

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS:	Torah Bo:	Exodus 12:1-13
	Haftarah:	Jeremiah 46:18-20
	Brit Chadasha:	Romans 12:4-8

*I will pass over you, and
the negef [strike or blow that causes the recipient to stumble or reel] will not impact you*
[Exodus 12:13(b)]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 18:49-50;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #12, *Sh'ma Koleinu* – Hear our Cry!

Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe v'el-Aharon b'erez Mitzrayim l'emor – Then the Holy One spoke to Moshe and to Aharon in the land of Egypt, saying ... *Ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodashim* – This moon/month shall be the head/lead of moons/months for you Exodus 12:1-2a.

Egypt is crying out like a woman in hard labor. Contractions are coming rapidly now; and each one seems exponentially more intense than the last. Yet *one more contraction* ... and there will need to be a pressure release. Yet *one more contraction* ... and the urge to *push* will be too strong to resist. A Great Nation will then be birthed. The Avrahamic Covenant will then be able to expand from the *micro-level* (i.e. the one man, one household level to which it was introduced) to the *macro-level* (i.e. the vast hordes as numerous the stars of the heavens and/or the sands of the seashore which the Holy One has been promising all along). The sons and daughters of the Covenant are coming forth at last – and the Holy One is rearranging the ecosystem around them to make room for their emergence as vessels of Light and harbingers of *tikkun olam*.

Meanwhile, In the Outside World

Birthing is a messy and uncomfortable process. In order for a new life to be born there must be a thoroughly – albeit temporarily - traumatized and exhausted womb. For the new nation coming forth from the seed of Avraham – Am Yisrael – the traumatized and exhausted womb is that of the land of Egypt. Previously the greatest empire in the world, the land of the sphinx and the pyramids is now groaning and doubling over like a woman in the throes of childbirth. Pharaoh - the richest, most powerful human, and most egotistical being ever to live on the planet - has come face to Face with Someone far more powerful, possessed of vastly greater resources. Pharaoh's usual tactics of control - occult manipulation, intimidation, and the diplomacy of deceit - have failed miserably. He has played

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every card in his hand but one – the charge of his mighty chariot brigade. Every effort he makes to restore his nation and its people to the status quo backfires – and at the end of the day makes him look petty, foolish, and weak. Even his most trusted advisors are beginning to turn on him. His store cities have become ghost towns. His storehouses are almost empty. His sorcerers have run out of spells. His astrologers have run out of imagination. The political pundits on his payroll have run out of ways to spin the narrative in his favor. The palace is in full-blown damage control mode. Pharaoh and his oligarchs have lost any semblance of control – even over their own emotions, much less the stunning events that are suddenly transpiring in their domain. Ugly secrets of narcissistic perversion have been exposed. But do not weep for Egypt - Egypt will survive. The phenomena that are being experienced in the land of the pyramids are about a whole lot more than judgment – much less ‘social justice’. These phenomena are inaugurating the next phase of the Creator’s Grand Plan for the redemption of humankind and the restoration of Creation to its intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and harmony. All this was planned out in detail before the foundation of the world. Every strategic act in the drama was scripted before Egypt even existed. The Great Extraction had to happen – and it had to happen *now*. The moon under which it is happening heralds a glorious new age for humanity, it is to always be remembered, in every generation, as anniversary of our nation’s birth.

It Is All Happening According to Plan

The great drama of redemption that we are watching unfold in the world’s greatest superpower nation did not by any means happen overnight. Generations ago, after the Tower of Babel incident, one clan of Cham’s descendants – the group identified in Genesis 10:6 as ‘*Mitzrayim*’ - broke off from the other Chamites. These *Mitzrayim* – whom the Western world has come to know as ‘Egyptians’ - took up residence in the Nile River Valley. After settling in that area the *Mitzrayim* developed a culture obsessed with the dark magic of the occult – and the wealth, power, and sense of superiority their occult arts promised them. They became the most prolific human traffickers the world has ever known. They invaded and conquered the adjoining nations of Nubia and Libya. They were not by any means kind to either. Those they did not kill they forced into slavery. Ever expanding their territory by military conquest, they eventually forced slavery upon many other people groups. For over a thousand years they used their slave populations as minions. By 2600 BCE they had begun using these subjugated peoples of Africa to build the ‘Great Pyramids’. A century later they forced them to build the ‘Great Sphinx of Giza’. And, of course, there were many more cities, and storehouses, and virtually anything else the Pharaohs or noblemen of Egypt happened to decide they wanted built. Gradually they turned their aspirations for domination Eastward, to Arabia, Kena’an, Phoenicia, and on

into Southwest Asia. For centuries they have done whatever they pleased, whenever they pleased no matter who suffered as a result. But no longer. They have imposed their will on the peoples of the world, and thumbed their noses at the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, long enough.

***It's Been A Long, a Long Time Comin', But I Know –
a Change Is Gon' Come!***

A few centuries ago, however, the descendants of Avraham and Sarah – the eternal Covenant Partners of the Creator of the Universe – were brought into Egypt to serve as His ‘witnesses’. Remember, one of the eternal ‘Divine Whisper-Promises’ made by the Holy One made to Avraham and his descendants is ***‘I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse’*** [Genesis 12:3]. When descendants of Avraham come into a region, or among a people, that can be either very good – or very bad – for the local population. It all depends on the way the locals choose to relate to the descendants of Avraham they encounter. What did the Egyptians choose to do in relation to Avraham’s descendants? In the very early days, while they were still influenced by the wisdom of and the Holy One’s blessing upon the brilliant Hebrew statesman Yosef, the Egyptians welcomed the descendants of Avraham into their land – or at least a remote, swampy part of it which they established as the first of many Hebrew-only ghettos in the world. As long as they did not harm the Hebrews, the Egyptians found themselves richly blessed – just as the Holy One had promised would happen. Alas, after Yosef died the attitude, the rhetoric, and the behavior of the Egyptians in relation to the Hebrews quickly turned sour. For generations, instead of blessing the children of the Avrahamic Covenant, the Egyptians have chosen to relate to the Hebrews through lenses of distrust, disgust, and hate. The Hebrews have become the convenient social, political, and religious scapegoat for every social and/or economic ill Egypt even imagines, much less experiences. Fueled by an endless flow of scapegoating propaganda, Egyptians as a culture have now become absolutely obsessed with paranoia regarding the Hebrews. They have therefore rounded the Hebrews up, herded them into labor camps, and forced them into hard labor. They have branded their male children as contraband and sentenced them to death. They have shown what it means for a nation to curse Avraham’s descendants.

As a result of the Egyptian people’s extremely cruel behavior toward its Hebrew minority, the blessing that Yosef and the Hebrews brought to Egypt and its families in the days of Yosef has gradually dried up. Just a little fragment of the misery the Mitzrayim have sown, family by family and bloodline by bloodline, over centuries, they are now reaping. Their entire occult-obsessed, materialism-focused, human-trafficking culture is suddenly reeling. The God of the Hebrews

is turning their manipulations and oppression right back on their own heads. He is releasing a series of brilliantly conceived strategic strikes aimed at every pressure point the Mitzrayim have used to inflict misery on others. He is delivering a series of carefully measured strategic strikes through the rod of a simple shepherd. These strikes are dismantling the culture that slave trade built one piece at a time, inflicting the minimum amount of damage necessary to achieve the Divine Purpose. The Egyptians wanted signs and wonders – they have them. They have delighted in intimidating and oppressing other peoples; they are getting a taste of exactly what intimidation and oppression feel like from the other side. Will they now *sh'ma* the Voice of their Creator, as He calls them to repent and make restitution? Will they humble themselves and learn to value the lives of other human beings? Will they quit attacking, oppressing, and forcefully imposing their will upon, other nations? Will they quit harvesting for themselves the natural resources the Creator has given to other nations? Will they free the people groups they have forced into slavery? Will they eschew human trafficking? Or will they all cling to their illusions, their trust in the occult arts, and their arrogant attitude of racial, cultural, economic and national superiority – and ride the beast of pride and perversion all the way into the abyss of judgment? Time will tell – for Egypt, and for any nation or culture similarly disposed. But whatever choice they make, the Grand Redemptive Plan of the Holy One will go forward, right on schedule.

***With the Holy One, It is Never Primarily About Judgment;
It is Always Primarily About Laying the Groundwork
For The Next Phase of His Grand Redemptive Plan***

Though it may appear to the untrained eye that the primary focus of the narrative of the Exodus story is on the judgment of the *Mitzrim* for their oppression of helpless foreigners, there is also something much bigger going on. There is a much *greater story* being told than Heaven's strategic release of long-delayed disciplinary actions against Egypt. There is a far more glorious tale being told by *Sefer Sh'mot* than the Holy One releasing surgical strikes against Egypt's sadistic social and cultural norms, its societal obsession with the dark world of the occult, and against the abominable practices of its religious cults. The Holy One has not stepped out of eternity into time to rain down judgment upon Egypt. He never comes merely to close a door of darkness, oppression and death; He always simultaneously opens another door – a door that will lead a remnant of survivors to a new and better way of life. The Holy One never appears on the earth merely to bring judgment upon the purveyors of oppression, perversion, and misery; He always replaces whatever depraved and corrupted system or people He is judging with something else – something or someone that will offer the world a better way – a way pregnant with redemption, with respect for human life and potential,

with kindness and mercy at its core, and with hope for the future burning in its heart.

There is indeed *something much bigger* going on. What is the Father really doing with all this give and take, move and counter move? What is the greater story going on? What are we really supposed to be seeing, hearing, and taking note of?

Introducing the Sh'ma People

In today's aliyah the true focus of the narrative is clearly revealed. Our attention is finally going to be directed away from the Holy One's judgments upon the *Mitzrim* and to the most important thing that has really been going on all along - the *formation and nurturing by the Holy One of the sh'ma people through whom He intends to effectuate His Plan of Redemption for mankind*. What are *sh'ma people*, you ask? *Sh'ma people* are, quite simply, people who sh'ma. It is a matter of *responding to auditory stimuli*.

*Sh'ma*² is a very common verb in the Hebrew language. Western minds, however, have a really hard time with this verb. Our English Bibles have real trouble translating it. Sometimes, for instance, our English Bibles translate the Hebrew verb *sh'ma* as 'listen'. Other times our English Bibles translate *sh'ma* as 'hear'. Still other times our English Bibles translate *sh'ma* as 'obey'. The English language, you see, really does not have a word that satisfactorily translates the Hebraic action described in the word *sh'ma*. That is because of the nature of the Western mind – which equates verbs only with *bodily functions* – as opposed to *the functioning of the whole man, including his soul and his spirit*. Note therefore that the English words *hear*, *listen*, and *obey* all describe only *outward, physical – i.e. bodily - responses to auditory stimuli*. The Hebrew verb *sh'ma* starts with auditory stimuli as well, but it deals with the effect of such stimuli at a much, much deeper level than outward, physical or bodily responses. The verb *sh'ma* addresses the effect of auditory stimuli – sound waves, vibrations, words, and musical notes - *upon the innermost being – the soul and spirit and life force – of the human being*. When used in Torah, the Hebrew word *sh'ma* most frequently describes the effect of spoken words on *the inner man or woman*. In relation to the words of the Holy One, all of which have '*Light, BE!*'-type creative and prophetic power in them, the word *sh'ma* describes *the changes wrought by the Holy One's life-changing words from the inside out*.

Sympathetic Resonance

Consider the principle called 'sympathetic resonance', taken from the world of physical science. If you take two similarly tuned tuning forks and mount them on

² Sh'ma is *shin, mem, ayin*.

opposite ends of a wooden box, then *strike one*, the other will begin to *vibrate sympathetically*. Mute the one that was struck, and the un-struck mounted fork can be clearly heard making the same sound. Now consider that every physical structure on earth [from a guitar string to a crystal goblet to a human being] has its own built-in *natural frequency*. If something else - some outside initiator - sounds the same or even a very similar frequency in the presence of any physical structure, that second physical structure, though not physically touched at all, will actually start to *vibrate sympathetically*.

Sympathetic vibrations can be *disastrous*, as when howling winds cause a suspension bridge to sway violently. Or they can merely be *fascinating*, as when a soprano's voice causes a champaign glass first to *vibrate*, then *hum*, then *shatter* into pieces. Hence, on the third day of Creation, when the Holy One said, ***Eretz [earth], bring forth plants bearing seed, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed ...***, the molecular structure of the *eretz* began first to vibrate, then hum in sympathetic vibration with the Divine Voice. As the Champaign glass shatters under the voice of the soprano, so the *eretz* shattered under the Voice of the One Who created the soprano's vocal cords. Shaking with sympathetic vibrations, the molecular structure of the *eretz* was altered, rearranged, and restructured to the point that it DID – and still does - produce plants bearing seed, and trees bearing fruit in which was their seed³.

What does all that have to do with *sh'ma people*, you ask? Well, consider that what the *eretz* did in response to the word of the Holy One on Day 3 of Creation was not to 'listen', 'hear', or 'obey', but was instead to ... you guessed it ... *sh'ma*. The molecules that made up the *eretz* did not merely do what they were told - they responded sympathetically to the point that they totally changed natures. The atoms and molecules that made up the *eretz* received a Divine empowerment through His spoken Word, and in response underwent a dramatic – and irreversible - internal transformation. In the context of living organisms, biologists might call such a phenomenon '*recombination*'⁴. To *sh'ma*, you see, means to be changed internally – and permanently - by sound or words.

Souls Resonating With the Holy One's Voice – and Lives Transformed by the Whisper of His Words

The effect of such an internal change of a human being in response to the word of the Holy One is described beautifully in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. There Moshe exhorts us:

Sh'ma Yisrael: The Holy One our God, the Holy One is Echad!

³ Genesis 1:11-12.

⁴ Recombination is defined as *the natural process of breaking and rejoining DNA strands to produce new combinations of genes and, thus, generate genetic variation*.

*You will love the Holy One your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.
And put these words which I command you today in your heart.
Teach them diligently to your children,
and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way,
when you lie down, and when you rise up.
Bind them as a sign on your hand, and as frontlets between your eyes.
And write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

As can be seen from this passage, *sh'ma* people are a people within whose souls and spirits the words of the Holy One vibrate/resonate and have their intended creative, prophetic effect. As a result, certain predictable physical responses of the tongue, the hands, the eyes occur. As the words of the Holy One are welcomed into the heart of a *sh'ma*-person, they embed themselves into that heart like an embryo embeds itself into the wall of a woman's uterus.

It is about much more than mere *obedience*, however. Obedience is merely one *predictable physical result* of *sh'ma*-ing – and a lower-level predictable result at that. You see, Beloved, obedience can also result from other sources and with other motivations besides *sh'ma*-ing. Obedience can – and often does, result from inferior – even perverse – motivations. Some obey out of a *desire to manipulate*. Others obey out of fear. Still others obey out of *indifference*. What *sh'ma*-ing – as opposed to ‘obeying’ – entails being transformed in the innermost being by the vibrations of *sympathetic resonance to the Divine Voice*. Instead of doing what seems right in their own eyes or according to the philosophies and creeds of the cultures in which they were raised, *sh'ma* people *sh'ma* the words spoken concerning them by the Holy One. As described in Deuteronomy 6, that means, at a minimum, that they *listen carefully for, recognize when they hear, value highly, pay close attention to, receive as Divine empowerment, meditate on, and conform inward thought and word as well as outward action to the Divine message*. Chanoch [KJV ‘Enoch’] and Noach were *sh'ma* people. Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov all became *sh'ma* people after the Holy One spoke to them. Are you *getting it*? Okay. If you caught all that you now understand what the Holy One is doing vis-à-vis the slave population in Egypt. He is through Divine Utterance about to transform a motley crew of slaves, primarily descended from Yisrael, but including many other peoples, into a nation of people whose lives demonstrate the process described Deuteronomy 6:4-9. He is about to create a *sh'ma* people.

The Process of Transformation Requires Tuning to A New Calendar

Are you one of the Holy One's *sh'ma*-people? Is your inner ear tuned to *the Voice of the Great King*? Is every day that you spend on earth *a living illustration of*

Deuteronomy 6:5-9? Do you know where, according to Torah, the *sh'ma* lifestyle begins? It begins with something very simple - *the calendar by which you choose to order your life*. I am not talking about the printed paper calendar you have hanging on your wall. I am talking about THE CALENDAR OF REDEMPTION WHICH THE HOLY ONE HAS FOREVER ENGRAVED ON YOUR HEART.

The first step in the transition of the Hebrew people from a diverse group of slaves into a *sh'ma* people is set forth in today's aliyah of Torah, with the introduction by the Holy One of a totally new calendar which He intends for His people to follow. In Egypt, you see, the Hebrews had always operated under, and had always organized their lives pursuant to, the Egyptian calendar. The Holy One, however, had something much better in mind for His people. The Holy One wanted His people to have a totally different means not only of calculating, but even relating to the medium of time. A few short weeks before the plague of the firstborn occurred the Holy One made a startling pronouncement to Moshe and Aharon:

Ha-chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodashim

This moon/month will be the head/lead moon/month to you.

rishon hu lachem l'hodeshei Ha-shanah

It will be the first moon/month of the year.

[Exodus 12:3]

We do not know exactly what the circumstances or timing concerning this pronouncement were. In my mind I picture the Holy One appearing to Moshe and Aharon the night He lifted the plague of darkness. I picture the Holy One calling Moshe and Aharon's attention to the heavens. I picture Moshe and Aharon's eyes focusing upon the first light they saw that night – the first silken sliver of the new moon bursting forth from the thick darkness that had accompanied the plague. And I picture Moshe and Aharon staring in awe at that sliver of new moon as if it were, for them, a recurrence, or remembrance, of sorts, of the Light that burst forth from primordial darkness in Genesis 1:3 in *sh'ma* response to the Holy One's declaration of ***Yehi Ohr! – Light, BE!***

Despite the fact that Egypt was a land in which the 'sun god' was the primary object of worship, the calendar of Egypt was not ordered according to the cycle of the sun. The ancient Egyptian calendar was, instead, based upon the cycle of a star we know today as *Sirius* - the brightest star in the heavens, located near the constellation Orion. Twice the size of, and 20 times brighter than, earth's *sun*, Sirius was visible in the ancient Egyptian sky for all but approximately 70 days each year [approximately mid-April through the end of June]. The Egyptians celebrated the new year on the first new moon following the reappearance of Sirius in the

Egyptian sky after its annual hiatus. Why did the Egyptians base their calendar around the cycle of *Sirius*? Because the re-appearance of this star, which as aforesaid in ancient times occurred around the end of June or first of July each year, happened to correspond almost perfectly with the beginning of the annual flooding of the Nile. It was that annual flooding, which deposited rich, black silt on the land alongside the Nile that prepared the otherwise dry, sterile, desert lands of Egypt for sowing and growing life-sustaining crops⁵. Since the rising of the star the Egyptians called *sepdet* [*Sirius*] coincided with the rising of the waters of the Nile each year, an ancient myth developed connecting the two. According to the myth, *sepdet* [*Sirius*] was actually *Isis* - the Great Mother of all gods and queen of *nature*. They believed the Nile flooded each year in response to *Isis* weeping over the murder of her husband, *Osiris* - who the Egyptians believed was then assigned to rule the afterlife⁶.

Such was the basis of the calendar of the Egyptians – the only reckoning of time, which those in slavery in Egypt for multiple generations, such as the Hebrews, had heretofore ever known or needed to know. But the Holy One made it clear this was not to be the calendar – or way of approaching time – followed by His people after He redeemed them. The Holy One, Who *invented time* - operates on, and wants His people to live by, a different kind of calendar than the Egyptians. The Holy One did not want His people reckoning time according to folk-legends of the peoples of the world like the legend of *Isis*. The Holy One desired – and instructed - His called-out *nation*⁷ to see and relate to time according to *His calendar, instead of any calendar produced by man*. The Holy One’s calendar is not the calendar of the nations of the earth. The Holy One’s calendar is *kadosh* – holy, set apart, unique to the Holy One’s redeemed people. In subsequent portions of Torah – particularly in Leviticus 23 - the Holy One will fill in the specific dates on the calendar He has given us, and will instruct us concerning specific activities in which we are to participate on those dates. For now He merely establishes the beginning – and focal - point of the calendar.

⁵ After the waters of the Nile receded in the Fall, crops were planted in the newly rejuvenated soil alongside the river. Egyptian harvest time then began about the end of February and continued until the next Nile flood [as aforesaid, around the end of June]. For additional information, see Richard Weinger’s *The Nile, the Moon and Sirius: The Ancient Egyptian Calendar*, <http://www.touregypt.net/magazine/mag03012001/magf1.htm>.

⁶ According to the ancient legend a good pharaoh named *Osiris* was murdered by his evil brother, placed in a wooden sarcophagus, and set afloat on a river called *Ducoal* as it flooded, and was carried to a mythical place called *Byblos*. Thereafter, according to the myth, *Osiris* became a god – the god of the dead, and ruler of the afterlife.

⁷ As a ‘nation’ does not mean as a ‘congregation’, or even as a ‘community’. It means that we are all – all of us who have taken unto ourselves and appropriated for ourselves and our families the blood of the *seh* - a new nation. The issue, therefore, is not with whom we may choose to get together, or to what subgroup or ‘stream’ we belong, but our status in the collective whole of the people who have served, are serving, and will ever serve as covenant partners of the Holy One in place of *Avraham*.

According to the Holy One's calendar, instead of continuing once we left Egypt, to reckon years according to the cycle of Sirius as the Egyptians had done, or according to the cycle of the sun, or according to any other man-made system of reckoning, we were directed to reckon years *beginning with the appearance of the first visible sliver of the 'new moon' in the month of the anniversary of the plague in which the firstborn of Egypt was slain*. The appearance of that first sliver of a new moon represented the beginning of a new era for us and for all mankind. According to the Holy One's calendar, you see, the Exodus and the subsequent events on Mount Sinai are the pivotal events of history - the events in relation to which all things are determined.

The Faithful Witness of the Moon

We will learn in subsequent portions of Torah that every aspect of our lives including communal worship of the Holy One is to be conducted pursuant to a modified form of a *lunar* calendar⁸. For us, every month is to start when the first sliver of the 'new moon' is sighted. Why? Why so much focus on the *yerach* [moon]? Perhaps one reason was that Egypt - like most pagan societies, even today - was a *sun-worshipping society*. They considered the sun as their supreme god, and, thus, they scheduled their activities - indeed structured their lives - around the cycle of the sun.

Other than the paganism, why is this unhealthy for the Holy One's people? It is unhealthy because the sun's light focuses attention upon what *man* can accomplish, given enough light [Ever wonder why we have "daylight savings time" today"?]. Approaching life according to the cycle of the sun leads one to focus upon what the 'preacher' [Hebrew, *Kohelet*] of the Book of Ecclesiastes calls 'vanity of vanities'. There is nothing new *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. 'under the sun']. **Ecclesiastes 1:9**. Man has no profit from labor *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. 'under the sun']. **Ecclesiastes 1:3**. All kinds of oppressions are inflicted by man *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. 'under the sun']. **Ecclesiastes 4:1**. Material blessings of the Holy One become a curse to their possessors' *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. 'under the sun']. **Ecclesiastes 5:13**. The life of a man becomes only a shadow of that which it was created to be *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. 'under the sun']. **Ecclesiastes 6:12**. One man

⁸ It should be noted here, however, that the Hebrew calendar also acknowledges the impact of the sun, and therefore coordinates the lunar calendar with solar phenomena. Hence, a day for us consists of a solar event - measured by the interval from sundown to sundown.

Moreover, in order to reconcile the lunar calendar with the solar year [i.e. to keep the harvest seasons occurring in the lunar months in which they occurred at the time of the Exodus] we have to add an extra month once every few years. This Hebraic version of the 'leap year' is necessary in order that the barley harvest [and *Pesach*] always occur in Nissan, rather than in the months associated with summer, winter, or fall, and in order that the grape harvest [and *Sukkot*] always occur in Tishrei, rather than in the months we associate with the spring, summer or winter.

rules over another *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. ‘under the sun’]. **Ecclesiastes 8:9**. Man cannot see the workings of the Hand of the Holy One *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. ‘under the sun’]. **Ecclesiastes 8:17**. Time and chance eventually overcome every man *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. ‘under the sun’]. **Ecclesiastes 9:11**.

A life *tachat ha-shemesh* [i.e. ‘under the sun’] is not to be the lot of the Holy One’s Redeemed. Those in covenant with the Holy One are exhorted and empowered to see beyond the *tachat ha-shemesh* world. From the beginning the Holy One’s community is instructed to think totally opposite from the *tachat ha-shemesh* mindset. The focus of the Holy One’s redeemed is not about what *man* can accomplish given the daylight, but is always to be about what *the Holy One has done, is doing, and will do*. The Holy One’s redeemed are, like Messiah, only to *do what they see their Father doing*. **John 5:19**. And so the Holy One determined to establish a calendar not according to the cycle of the sun [*tachat ha-shemesh*], but according to the phases of *ha-yerach* [the moon] – which is sometimes visible, sometimes unseen – like the Holy One’s activity in His Creation. In so doing, the Holy One has ordained that His People would become perpetual sanctifiers of time.

Our Calling to Be ‘Sanctifiers of Time’

By beginning all instructions regarding worship with a total restructuring of the calendar the Holy One is doing far more than making for us a schedule for religious services. Egypt has that kind of calendar. The pagans around us have always had that kind of calendar. We, however, as a redeemed community are called not to emulate the pagans, but to be *kadosh* – set apart, different.

One of the things the Holy One redeemed us to be is *sanctifiers of time*. What the Holy One is doing in announcing the calendar He wants us to follow is *re-arranging, and repairing, the way we as a Redeemed community will relate to time*. What does the sanctification of time involve? Sanctifying time is a 24/7/365 lifestyle. It involves *living in a constant state of responsiveness to the Holy One*. It involves *moving in rhythm with the Holy One’s every movement*. It involves *recognizing all of time – every moment – as pregnant with holiness*. That kind of lifestyle – not a system of regularly recurring religious services - is what it means to *attend to/serve/worship* the Holy One in spirit and in truth.

I believe the Holy One is saying to us, as His Beloved, by establishing a new and unique calendar for us, based upon His prophetic timetable of redemption, something like the following:

[1] *By My empowerment you will no longer live by the calendar of the nations of the world.*

[2] *You will learn to view time from My perspective, instead of from the perspective of un-redeemed man.*

[3] *As you live by and structure your lives around the Divine prophetic calendar of Heaven you will sanctify the realm of time - sowing My Holiness into the realm of time the way a farmer sows seed into his field;*

[4] *You will thereby demonstrate to the rest of the nations and peoples of the world what it means to relate properly to the medium of Creation called “time”;*

[5] *In due time you will be My Reapers, reaping on My behalf a series of harvests from nations and the peoples of the world.⁹*

That’s pretty awesome, is it not? Even before His people were physically set free they were by the Holy One’s words Divinely-empowered to begin to live and arrange their lives by the Holy One’s calendar instead of the calendar of Pharaoh and Egypt – or for that matter the calendar of Pope Gregory of Rome, or of America, or of England, or of Canada, or of South Africa, or Thailand, or Russia, or Australia, or the Philippines, or of whatever other secular nation seeks to order and arrange ‘time’.

Learning to approach time from the Holy One’s perspective, instead of from the perspective of ordinary men, is the first step in the process of transitioning from slaves of Pharaoh to the *sh’ma*-people of the Most High God.

The Concept of the Mitzvah Is Re-Introduced

The second stage of the transformation process – the re-introduction of *mitzvot* to the world of God-man relations – is also addressed in today’s aliyah. In preparation for the plague of the death of the firstborn, Moshe is told to instruct all Hebrew fathers as follows [**Rabbi’s son paraphrase**]:

1] on the 10th day after the new moon the Holy One has called the beginning of years, *select a lamb, and take the lamb into your homes,*

2] *let the lamb dwell with you, in your home, for four days, then slaughter it at the appointed time – at evening on the 14th day of the month.*

3] *put some of the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the two side posts of the door of your dwelling to serve as a sign that you have sh’ma-ed My instructions.*

⁹ Notice that the entire cycle of “feasts” is tied to harvest-time in Eretz Yisrael. From *Pesach* (at the time of the Barley Harvest), to *Shavuot* (at the time of the wheat harvest), to the Fall “Feasts” at the time of the harvest of grapes and other fruits, we see that the Holy One is preparing His people – whether they are farmers or vintners or not – to think in terms of harvest, and to understand the timing and stages of harvest as the Holy One has arranged them and will bring them about – in both the natural and the Spiritual realms.

4] *remain in your homes and stand, clad in sandals, and with staff in hand, while you and all your family members eat a special meal of the flesh of the lamb in the merit of whose blood I agree to pass over your houses.*

5] *do not eat the flesh of the lamb raw or boiled – roast it.*

6] *eat all of it – do not throw any of it away.*

These instructions are *mitzvot*, a Hebrew term [plural of *mitzvah*] often inadequately translated into English as ‘commandments’. If not commandments, what is the essence of *mitzvot*? Let’s step outside of religious dogma and get into a Hebrew mindset, shall we?

***What Exactly Are Mitzvot? Are They Mere ‘Commandments’ –
or Are They Something Far More Personal,
Intimate, and Empowering?***

Mitzvot is the plural form of the Hebrew noun *mitzvah*. This noun is, like virtually all Hebrew words, derived from a verb, namely the verb *tzavah*¹⁰. The first letter of this Hebrew verb, which is the first image in the pictographic mural made up by the word, is *tzade* – pictographically representing a man bowing in submission under the Hand of the Holy One. The second letter of the Hebrew verb, *vav*, is a pictographic representation of a *peg* or *nail* – something used to attach one thing to another. The third letter of the Hebrew verb, *hey*, is a pictographic representation of the open window of a tent – the nomadic family’s source of fresh air [symbolic of inspiration] and perspective on the outside world [symbolic of revelation]. *Tzavah* thus pictures *a man living in submission to the Holy One being connected to true revelation and inspiration*. Adding as a prefix to the verb the letter *mem*¹¹ changes the verb *tzavah* to the noun *mitzvah*. The addition of the *mem* - which constitutes a pictographic representation of a *wave in motion* - means that the process of connecting a submissive man to a source of revelation is *animated, ongoing, and progressive*. *Mitzvot*, then, are *Divine pronouncements designed to, through an ongoing interactive process, connect men who submit to the Holy One with true revelation and inspiration*. With every step a man takes consistent with the *mitzvot* of the Holy One, the connection between that man and true revelation and inspiration grows more and more secure.

The Original Mitzvah – A Flashback to the Garden of Eden!

Mitzvot were first introduced in the Garden of Eden. Then, the Holy One told Adam:

***Of every tree of the garden you are to freely eat:
but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are not to eat of it:***

¹⁰ *Tzavah* is *tzade, vav, hey*.

¹¹ The *mem* is the Hebrew letter which makes the ‘m’ sound’.

for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die.

[Genesis 2:16-17]

Mitzvah #1 – the prototype for all positive *mitzvot* - was to *eat freely of every tree in the garden* - including the tree of life. *Mitzvah #2* – the prototype for all negative *mitzvot* – was NOT to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *Mitzvah #3* – the prototype for all ‘approaching life’ *mitzvot* – was to live all of life from the fundamental understanding that for a human being to *sh’ma* the words of the Creator and walk in them is to experience real *life*, while to *lo sh’ma* the words of the Creator, and choose to pursue instead what one’s flesh craves and/or one’s deceived mind or culture thinks or says will bring pleasure or self-actualization, is to enter the realm of *walking death*.

To the extent the first man and woman – Adam and Chava – walked in these three prototypical *mitzvot*, they would have *connected more and more with true revelation and inspiration*, and *drawn closer and closer* to the Holy One. But that is, alas, *not what happened*. Adam and Chava, seduced by the Serpent, were not submissive to the Holy One’s *mitzvot*. They therefore broke the connections to true *revelation* [receiving unto themselves instead the Serpent’s deception] and to true *inspiration* [receiving unto themselves instead death – the opposite of inspiration]. Adam and Chava chose not to be *sh’ma*-people. They did not therefore deal appropriately with the *mitzvot* given them by the Holy One. But that was not to be the end of the story. There will yet be a *sh’ma*-people!

A Second Chance for Man and Creation

Now that the Holy One is forging from the seed of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov a *sh’ma*-people, however, He re-introduces into God-man relations the concept of *mitzvot*. Again, the Hebrew concept involved is not that of *commanding*, but of providing a *medium of connection* with true revelation and inspiration.

Every *mitzvah* announced by the Holy One is like a *portal*, or opening, through which He intends to introduce men into a *deeper realm*. Submissive men step through the portal willingly - not to win the Holy One’s favor or earn some works-based righteous standing, but to *gain a deeper understanding and revelation of, and to better receive inspiration from, the Holy One*. Once the portal is entered, one discovers the passageway one has entered is *infinite* – just as the Holy One’s word is infinite. One does not – cannot - therefore ‘fulfill’ a *mitzvah* given by the Holy One, any more than one could swim every square inch of the Pacific Ocean. The idea of a finite and mortal man *fulfilling a mitzvah*

[which is by nature infinite and immortal] is utterly nonsensical¹². Man's purpose in relation to the *mitzvot* has never, therefore, contrary to popular opinion, been to *fulfill* them – but merely to *abide in them continually* so as to receive a continuing, progressive flow of revelation and inspiration from them. As one abides in the *mitzvot* of the Holy One, you see, he remains 'connected' to the inspiration/revelation pipeline and the Holy One causes new and progressively deepening levels of spiritual understanding to constantly emerge. As one immerses himself in this constant flow of revelation, he constantly receives refreshing bursts of the Divine breath upon his soul enabling him to *keep exploring, keep receiving, keep growing*.

The Next Steps After Sh'ma-ing - 'Keeping' and 'Doing'

In English language conversations the process of abiding and continually maturing in the *mitzvot* of the Holy One is often called '*keeping*' and sometimes called '*doing*' them. But the verbs '*keep*' and '*do*' are merely some English-speaking person's very rough approximation of the Hebrew verbs the Holy One employed to teach this lifestyle to the people He redeemed from slavery.

These English translations, like the various English translations of the Hebrew verb *sh'ma*, focus the attention of the reader solely on external, outward, physical activities, and totally ignore the deeper, inner-man aspects of what is being communicated. That is the critical flaw of the English language – and the Greco-Roman mindset from which modern English emanates.

Keeping Does Not Equal Sh'mar-ing

The Hebrew verb usually translated *keep* in relation to the Holy One's *mitzvot* is *sh'mar* - *shin, mem, resh*. This verb involves a dramatic internal transformation. It means *to cherish, and treasure, to value highly, and therefore to keep close watch over, and to guard so as to keep pure and inviolate*.

'Doing' Does Not Equal Asah-ing

The Hebrew verb usually translated 'do' in relation to the Holy One's *mitzvot* is *asah* - *ayin, sin, hey*. This means to be so captivated by an idea that one does not rest until he has *taken from the realm of theory and words into the realm of concrete, functional reality. The same word is used to describe the action of a potter in taking a lump of clay and making it into a vessel the image of which he*

¹² In the Chasidic tradition this is sometimes expressed by saying that the *mitzvot* of Torah are to be 'observed' *b'hidur* – i.e. with "beauty." This means that each individual is to treat each *mitzvah* of Torah like an artist's palette on which he or she paints a little each day throughout his or her life. The work on the canvas will never be completed in this life on earth - but it will *continually become more and more beautiful with each stroke of the brush*. One should ask the *Ruach HaQuodesh* to help him or her see, and ask the Holy One to have Messiah lead him or her, far past the minimal requirements of the *mitzvah* to the deeper world of spiritual reality which the *mitzvah* is intended to open up to mankind.

sees in his mind.

We will be discussing these two Hebrew verbs in much more detail in coming studies. For now, just understand that they are intended by the Holy One to be a very significant part of His relationship with those of us He has redeemed from bondage.

Other Forms of Divine Empowerment Which We Will Soon Begin to Encounter In Torah

Not many days hence in our Torah studies we will start to see Divine instructions and empowerments absolutely pouring from the Heart of the Bridegroom of Heaven like water from a fountain. The River of Life that flows through the Throne Room of Heaven is about to spill out upon the earth. The Author of human life is about to reveal secrets to living that life well – as it was intended to be lived from the Beginning.

Some of the instructions and empowerments of the Holy One we will encounter in the upcoming parshot of Torah will be properly characterized as *mitzvot*. Others portions of the Creator's manual for the well-lived human life will be characterized by Him as *mish'patim* [usually translated as 'judgments']. Still other pearls of Divine Wisdom which are about to be released will be characterized by our Divine Bridegroom as *chukot* [usually translated as 'ordinances']. But whatever they are called all the instructions and empowerments of the Holy One will *build upon*, and will all assume the successful incorporation by us into our lives of the *mitzvot* the Holy One has given us in today's aliyah concerning the appropriation of the blood and the life-force of the Passover lamb.

The *mitzvah* of appropriating the blood of the Passover Lamb, you see, is absolutely critical to the coming forth of the Holy One's *sh'ma*-people.

The Significance of Today's Aliyah

Today's aliyah of Torah is very significant in many ways. Foremost this aliyah is memorable as *the aliyah of the Holy One's Passover*. In the passage we read today the Holy One will go throughout Egypt to strike the firstborn of every Egyptian family but will, according to His covenant, 'pass over' every dwelling the doorposts on which He sees the blood of the Passover Lamb.

Secondly it is in this aliyah of Torah that the Holy One first gives His people specific – and I believe fundamental - instructions about how He is to be *worshipped* in a communal setting.

Thirdly it is this aliyah more than any other in Torah which establishes the blood of a male having no blemish as *the effectual sign of covenant participation* – the one sign upon which such things as redemption, salvation, deliverance, divine protection, and inheritance are claimed.

We will address each of these matters, but will address the matter of the Holy One's instructions for communal worship first.

An Early Instance of the Holy One Instructing His People Regarding Communal Worship

In yesterday's *shiur* I discussed that the first phase of Moshe's prophetic ministry – the ministry before Pharaoh – is now concluded. Moshe's message to Pharaoh has always had two main emphases. The primary emphasis up to this point has been ***shelach et-ami*** – SEND MY PEOPLE FORTH! But each time this message has been communicated it has been followed up with a phrase which gets very little attention: ... ***v'ya'av'duni*** – *and they will attend* [most translations say 'serve' or 'worship'] *Me*.

Now that the Holy One has seen to it that Moshe will never again have to ever tell Pharaoh to ***shelach et-ami*** the emphasis will now shift from that message to the other primary message: ***v'ya'av'duni*** – *and they will attend Me*. The shift in focus is going to occur in today's aliyah. Attending to/serving/worshipping the Holy One is going to be *the focus of the remainder of the Book of Exodus* – if not, indeed, the whole of Scripture. Leaving Egypt has never been the main thing that was on the table. There has always been a clearly stated and understood *reason* why Yisrael's descendants were being called out of Egypt – namely to attend to/serve/worship [Hebrew, *abad*¹³] *the Holy One*, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. But that presents for our ancestors a bit of a thorny problem. They have lived in Egypt and been enslaved by Pharaoh all their lives. It has been generations since Ya'akov walked the earth. And there has been no 'altar life' mentioned in Torah since before Ya'akov even arrived in Egypt. No one living has ever done – or seen anyone else do - what the Holy One is calling them out of Egypt to do. They have no idea what it looks like and of what does it consists to attend to/serve/'worship the Holy One'. How could they? The only worship practices they have ever seen were those practiced by the Egyptians in whose country and culture they lived.

¹³*Abad* is *ayin, beit, dalet*, Strong's Hebrew word #5647, pronounced *aw-bawd'*. The first Biblical usage of this verb root is found in Genesis 2:5, where the ground of earth is said to have been without a man to *till* or *work* or *tend* [Hebrew, *abad*] it. See also Genesis 2:15, where the Holy One is said to have placed Adam in the Garden to *abad* [till/work/tend] it and to *sh'mar* [cherish, guard, protect, watch over] it.

So we have this unanswered question: *How Will the New Nation Being Forged By the Holy One In the Crucible of Egypt Approach, attend to, serve, and Worship God?* Will the new creation of the Holy One merely *mimic the way the Egyptians, or the Midyani, or the Kena'ani worship/serve their gods?* Will every man just do *'whatever is right in his own eyes'?* Or perhaps, just perhaps, *does the Holy One have a specific plan regarding what attending to/serving and worshipping Him in Spirit and in truth by the peoples He has redeemed will look like and consist of?* Until today's aliyah no one - not even Moshe - knew what communal worship of the Holy One was supposed to look like or consist of. There had simply never been any communal worship of the Holy One before. All the Holy One's dealings heretofore had been "one-on-one" interaction with individuals. So we have in today's aliyah the "first reference" to communal worship activity. If the "law of first reference", or the principle of "progressive revelation", are real then we can expect to find embedded within the instructions we find in this aliyah - in the Holy One's first reference to communal worship – both the seed from which all legitimate communal worship is to grow and the essence with which all legitimate communal worship must be consistent.

If we are sincerely interested in approaching and worshipping the Holy One according to His instructions, rather than as and when and how it is convenient, or as our religious institutions direct, then it will behoove us to study in some detail the principles of communal worship set forth in this aliyah. Other passages of Torah, and passages of the Prophets, the Psalms, and the B'rit Chadasha, may amplify, and build upon these principles - *but because the Holy One's word is eternal and changes not, they will never conflict with or supersede them.* So, what are the principles of communal worship laid down in this aliyah? What is *the seed* planted in this passage from which all legitimate communal worship is to grow? And what about this passage describes *the essence with which all legitimate communal worship must be consistent?*

Definitional Principles of Worship Drawn From Today's Aliyah

The first and most important immutable revelation is that *worship is to be according to the Holy One's calendar, not according to our conventions or convenience.* Worship is all about Him – not about us. It is to be done at HIS instigation, and for HIS purposes, not for ours. Any pleasure or blessing we experience in connection with worship is of incidental, not primary, importance. True Worship is a *response to a Divine Prompting*, not a program for obtaining or manipulating Divine favor. But I see another wonderful truth in the first set of instructions the Holy One gives concerning worship. Let's continue our study by considering *the 'geography' of worship the Holy One's way.*

The Geography of Worship the Holy One's Way

The second and equally important thing that the Holy One spoke to His called-out community regarding communal worship is the clear declaration that *the center of worship activity is to be the home of the individual redeemed family*. Let's look at the instructions the Holy One gives about this prototypical communal worship activity.

Dabeiru el-kol-adat Yisra'el l'emor

Speak to all the congregation of Yisra'el, saying,

b'asor l'chodesh hazeh

'On the tenth day of this month,

v'yikchu lahem ish seh l'veyt-avot

they are to take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses,

seh l'bayit

a lamb for a household;

V'lakeichu min ha-dam v'nateinu al-shtei ha-mezuzot

take some of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts

v'al ha-mash'kof al ha-batim asher-yochlu oto bahem

and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it.

V'hayah ha-dam lachem l'ot al ha-batim asher atem sham

The blood will be to you for a token on the houses where you are:

V'ra'iti et ha-dam ufasachti aleichem

and when I see the blood I will pass over you,

v'lo-yihyeh vachem negef l'mashchit b'hakoti b'erezt Mitzrayim

and there will no plague be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Mitzrayim

Note that the things that the Holy One instructed to be done to approach and worship Him on this first occasion were all centered in the *homes* of those called out by the Holy One and focused upon the *families* living in those homes - not upon community gatherings, public ministries, and professional clergymen.

Note also *Who went to whose house* - the Holy One went to the houses of His people, not the other way around, as most of the world's religions call upon us to do today¹⁴! Note further that per the Holy One's instruction a lamb was selected not per *organization*, or per *congregation*, or per *tribe*, or per '*stream*', or per any

¹⁴ Religious organizations of all faiths have taken it upon themselves to boldly proclaim their headquarters/buildings as 'the House of God'. The truth is that the only 'houses of God' that have ever existed – or will ever exist – on earth are the Tabernacle Moshe and B'nei Yisrael built in the Wilderness, the Temple in Jerusalem, the individual redeemed soul, and the universal community of the redeemed.

age or status-classified group - but *per household*.

Note that the blood of the lamb was not to be applied on the gates of the community of Goshen or upon some community worship center somewhere but upon the doorposts and lintels of individual houses. And even in the future, for all generations, according to the Holy One's instructions, where was the focus for cleansing leaven from the lives of the redeemed to be focused? Not on public gatherings or public gathering places, Beloved – but house-to-house, in each individual home¹⁵.

The Establishment of the Blood of a Surrogate Male Without Blemish as the Immutable Sign of Covenant Participation

Today's aliyah contains one matter even more important than the prototypical instructions for communal worship of the Holy One - it establishes the blood of a male having no blemish as *the effectual sign of covenant participation* – the one sign upon which such things as redemption, salvation, deliverance, divine protection, and inheritance are claimed. Before any other instructions were given by the Holy One as to what actions, deeds, *mitzvot*, *chukot*, or *mish'patim*, were to be engaged in by the Holy One's called out ones, the Holy One gave the PRIMARY instruction – *do not trust in your own righteousness, but in the righteousness of a surrogate I will supply*. What was the surrogate to be? The answer is given: ***a lamb ... without blemish, a male a year old. You are to take it ...*** Exodus 12:3, 5.

In the original text the word describing the surrogate that our English Bibles calls a “lamb” is *seh*¹⁶. This term is not species specific – it can be from any species, as long as it is part of, and chosen from, a flock of the same species. The word *seh* is first encountered in Scripture in Genesis 22, when, as Yitzchak and Avraham are ascending Mount Moriyah in response to the Holy One's instruction, Yitzchak asks: *"My father ... where is the lamb [Hebrew, seh] for a burnt offering?"* Genesis 22:7. We all know Avraham's reply. He told his son: *"God will provide himself the lamb [Hebrew, seh] for a burnt offering, my son."* We also all know how the Holy One fulfilled Avraham's prophecy to Yitzchak:

¹⁵ Other issues of “communal worship” which you may wish to consider, at your leisure, based upon this “first instance” passage, include:

- [a] What portion of the activities did the Holy One specify was to be performed by professional clergymen, as opposed to the heads of households?
- [b] What was to be the role of the “elders” as per the instructions of the Holy One [Exodus 12:3] and as per (or possibly as opposed to) Moshe's instructions [Exodus 12:21]?
- [c] Just who were/are the “elders” anyway?
- [d] How were “fragmented families” (broken homes) to participate?
- [e] Who initiated and planned the meeting?

¹⁶ *Seh* is Strong's word # 7716. It is pronounced *say*.

*Avraham lifted up his eyes and looked,
and saw that behind him was a ram¹⁷ caught in the thicket by his horns.
Avraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a korban olah instead of his son.*

[Genesis 22:13]

The fact that the *seh* that was provided by the Holy One on Mt. Moriyah is called an *ayil* is significant – and prophetic. That word *ayil* not only means “ram”, but also means, of all things, *doorpost*, and *leader* (or *chief*). The *seh* which Avraham saw the Holy One provide and which he *took*¹⁸ was *more than just a ram* – He was the *door for the sheep*, and the *leader, or chief, of the Holy One’s people*. In other words, the *ayil* of Moriyah was none other than Messiah Himself.

The ‘Taking’ of the Lamb

Likewise we see that the Holy One instructed each head-of-household among His called-out ones to “take” [Hebrew *laqach* – personally and physically appropriate unto themselves, as a man takes unto himself a bride] a *seh* [an animal from the flock or herd] as a surrogate for themselves and their firstborns. For the next four days each family was to familiarize themselves with, and to physically abide with, the *seh*. For those four days the primary focus of life in the home was to be on that *seh*. At the end of the fourth day, at sundown, they were to personally lay hands on and slaughter the *seh*. They were then to smear some of the *seh*’s blood on their doorposts. That blood was to serve as the medium of separation through which those who trusted the Holy One for redemption, deliverance, salvation, inheritance, and blessing would declare their desire to participate in the Avrahamic covenant.

Every person, Egyptian or Hebrew, who desired to participate in the covenant had to *take* the *seh*, and smear the blood, or the death angel would strike the home. If a family – even a family of Hebrews – did not ‘take’ the lamb, and apply the blood to the doorposts and lentils of the dwelling, *that family’s firstborn would perish with the firstborn of the Egyptians*. It did not matter if the firstborn was, or was not, circumcised. It did not matter if the firstborn was, or was not, of the *seed of Avraham*. The Holy One did not pass over the sign of circumcision, or the sign of Avrahamic seed. The sign of circumcision and the sign of Avrahamic seed were both preparatory, or prophetic if you prefer. They pointed forward to the sign the Holy One *would* pass over - *the blood of the seh [lamb]*, and that alone.

¹⁷ The Hebrew noun translated here as ‘ram’ is *ayil*, pronounced **ah'-yil**, Strong’s #352.

¹⁸ The Hebrew verb here translated ‘took’ is *laqach*, pronounced **law-kakh'**, Strong’s word #3947, meaning *to personally and physically appropriate unto oneself*, as a man in the Hebrew tradition *takes* unto himself a bride, coming for her, calling her his own, and physically taking her away from her father’s house and into his own.

For every family - Egyptian, Hebrew, or of the ‘mixed multitude’ - there had to be a *seh* and its blood had to be smeared upon the doorpost - or the firstborn would die. For the Holy One instructed Moshe to tell us that on the tenth day of the first month of the year:

V'yikchu lahem ish seh l'veyt avot seh l'bayit

every man must take a lamb for each extended family, a lamb for each household.

V'hayah lachem l'mish'meret

Hold it in safekeeping

ad arba'ah asar yom l'chodesh hazeh

until the fourteenth day of this month.

V'shachatu oto kol k'hal adat-Yisra'el beyn ha-arba'im

All the called of Israel shall then slaughter it in the afternoon.

V'lakeichu min ha-dam v'nateinu al-shtei ha-mezuzot

They are to take the blood and place it on the two doorposts

v'al ha-mash'kof al ha-batim asher-yochlu oto bahem

and on the beam above the door of the houses in which they will eat it.

Hebrews were the recipients of these instructions. Hence Hebrews were to take the lead. Others were welcome to follow suit. But the issue, with regard to each household, was the blood of the *seh*. This was the exclusive sign. The sign could not have been *circumcision*, because most of the Hebrews – and certainly the mixed multitude - were almost certainly uncircumcised. The sign could not have been *Torah observance*, because the Torah was not yet revealed. The sign could not have been membership in - or even attendance at - a church or synagogue, because no such thing existed. The sign could not even have been Shabbat observance, because slaves are not free to observe Shabbat. The sign could not even have been “*faith*” in the Holy One, because all had lost faith in the Holy One’s promises, and ignored His proposal of betrothal, just as soon as Pharaoh increased their workload to include gathering straw as well as making bricks. They had all refused to listen to the Holy One’s words, because of their hard labor, and the burdens of their enslaved condition.

Torah affirms that it is the blood of the *seh* – who is also the *ayil* (Messiah Himself, the *seh* slain from before the foundation of the world) *taken* [*laqach* – personally appropriated unto oneself] by the head of each household, which seals the covenant and qualifies a person or household to lay claim to the benefits of the covenant. And Torah confirms as well that it is the act of *taking* the *seh* and *personally appropriating unto oneself and ones household and trusting in* the *seh*’s spilled blood which is the exclusive sign by which we become set apart unto the Holy One, and engrafted into the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham, Yitzchak, and

Ya'akov¹⁹. The observance of *mitzvot*, the performance of specific *mish'patim* and *chukot* of the Torah, and participation in the divine drama of the *moed'im* [festivals] and the Shabbat, as wonderful and exciting as they are, are only the *natural outgrowths* of the covenant – behaviors consistent with, and in furtherance of, the covenant. They are not what we do to “be saved” [i.e. to *qualify us for redemption*] or to bring us “close to God” – but are merely what we are privileged and divinely-empowered to do *because* we are saved [i.e. *redeemed*] and brought close to God through the blood of the *seh* Whom we have taken as our *ayil*.

Neither circumcision nor Torah submission are, and were ever intended to be, the way to eternal life. To the contrary, if properly understood, Torah submission is – and has always been - the lifestyle of *those who have already received* eternal life through appropriation of the spilled blood of the *seh*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah of Torah the Holy One shares intimately with Moshe and Aharon what the congregation [Hebrew *edah* – *witnesses*] of Israel is to do to escape the final plague which the Holy One Himself is about to inflict upon Egypt.

[A] What event does the Holy One say is to be the “beginning of months” - that is, the new year, for the congregation of Israel.

[B] On what day of the first month were the people to set aside a lamb?

[C] On what day of the month, and at what time of the day, was this lamb to be killed?

[D] What was done with the lamb during the days intervening between it being “set aside” and it being killed?

[E] What were the people instructed to do with the slain lamb's blood?

[F] List all instructions you can find in this passage relating to how the people are to eat (and not to eat) the Passover Lamb.

2. In verse 12 of today's aliyah the Holy One describes what He is about to do:

***For I will go through the land of Mitzrayim in that night,
and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Mitzrayim, both man and animal.
Against all the gods of Mitzrayim I will execute judgments: I am the Holy One.***

¹⁹ The lamb that was slain by each sh'ma-ing household was a *sign of separation*, an act of supreme trust in the Promised Redemption. The blood on the doorpost signified that in that home was a family who chose obedience to the Holy One of Israel. Contrary to the teaching of some, the original Passover lamb had nothing whatever to do with atoning for sin. In fact, throughout the entire Exodus and Pesach account, there is no indication whatsoever that the Holy One was dealing with sin in His people. This does not mean that they were sinless, for they had sinned greatly and often. What it means, instead, is that they were redeemed by Him, and claimed and acknowledged by Him as His own, *even in the midst of their sin*. He redeemed and claimed them first, and then dealt with their sin later.

[A] Describe both the *physical actions* the Holy One says He is going to take and the *spiritual reality* He says those actions will accomplish.

[B] What is the purpose of the slain lamb's blood?

[C] Why do you think the Holy One chose this slain lamb's blood as the instrument of covenant-participation and salvation?

3. In today's Haftarah *Bo* the prophet *Yirmayahu* quotes the Holy One's "oath" of judgment on Mitzrayim.

As I live, says the King, whose name is the Holy One of Hosts, surely like Tavor among the mountains, and like Karmel by the sea, so will he come. You - daughter who dwell in Mitzrayim – acquit/equip yourself to go into captivity; for Mof will become a desolation and will be burnt up, without inhabitant.

[A] Who does the Holy One say will "come" [that is, *Bo*] to Egypt?

[B] When this one comes what does the Holy One say He will do?

4. In Romans 12:4-5 Shaul turns his attention from what should be the basis of one's relationship with the Holy One to what should be the basis on one's relationship with others - particularly other *talmidim* [followers] of Messiah.

[A] To what does Shaul compare the *talmidim* of Messiah as a group?

[B] To what does he liken individual followers of Messiah?

[C] What point do you think Shaul is trying to make with this discussion?

5. In Romans 12:6-7 Shaul says that the "gifts" [in Hebrew *matanot*; in Greek *charismata*] that different *talmidim* of the Holy One in Yeshua exhibit as they walk out a Torah-submissive lifestyle are different. He also teaches us what makes these *matanot* differ from person to person within the '*kahal*'.

Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or service, let us give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching

According to Shaul what is the reason our *matanot* are not all the same? [NOTE: See also I Corinthians 13:7, 13.]

May your most significant act in community with others be the taking of the blood of the lamb as Torah prescribes.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 18:49-50

Therefore I will give thanks to you, O Holy One, among the nations, and will sing praises to your name.

He gives great deliverance to his king, and shows lovingkindness to his anointed, to David and to his seed, forevermore.