29).

The other type of heart that is mentioned in this section of Scripture is a heart of wisdom, which some versions render with either "skill" (NASU) or "ability" (RSV). Here,

⁴⁵ Exodus 35:4-9, 20-35.

⁴⁶ Exodus 35:5, 10, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29, 34, 35.

⁴⁷ Baker and Carpenter, 536.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 708.

one of the most common Hebrew terms for wisdom, *chokmah* (חִכְמָה), is coupled with *lev*.⁴⁹ *Chokmah* means “wisdom, skill, experience, shrewdness” (*AMG*).⁵⁰ The following are examples of it being employed in Exodus 34. You can detect from these passages that God Himself endowed these artisans with hearts of wisdom to help produce the diverse parts of the Tabernacle:

“All the women whose heart stirred with a skill [*chokmah*] spun the goats’ hair... He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill [*chokmah*] to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs” (Exodus 35:26, 34-36).

The people of Israel responded to not only the offering of materials, but also the construction project from what skill or “wisdom” issued forth from their hearts:

“Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill [*chokmah*] and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded. Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill [*chokmah*], everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it. They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing” (Exodus 36:1-4).

Many hearts had been stirred during the preceding months. When the opportunity to give to the Lord had arrived, they willfully gave abundantly. In fact, the offering was so overwhelming that Moses had to tell the people to stop bringing materials:

“[A]nd they said to Moses, ‘The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded us to perform.’ So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, ‘Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary.’ Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more. For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it” (Exodus 36:5-7).

Heart Condition

As you consider *V'yakheil* this week, with its focus on the heart, it might be a good time to reflect upon your own heart condition. The examples I have listed above show how the Ancient Israelites whole-heartedly responded to the challenge of building the Tabernacle. Perhaps what they demonstrated in ancient times can be used to bring some introspection into our own hearts, at this hour of great turmoil in the world. Think of such an examination of the heart like your annual physical, or your car’s regular oil change.

It is not by chance that we are considering this section of Scripture as the world suffers diverse, and rather serious conflicts. Hearts all over the globe are challenged by decisions that are made in high government circles, often without their consent. Many people are filled with questions for which they think there are no answers. Perhaps the Lord will

⁴⁹ Exodus 35:26, 31, 35.

⁵⁰ Baker and Carpenter, 337.

position *you* to be available to those who are asking about life's big issues. Be prepared to share the "hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15), this hope being the gospel message of salvation. We should seriously consider having our *hearts stirred* toward the Holy One of Israel, while imploring Him to give us *hearts of wisdom*.

Just how do we respond to the opportunities presented each day, to offer ourselves for the work of the Kingdom? Are you mustering, by your freewill, to choose to serve the Lord with your resources and talents? What about those of you who have been given a heart of wisdom with the innate ability to skillfully create things for the King's use? Are you using your God-given talents for your own benefits, or for the edification of His Kingdom?

These and a flood of questions might come to mind as we ponder our hearts, wills, inclinations, resolutions, and determinations. We also might be reminded that a hardened heart is wickedly deceitful, as described by the Prophet Jeremiah:

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Even if you have received salvation in Messiah Yeshua and have a regenerated and transformed heart, we still live in a world where most people do not have regenerated and transformed hearts. *We are surrounded by these people every day*, and whether we acknowledge it or not, we can be affected by them. The Psalmist reminds us that we have a need to treasure God's Word in our hearts, so we remain unaffected by the power of sin:

"With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:10-11).

We are similarly instructed in Proverbs how God's Word is to be imprinted onto our psyche, as we trust in Him and are led by Him:

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:1-6).

Trusting in God with all your heart, and not relying upon your own limited human "wisdom," is critical in maintaining a good life. Letting God direct your path as you acknowledge Him in all your ways, gives Him preeminence in your heart and the course upon which you walk. *Such will be a long life of peace and tranquility*. It will be a life certainly guided by love for God and neighbor, the foremost of the Torah's commandments. Yeshua, when asked about the greatest commandment of all, responded to this end:

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

Clearly, the Lord wants all of our hearts, all of our souls, and all of our minds. His description of the greatest commandment expresses the need for one's heart to be totally dedicated to the imperatives of love—*because saying and thinking are not enough*. The Apostle John emphasizes how we must let our love for God manifest itself by our positive actions of service:

“But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things” (1 John 3:17-20).

Here as you read and reflect on these words, the contrast between “with word or with tongue” versus “in deed and in truth” are quite sobering. How are we measuring up to these strong words? How does your heart respond when you see needs among those in the assembly? If we fall short of extending compassion to others, perhaps we need to cry out to the Lord for more of Him and His stirring our hearts. We know that if we are His and we ask in faith, He will pour Himself out for us:

“[A]nd whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

We thank you, Father, that we can confess to you the condition of our hearts! Stir our hearts, O God! Soften our hearts with the oil of gladness! Fill us with your Ruach! Make us willing vessels that depend upon You for all things. Use us that You may be glorified through all that You do through us.

***Pequdei* פְּקוּדֵי** Accounts “The Glory of God”

Exodus 38:21-40:38

1 Kings 7:51-8:21 (A); 7:40-50 (S)

This week's Torah portion, *Pequdei*, concludes the Book of Exodus. Although some important things occur in our selected reading, Exodus ends with some very meaningful words, as the Tabernacle is completed and the Ancient Israelites prepare to enter into the purpose that the Lord has set for them:

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel” (Exodus 40:34-38).

In *Pequdei*, we see the appearance of the glory of God in the completed Tabernacle:

“[T]he cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the LORD filled the Tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34, NJPS).

For the past ten readings, since the introduction of Moses in *Shemot*, the Israelites have been on a somewhat soul-searching journey in the wilderness. Their emotional “roller coaster” that began with their deliverance from Egypt, has now culminated with God's glory residing in their very midst. If you did not know any better, you might think that a considerable amount of time has passed, because the people of Israel have been through an intense period of getting to know their God. But instead, it has really just been a little over