

Parashah Seventy-One

Exodus 34:27–36:38; Jeremiah 31:31-40; 1Corinthians 12:1–13

notes by Tim Hegg

In this *parashah* we learn of the final meeting of Moses with the Almighty upon Sinai, the re-issuing of the Ten Words (עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים, *‘aseret hadevarim*) written upon two stone tablets, the descent of Moses from the mountain to the people, and the subsequent construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings in accordance with God’s instructions. It is noteworthy that the Sages of old collated the reading from Jeremiah 31 as the *haftarah* for this Torah portion in the triennial cycle. In so doing, they recognized that the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah fit the re-writing of the Torah (as summarized in the Ten Words) after Moses destroyed the first set of tablets in the face of Israel’s disobedience at the Golden Calf incident. In their minds, the re-writing of the Torah upon the heart of Israel was pictured in Moses’ returning to the people with the re-written words upon the new tablets. Moreover, the response of the nation, in bringing their abundant contributions for the construction of the Tabernacle, evidenced their willingness to receive the Torah. Furthermore, our Torah portion reiterates seven times that the people contributed as their hearts were “stirred” or as their hearts “moved them” (Ex. 35:5, 21-22, 26, 29, 34; 36:2), corresponding to Jeremiah’s promise that the Torah would be written upon the heart in the establishment of the New Covenant. Even as the Ten Words were written by the finger of God (we should understand the phrase in 34:28, “And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments,” to refer to God), so the writing of the Torah upon the heart is likewise the work of the Almighty.

In 34:28 the notice is given that Moses remained upon the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights, a number that is usually symbolic of a period of testing (the deluge of the flood; the wilderness wandering of Israel; periods of rest during the days of the Judges; the taunting of the Philistines with Goliath as their champion; the temptation of Yeshua in the wilderness). Later on (Deut. 9:25; 10:10) Moses explains to the people of Israel that he was two times upon the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights as he interceded for the people, imploring God that He would not destroy them for their sin. Once again, Moses stands as a foreshadow of the Messiah Who would likewise undergo testing, and would emerge victorious as the intercessor for His people.

When Moses descended from the mountain, he was not aware that his face was shining, the result of talking “face to face” (cf. Ex. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10) with God. The glory of God was shining in the face of Moses. The Hebrew uses the verb קָרַן (found only here in the *qal*, cf. Ps 69:32 for its use in the *hitpael*) to describe this phenomenon. The context, as well as the parallel with Hab 3:4 (“He has rays flashing from His hand”) suggests that the meaning of this verb is “rays of light” that went out from the face of Moses, as likewise interpreted by the Lxx, Peshitta, and Targums. The verb, however, is related to the noun קֶרֶן (*keren*) meaning “horn” or “strength,” which was most likely used here as a direct negation of the golden calf. The *power* of God is revealed in His Torah, not in a molten image. Recognizing the connection to the word for “horn,” the Vulgate translated the verb with *cornutus*, “having horns,” which in turn gave rise to Michelangelo’s famous statue of Moses with horns.

It is instructive to note carefully what happened as a result of the shining of Moses’ face. At first, Aaron and the rulers were afraid to come near to him. But after Moses calls to them, they return and he relates to them the commandments he had received while on the mountain. Then, after he had finished speaking with the people, Moses put a veil over his face, but the text does not explain why. Many commentators have suggested that he did so in order to assuage the fear of the people, but this hardly

seems reasonable. Apparently they were not afraid of the brilliance of his face, for after Moses calls to them, they return and listen to his words. Furthermore, the text goes on to explain that whenever Moses would go into the tent of meeting to inquire of God, he would remove the veil, and when he emerged from the tent, the people would see that his face was shining. He would thus replace the veil over his face until he entered the tent again to speak with God. Thus, the text before us gives no clear indication regarding the purpose of the veil.

It is this ambiguity that gives rise to Paul's midrash on our portion in 2Cor 3. We know, from Exodus 24, that the One with whom Moses spoke was none other than the Messiah, Who is the physical representation of God, and in Whom is the "radiance of His glory" (Heb 1:3). As such, the glory that shone in the face of Moses was, in fact, the glory of Messiah. With that in mind, Paul understands the veil over Moses' face midrashically. Since Moses can stand as a metonym for the Torah itself (cf. 2Cor 3:15, "...Moses is read"), for Paul, the glory of Messiah shines forth from the Torah (cf. Rom 10:4, "For Messiah is the goal of the Torah..."). But in order to see the glory of Messiah in the Torah, one must have one's eyes opened by the work of the Spirit. When the Spirit "unveils" the glory of Messiah in the Torah, those who read and hear it, see and believe upon the Messiah. But apart from this work of the Spirit, the glory of Messiah in the Torah is veiled. This corresponds to the words of Isaiah 6:9–10, "He said, 'Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' 'Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.'" Yeshua refers to this text to explain why He taught in parables (Matt 13:14; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40, cf. Acts 28:26–27).

Unfortunately, the English translators of 2Cor 3 have been influenced by yet another interpretation of why Moses wore a veil. From ancient times, Christian commentators have suggested that the reason Moses put on the veil was because he did not want the people to see that the glory or shining of his face was fading or diminishing with time. Thus, many newer translations speak of the glory in Moses' face as "fading away" (cf. 2Cor 3:7, 13). But the word translated "fading" (καταργέω, *katargeo*) means "to render ineffective," "to annul," "to do away with," but it never means "to fade." In reality, what Paul is saying in his midrash is that the veil upon Moses face was for the purpose of rendering the glory "ineffective." Instead of seeing the glory of God, which would bring a person to believe, the veiled glory had no effect. Thus, the NET Bible has it correctly translated: "and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective" (2Cor. 3:13). The veil was put over the face of Moses (and by analogy, over the Torah) so that the glory of Messiah could not be seen. But whenever the Spirit of God takes away the veil, the glory of Messiah is seen (=known), and thus received. While God allowed the veil to remain so that the nation of Israel would not see the glory of Messiah in the words of Moses, in the Apostle's proclamation of the Gospel, God was removing the veil and many were seeing and receiving the Messiah Yeshua.

Chapter 35 of our Torah *parashah* gives a brief summary of the words spoken by Moses to the people after descending from the mountain. It consists of primarily two sections: the first is a reiteration of the Sabbath commandment, and the second is the instructions for the people to bring contributions for the construction of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). Why would Moses first reiterate the Sabbath commandment, and then admonish the people to bring their offerings? The purpose seems clear: the bringing of the materials for constructing the *Mishkan* was to be done from a heart of gratitude for the covenant God had made with Israel. The Sabbath was the sign of the covenant (Ex 31:12ff), and the Tabernacle was the central revelation of God's way of salvation within the covenant (through the work of a me-

diator [priest] offering sacrifices). The arrangement of our text, in which the Sabbath commandment precedes the request for contributions, teaches us that access to the Tabernacle was available only to those who were covenant members. One could not be an outsider to the covenant and expect to have communion with God via the Tabernacle. Or to put it another way, one could not expect to enjoy the fellowship offered in the Tabernacle if one was not willing to accept the covenant as God had revealed it. Here, as is the case throughout the Scriptures, obedience and faith are wed together as inseparable partners of a single reality.

In this reiteration of the Sabbath commandment, Moses adds “You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day” (35:3). The Sages understood the verb *בָּעַר* (*ba‘ar*, used here in the *piel*) to mean “begin a fire anew,” and ruled that it was permissible to use a fire that was kindled before the Sabbath. This gave rise to the rabbinic rule that one was obligated to kindle a fire prior to the Sabbath, which most likely was the basis for instituting a blessing over the kindling of fire (as seen in the blessing for lighting candles on the eve of Sabbath). The Karaites, however, reacting to the rabbinic interpretations, spent the Sabbath day in darkness (see the comments of Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, p. 222 and n. 2). Some later Karaites, however, broke with their traditions, and accepted the rulings of the Sages regarding fire on the Sabbath.

In attempting to understand the meaning of this prohibition, one might cross-reference Jer 7:18, “The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle (מְבַעְרִים) the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me.” Here, the kindling of a fire is linked to the process of gathering wood. If we collate that with the incident in which a man is caught gathering wood on the Sabbath (Num 15:32ff), a transgression that received the death penalty, we may understand that the prohibition for kindling a fire was given as an example of the kind of work that was to be suspended on the Sabbath. In this way, kindling a fire would be seen as the “common work” of the six days, which was to be set aside on the Sabbath.

The admonition to the people, that they bring offerings of goods and materials needful for the building of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, was met with happy compliance. The people were so moved in their hearts that they gave abundantly. So great was the outpouring of the free will offerings, that Moses was forced to constrain the people: “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” (36:6). This notice is in stark contrast to the heart of the people as they engaged in the idolatry of the golden calf. There, they were entirely consumed with their own needs. Here, they willingly give of their wealth in order to construct the Tabernacle according to God’s instructions.

This illustrates an important principle made clear by the teaching of our Savior: “... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21, cp. Lk 12:34). The treasures we have are not only our material wealth and money but also our time and our life energy. Our *parashah* is a sober reminder that as our hearts are more and more given over to loving God, we will be willing to use our treasures to accomplish the advancement of His kingdom and the sanctification of His Name upon the earth.

The remainder of our *parashah* is essentially a reiteration of the instructions for constructing the Tabernacle and its furnishings, now changed to narrate the actual construction. The point of such a repetition is that the Tabernacle was constructed precisely according to the instructions of God. This is the connection with our Apostolic portion. In 1Cor 12, Paul speaks of each member of the community as being endowed with a particular ability given by the Spirit. Even as the people of Israel each contributed to the building of the Tabernacle, so each member of the body of Messiah contributes to

the building up of the community in Yeshua. Not everyone has the same task, but everyone's task is important. Even as Bezalel and Oholiab were singled out as leading craftsmen in the production of the Tabernacle, so there are those in the body of Messiah who may have a more conspicuous duty within the community. But this in no way diminishes the high importance of the work done by those whose contribution may not be so public. Paul uses the metaphor of the human body itself: not everyone is an eye, or a hand, but every part is necessary for the proper functioning of the whole. "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (v. 18). By way of illustration, then, we may ask ourselves how we are contributing to the growth and building up of the community of Yeshua. Do we have the same heart demonstrated by Israel of old, to bring our "willing contributions" (i.e., to function in the manner in which God has gifted us by His Spirit) in abundance?

As I noted above, the Sages saw a clear connection between the rewriting of the Torah upon the new tablets that Moses brought with him the second time, and the writing of the Torah upon the heart of Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah. Our *haftarah* contains the only occurrence of the term "New Covenant" (בְּרִית הַדְּשָׁה) in the Tanach. It is to this text that Yeshua refers when He identifies the cup of redemption in the Pesach seder as representing the "new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:20, cf. 1Cor 11:25), meaning that His subsequent sacrifice upon the execution stake would procure everything necessary to bring about the New Covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah. Likewise, Paul identifies himself as a servant of the "new covenant" (2Cor 3:6), because in His proclamation of Yeshua as the Messiah, the New Covenant would be realized through the salvation of God's chosen people. In this same way, the writer to the Hebrews identifies Yeshua as the "mediator of the new covenant," (9:15; 12:24).

But what exactly is the "New Covenant?" Unfortunately, this terminology has become so common place in Christian theology that people regularly talk about the "New Covenant" without really considering what it actually is. Usually, the New Covenant is viewed as opposite of the "Old Covenant," which many people identify with the "Old Testament." In fact, the designations "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are nothing more than another way of saying "Old Covenant" and "New Covenant" (since our English word "testament" is derived from the Latin *testamentum* meaning "covenant"). Thus, the Christian Church has regularly taught that the "Old Covenant" or "Old Testament" was the precursor of the "New Covenant" or "New Testament," and that since Yeshua has established the "New Covenant," the "Old Covenant" has been abolished or relegated to an inferior position. Given such a theology, it is no wonder that the "Old Testament" always takes a "back seat" to the "New Testament." In fact, in many churches, the "Old Testament" is essentially neglected, with the exception of the Psalms and a few of the prophetic passages.

In reality, the designations "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are the fruit of Replacement Theology formulated by the early emerging Church. Believing that God had abandoned Israel, and that He had replaced her with the new, "spiritual" Israel, the Scriptures of Israel were considered antique (old) while the Scriptures of the Church (those of the Apostles) were received as relevant (new). The Hebrew Scriptures constituted the Bible for "old Israel," while the Apostolic Scriptures were received as the Bible for the "new Israel." It is not uncommon to hear the teaching that "as Christians, the New Testament alone is what we obey." Thus, if something is found in the "New Testament," it is received as normative (or at least it is supposed to be received as normative), while the instructions and commandments of the "Old Testament" are relegated to bygone eras. The oft heard slogan is: "the New is in the Old contained; the Old is by the New explained." But if we were to accept this as true, we would have to say that before the canonization of the "New Testament," no one was able to explain the "Old Testament," and we know that is not the case. The so-called "Old Testament" was the very Bible used

by the Apostles in their proclamation of the Gospel, and the Hebrew Scriptures were the means by which all true believers came to faith in the centuries before the Apostles. In fact, the teachings of the Apostles cannot be understood apart from the Hebrew Scriptures. Rather than the “New Testament” shining light back upon the “Old,” the Tanach is a light shining forward to illuminate the teachings of the Apostles.

In view of this, we do well to reconsider the words of Jeremiah and seek to understand how he defines the New Covenant. First, we see specifically that the New Covenant is made “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (31:31). Yet in v. 33, the New Covenant is made “with the house of Israel,” without mention of “the house of Judah.” What the prophet is indicating is that the New Covenant is made at a time subsequent to his own, when the dispersed tribes of Israel will be regathered and reunited as the single people of Israel. Even to this day, that has not yet happened.

Second, Jeremiah contrasts the New Covenant with the “covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke...” (v. 32). As he demonstrates in the following verses, the contrast is not in the substance of the covenant itself, but in the response of the house of Israel to the covenant. The covenant of Sinai was broken, not by God (for He gave it as an eternal covenant), but by the generation of Israel that came out of Egypt. In contrast, Israel will be faithful to the New Covenant.

Third, the reason Israel will be faithful to the New Covenant is because God will sovereignly write it upon their heart: “I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it” (v. 33). God does not have two different Torahs! The Torah that He will write upon the heart of Israel in the day of their salvation is the same Torah that He wrote on tablets of stone, and put into the hands of Moses. It is this same Torah that is written on the heart of everyone He brings to salvation. Thus, Paul could confess: “I joyfully concur with the Torah of God in the inner man” (Rom 7:22) and David could say: “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You” (Ps 119:11).

Fourth, this sovereign work of writing the Torah upon the heart of the nation of Israel is the fruit of Yeshua’s work in procuring salvation for the elect. Jeremiah indicates that the essence of the New Covenant is to be found in the forgiveness of sins: “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (v. 34). We know that there is no forgiveness of sins apart from the payment of sin offered by the death of the sinless One. The New Covenant, then, as Jeremiah foresees it, occurs at a time when the House of Israel has come to receive God’s forgiveness for their sins. This means that on a national scale, Israel will receive Yeshua as their true Messiah—as the only means for them to stand righteous before God. Once again, it is clear that even up to our own times, this has not occurred.

Finally, the result of the establishment of the New Covenant is that the nation of Israel will be faithful to God: “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know Adonai,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares Adonai” (v. 34). Here, the idea of “knowing Adonai” should be understood in a covenant sense: to “know Adonai” means to have intimate, faithful relationship with Him in the context of a covenant of marriage (note v. 32, “even though I was a husband to them”). Once again, such a covenant faithfulness *on a national scale* has never been seen in Israel.

But all of these characteristics have been the norm for the believing remnant in every generation. Every true believer, then, has participated in the New Covenant as the first fruits of the final harvest. But the fulfillment of the New Covenant is yet future, for it awaits the national revival and salvation of the physical offspring of Jacob. It is to this that Paul points when he writes: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery...that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the

fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:25–26). When this comes to pass, something new indeed will have taken place, for the remnant of Israel, enlarged by the ingathering of the elect Gentiles from the nations, will at last include not a part but the whole of the Jewish nation.