

WHY WE CAN'T HAVE NICE THINGS

A Devotional Meditation on Tetzaveh (You Shall Command)

Exodus 27:20-30:10; Ezekiel 43:10-27; 1 Kings 12:12-19;
Luke 16:10-13; Romans 3:1-4; Galatians 3:29; Hebrews 7:11-28, 8:8-12

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Sometimes I break things. That's why we have a set of seven glasses in our kitchen cabinet. It used to be a set of eight, but I broke one the very first time we used those glasses. My wife and I laughed about it, but it was a reminder to be more careful about handling our fragile kitchenware, and so far, I've been able to avoid more accidents.



Photo by Arthur, August 5, 2009, [via Flickr](#).

It's one thing to break dishes by accident, but quite another to break them on purpose. That might happen when a person throws dishes, bottles, or whatever comes to hand in a fit of anger, but sometimes it's simply foolishness. I remember one such occasion with fellow soldiers in Germany, when the beer we imbibed inspired us to send our glasses hurtling into the fireplace. We could have wrought havoc on the furniture as well, but we chose to limit our celebratory destruction to beer mugs and wine glasses. We didn't think about the trouble we caused for the housekeeper the next day, or the cost to the lodge where we were staying.

Are people destructive by nature? Children seem to be. We teach them to take care of their toys to help them learn proper conduct with possessions, both their own and others'. We teach them manners so they can act responsibly in society. Children who don't learn these lessons are the ones who drive their mothers to exclaim, "We can't have nice things!"

We laugh when we hear that, but we should think about why a family can't have nice furniture, special dishes, shiny bicycles, or expensive clothes. Irresponsible children often grow up to be irresponsible adults, careless not only with possessions, but also with relationships. Irresponsibility contributes to poverty. If a person cannot demonstrate responsibility with his or her own possessions, who would trust them with jobs at which they are responsible for expensive machinery, or clients' accounts?

This is a biblical principle. Yeshua summarizes it this way:

One who is faithful in the smallest matters is also faithful in much, and the one unjust in the smallest matters will likewise be unjust in much. So then, if you cannot be trusted with unjust wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? Now if you have not been trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you anything of your own?

Luke 16:10-12 TLV

We understand the practical applications of this in daily life, but what about the broader spiritual applications? What is it in the spiritual realm that God wants to trust us with, but can't? Spiritually speaking, why can't we have nice things?

There's an answer in Ezekiel, but we will miss it if we don't understand our identity in Messiah. God says this to Ezekiel regarding His Temple in Jerusalem:

"You, son of man, describe the House to the house of Israel, so they will be ashamed of their iniquities. Let them measure accurately. If they are ashamed of all they have done, sketch out the House for them, its layout, its exits and its entrances, its complete design, with all its ordinances and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so they may observe its complete design and all its ordinances and do them. This is the *Torah* of the House: the whole territory around it on top of the mountain will be most holy. Behold, this is the *Torah* of the House.

Ezekiel 43:10-12 TLV

We overlook this passage because we think it's only a Jewish thing. It most certainly is a "Jewish thing," for the Jews are the custodians of the oracles of God. However, we, too, are part of the nation of Israel, according not only to Paul's testimony that in Messiah we are Abraham's seed, but also according to the terms of the New Covenant that the God of Abraham sealed with Messiah's blood:

For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says *ADONAI*, when I will inaugurate a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not remain in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says *ADONAI*. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says *ADONAI*. I will put My *Torah* into their mind, and upon their hearts I will write it. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no more will they teach, each one his fellow citizen and each one his brother, saying, 'Know *ADONAI*,' because all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins I will remember no more."

Hebrews 8:8-12 TLV

We call ourselves "New Covenant believers," but do we know that the New Covenant is what brings us into the House of Israel? Notice that God makes this covenant with both parts of His Chosen People: The House of Judah (the Jewish people), and with all the rest of us from the nations. That's why His Torah applies to us all, and why Christians and Jews are in covenantal relationship with one another and with the God of Israel.

Notice that Ezekiel is told to explain the Torah of the Temple only if this newly-recovenanted House of Israel is ashamed of their iniquities. This is something else we miss. We understand the need for personal repentance and salvation in Jesus, but we don't yet understand our connection to the Covenant Nation God chose to be His representatives on earth. He brings us into Israel for that purpose. That's why the history of Israel is our family history, and why we need to know it. Our Jewish kin did desecrate the Temple with abominations, but our spiritual ancestors of the House of Israel were the ones who turned their backs on the Temple when they rebelled against the God of Israel and His Anointed ruler, David, and his heirs. Their abominations filled their hearts to the

point of reckless rebellion against the Son of David, and that's why Messiah Son of David had to come looking for them to graft them back into the Covenant family, while simultaneously making a way for the Jewish part of the family to keep the promises of redemption to Israel alive simply by their continued existence as the Chosen People.

It all comes together in the Temple, just as it all came together in the Tabernacle long ago. That moveable sanctuary was a shadow or model of the permanent Temple in Jerusalem, where heaven and earth meet. In turn, the Temple is a shadow or model of the Temple in heaven. Messiah is the connection running through all of these sanctuaries. In Heaven, He is the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, interceding for us with His Father. On earth, He is the King of Israel and the world, receiving the ministry of the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem, and the ministry from the priesthood of all believers in the tabernacles of our hearts wherever we happen to be.

With this in mind, think about those beautiful garments of the High Priest. Our Heavenly High Priest also wears splendid garments made more beautiful by the stains of His own blood shed on our behalf. We have priestly garments as well – white robes of righteousness testifying to our identity in Him. The question is, are we ready for those robes and everything that goes with them? If not, what keeps us from having such nice things?