

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Beshelach:*** Exodus 15:22 - 17:16
 Haftarah: Judges 5:1-31
 B'rit Chadasha: John 6:39-51

I will make bread rain down to you from the Heavens.

[Exodus 16:4a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 78:17-30;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #13, *Retzeh* [Intimate Relationship]

Vayasa Moshe et-Yisra'el miyam-Suf – Then Moshe caused Yisrael to rise up from the Sea of Reeds Exodus 15:22a.

Did we just see what I think we saw? Did the waters of the Sea of Reeds really just part? Did the waters of that sea just congeal into two great walls, making a way for the likes of US to escape Pharaoh's genocidal wrath? Did the pillar of fire and cloud that our migrant throng has been following around since Etam really just lead us through a deep-water seabed without allowing even as much as the bottom of our most puddle-happy child's sandal to get wet? Color us amazed! Color us awestruck! Color us as giddy as calves released from the stall!

Well ... I Guess THAT Happened!

The procession took hours – and we were trembling in terror the whole time. But the watery walls on either side of a wind tunnel the Holy One created for us to use as an escape route held firm the whole time. The instant the last of us stepped onto the opposite shore, however, those walls collapsed on the Egyptian charioteers that were charging after us. Now we have a new lease on life – and a story for the ages to tell; but the charioteers are no more. Those who plotted our genocide will never inflict their bloody rage anyone ever again. The occult-obsessed culture that accepted the order that innocent children be thrown into rushing water and drowned without challenge can now testify what *the law of sowing and reaping* on the one hand, and the great rabbinic admonition '*judge not, lest you be judged; for with what judgment you judge, it will be judged unto you; and with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you*' on the other hand, both mean.

As for us, our terror has turned to awe! Our shock has turned to exaltation! Our pitiful cries of desperation and despair have turned into joyful songs of celebration and exaltation! Our mourning has turned to dancing! Our *Ruach Ha-Elohim* – the

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Breath/spirit of God – has become our composer, our Maestro, and our choreographer. A shir sung by angels around the Sea of Glass was sung by ordinary men, women and children beside the Sea of Reeds. Though we had never heard it before, it flowed like rain from our trembling lips. We sang it, verse by verse and chorus after chorus, until our tongues could sing no more. We danced the ecstatic dance of Miryam until our feet would move no more. Then we knelt in the sand and wept in our Bridegroom-King's embrace until our eyes ran out of tears. That is when the sweet intoxication of requited love kicked in. We giggled like school children. We doodled phrases of adoration in the sand along the seashore. We spoke to one another boldly about how we would follow our Redeemer anywhere – *no turning back, no turning back; no retreat, no surrender; 'til death do us part; and for generations beyond*. And in that moment – our first communal moment of bliss - we meant every word.

Alas, the sensation lifted almost as quickly as it had fallen. The Pillar of Cloud started moving, and we all rushed to get our families and meager belongings ready for the next march. Moshe rushed to Yosef's sarcophagus, hoisted it on his shoulders, and took off walking - following the shadow of the Cloud. Individual by individual, family by family – Hebrew and representative of the nations - we did the same. Ethnicity did not matter. Gender did not matter. Age did not matter. Ideological leaning did not matter. All followed the same Cloud. We all gathered our wives, children, and meager belongings, and started walking in Moshe's footsteps. Down the Western edge of the Peninsula we went. We *walked ... and walked ... and walked ... and walked* some more. Heaven was once again confined to Heaven, and the air we were breathing was once again just the normal nitrogen, oxygen, argon, carbon dioxide, and water vapor mixture common to earth since its inception. Angels once again were the ones assigned the pleasure of singing eternal songs of pure praise, and humans were once again talking about mundane things like the weather, economics, political theory, philosophy, personal preference, petty offense, social justice, pseudo-science and institutional religion.

The Epic Journey Continues - Next Stop: Marah

After a while it began to seem like we had been *walking forever*. All the challenges that flow from being fallen men living in a fallen world returned to our consciousness – with a vengeance. The miracle at the Sea became a distant *memory*. Did it really happen? Was it all a dream? With each step we took and with each new blister that came up on our feet we grew *less and less ecstatic in our praise* of the Holy One and *more and more hot and tired and hungry - and thirsty*.

vayeitz'u el-midbar-Shur

And they ventured forth into the Wilderness of Shur

vayelchu shloshet yamim bamidbar v'lo-matz'u mayim
And they walked in that wilderness three days, and they found no water.

Vayavo'u Maratah
And then they came to Marah ...
[Exodus 15:22b – 23a]

One moment it was *lo'matz'u mayim* – *no water to be found*. But then suddenly – up ahead we saw an *oasis* ... and a *spring*! Excitement began to arise in the ranks. Smiles began to return to faces. A fresh lilt came to everyone's step. Moshe got to the spring first. He knelt by the ancient opening, put forth a hand, and tasted the water. From the look on his face we knew immediately that something was wrong. The water was polluted - so acrid, brackish, bitter, in fact, that it made Moshe wretch. This was not what we had hoped for. We found water, but it was too toxic to drink – either for humans or for animals. It was not merely a matter of higher-than-normal acidity/alkalinity, of hardness, or of unpleasant taste. It was a matter of pollution. It was a matter of contamination. It was a matter of toxicity. No matter how thirsty we were, if we held our noses and forced this foul water down our throats to satisfy our thirst, we would fall deathly ill. Color us disappointed. Color us hot, exhausted, and parched. Color us very worried about our wives, our children, our babies, and our animals – not to mention ourselves – dying the miserable death of thirst. Color us human.

Vayilonu ha-am al-Moshe l'emor
And the people lodged [a complaint] to Moshe, saying,

mah-nishteh
“What are we to drink?”
[Exodus 15:24]

The pillar of cloud led us here, just like it led us to *Pi HaCherot*. There has to be a reason. The Holy One has to have a plan. There has to be a lesson – a critical lesson of our national identity and mission in fact - in this for us. But what could it be? This is hard. We are exhausted. Our flesh is weak. Our emotions are raw. Our minds are fried. Individually and collectively, our strength is dried up like a potsherd. Our tongues cleave to the roofs of our mouths. We feel like we have been brought to the dust of death. Even the faces and attitudes of Moshe, Aharon, and Miryam are showing the strain. Anyone for a chorus or two of *Ashirah l'Adonai*? I didn't think so. Not now. Not under these circumstances. Judge not, Beloved - lest you be judged.

But then ... Ah, we are getting used to saying – and *hearing* – even EXPECTING ‘but then’ - aren't we Dear Ones? What is the ‘but then’ occurrence the Holy One has planned to amaze and inspire us this time? Let's just call it ‘*ot ha-etz*’ – the sign of the Tree. As is always the case with the problems men encounter, the solution was to be found not in public discourse, but in the secret place of prayer.

Vayitz'ak el-Adonai vayoreihu Adonai etz

And he [Moshe] cried out to the Holy One, and the Holy One showed him a tree.

vayash'lech el-ha-mayim

And he put it forth into the waters

vayimteiku ha-mayim

And the waters became sweet.

[Exodus 15:25]

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful – but his delight is in the Torah of the Holy One, and in that Torah he meditates day and night. He will be like ... yes, that is right, Beloved ... he will be *like a tree, planted by the rivers of living water*. The Holy One is in control of His Creation. He made water, and He made trees. He can do anything He wants, any time He wants. Not long ago He illustrated that point by using a limb of a tree - Moshe's rod - to change the water in Egypt into blood. The change occurred as soon as Moshe's rod hit the Nile. Did we think He could – or would – only use His power over Creation to punish His enemies? Did we not understand that He can – and longs to - do wondrous things for US whom He has redeemed?

Again Moshe was provided an *etz* to use in introducing a miracle. Moshe touched the waters of Marah with a branch of this *etz* - much as he had, not long ago, touched the waters of the Nile with his staff. That is when it happened. The bitterness disappeared. The toxicity vanished. The pollution dissipated. Think of it as a reversal of the '*water into blood*' sign the Holy One wrote into the Exodus narrative. Suddenly that which was death to us became life to us. Suddenly that which had been bitter and intolerable became sweet to our taste. What does this mean? What is the Holy One trying to teach us? Could this be about a whole lot more than drinking water? Is there more to this story than meets the eye? Could there perhaps be a 'life hack' or two of eternal wisdom for the journey of life we have undertaken in it?

***Did You Not See the Chok u'mishpat –
i.e. the 'Statute' and the 'Judgment'***

That miracle of bitter waters turned sweet is certainly what most people will remember in future generations about our stay at Marah. But there was much more to the story of our sojourn at that oasis than that miracle! As the Writer of Torah concludes the narrative of the experience He says: ***Sham sam lo chok umishpat – i.e. It was there that [the Holy One] established for them a statute and a judgment, v'sham nisahu vayomer – i.e. and it was there that He tested them.*** These parts of the Marah narrative do not get much attention today. But those things constitute a VERY, VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE BRIDE-TRAINING the Holy One is doing.

You see, Beloved, the establishment of the ‘statute’ and ‘judgment’ and the ‘testing’ of His newly redeemed community were *the primary purpose for which the Holy One orchestrated and choreographed the ‘bitter waters’ experience at Marah in the first place.* For *sh’ma*-people the nurturing experience of being properly re-oriented – brought into consciousness and accountability to **chok umishpat** - is *just as much a necessary part of the courtship of the Holy One as any of the signs and wonders we usually associate with the Exodus.* If we marvel at the miracles of *Sefer Sh’mot*, but fail to recognize and internalize the ‘new creation’ calling and lifestyle orientation the Holy One revealed starting at *Marah*, we will be totally unprepared for - and thus will be handicapped in our ability to appreciate and fully receive - the other experiences the Holy One has planned for us in the days to come. We will not have a clue what our freedom means – or how glorious the endgame of the harsh wilderness obstacle course He is leading us through really is.

What was the *chok* our Bridegroom-King taught us at *Marah*? What did He say would be our ‘test’? It went like this: ***Im-shamoa tish’ma l’kol Adonai Eloheicha*** – *If/as/when/to the extent you diligently sh’ma the voice of the Holy One your God ... v’ha-yashar be’eynav ta’aseh* – *and if/as/when/to the extent you make/form/cause to take shape what is right/straight/productive in His sight ... v’ha-azanta l’mitzvotav* - *and if/as/when/to the extent you give ear to His life-instructions ... v’shamarta kol-chukav aleicha* – *and if/as/when/to the extent you treasure/cherish/carefully watch over to keep all His directives ... kol-ha-machalah asher-samti b’Mitzrayim lo-asim* - *I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians ... ki ani Adonai rof’eicha* – *for I am the Holy One who heals you. Exodus 15:25(b)-26.*

Welcome to the next phase of Mission-Critical Training! Welcome to the first of the many essential ‘life hacks’ to which the Creator of the Universe plans to introduce in the course of our epic journey of Covenant relationship!

Our Next, More Advanced Phase of Training

What the Holy One introduced to us at *Marah* were the most foundational of the mission-critical techniques we are going to need to master if we are to become the *great nation* and the *blessing to all the families of the earth* that He covenanted with Avraham to make us. I call them ‘*deprogramming/mission-refocusing exercises*’. If we are going to become a great nation and a blessing to all the families of the earth, we simply must *get these four things*. Like our ancestors we have little chance of surviving the wilderness that looms before us – much less the great deception that is coming – if we miss this treasure hidden in plain view. So let’s take a closer look at the four specific things the Holy One tells us are essential to our survival in, overcoming of, and bringing fruitfulness to not only the barren deserts and polluted oases of this world, but also all forms of toxicity that flow into

humanity from ingestion of the fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge instead of encamping alongside the *river of life* and choosing the fruit of *the tree of life*. If a son or daughter of the Covenant is ever going to mature into a fitting helpmeet for the Holy One, he or she must embrace the *four essential behavioral approaches* established/set before our eyes at *Marah*. If, as, when, and to the extent we participate in these four behavioral approaches, the Holy One promises, we will experience freedom from the SICKNESSES [Hebrew *machalah*, meaning not only *infirmities of body* but worries, sorrows, griefs, terrors, and weaknesses of all kinds].

The operative verbs the Holy One used – the Hebrew action words that He chose to employ to explain to us what He expects from us in the relationship – are four. We are to:

1. *sh'ma* – vibrate in resonance with and implement in real time - every word He speaks;
2. *asah* – i.e. apply creative energy to build or put in place – only what is right and productive in *His eyes*, instead of what seems right and productive to us;
3. *azan* – *surrender our ears to* - His life-instructions instead of employing them to listen to the ‘voice of a stranger’; and
4. *sh'mar* all His specific directives on how to handle specific situations.

Let’s talk about these four transformational approaches to life one-by-one.

1. The First Essential – Transitioning to a Sh'ma Life-Focus

First, if we want to transcend the desert and live the life we were created and redeemed to live, we must learn to ***sh'ma every Word from the Holy One's mouth***. We cannot be swayed by other voices. We cannot bow before – or give either our attention or affection – to other sovereigns. We cannot let ourselves get seduced into trusting in, following voices, or letting our thoughts or emotions be manipulated by men, by governments, by ‘experts’, by entertainers/sports icons, by institutional thinking, by narratives spun by propagandists, or by people wearing lab-coats, black robes, or designer clothes. The details and profound implications of what *sh'ma*-ing the voice of the Holy One and *lo sh'ma*-ing voice of all others means in the greater scheme will be spelled out later – beginning with when we set up camp in the shadow of Mount Sinai. But the warning from Heaven is clear; *Man shall not live by bread alone ... but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Holy One*. We are no longer to live by [which means *in bondage to*] *our appetites or our emotions – or any societal priorities, definitions of success, dreams or values*. Instead from this point forward we are called to structure all aspects of our lives around and upon our Divine Bridegroom’s instructions for living. This is *essential new approach to life #1*.

2. The Second Essential – Adopting an Asah-ing Energy Focus

Secondly the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven told us that *in order to survive the wilderness we will have to learn to do* [Hebrew *asah*, meaning to build, to craft, to form as an artisan] *what is upright and productive in His eyes*. Hmmmmn. What exactly does this mean? Well, first of all it means we absolutely must *unlearn* the way of survival we developed in Egypt, which was to always do and spend our time, energy and passion building that which pleases men in positions of influence, popular favor, and/or power. In our former way of life in Egypt, Pharaoh issued a mandate, a taskmaster cracked a whip, or some full-of-himself-or-herself celebrity lectured us on social justice, and we rushed to come into alignment. We bought their lies. We embraced their paranoid delusions. We learned to wink at their abominations. We looked the other way as they committed atrocities and indulged perversions. We shook off the sting of their anti-Semitic slurs. We laughed at their disgusting jokes. We put on long faces and shed real tears as their funeral processions passed by. We let our children grow up considering their occult practices as ‘another pathway to truth’. We adopted their language as our primary means of communication. We took the bait of whatever propaganda they threw at us. We bought into whatever social, economic and political propaganda they promoted. We bought into whatever vain imagination they decided to peddle on a given day. We fretted with them over whatever evildoers they were in all up in arms about in any given week. But now we have come to our senses. We know that the ways of the nations are never the Holy One’s way. Now we know that we are called to stand apart from the world around us. Now we know our job is to calmly say ‘no, thank you’ – and teach our children and children’s children why they also should say - ‘no, thank you’ to ethno-centric narratives; to cultural perversions; to worldly philosophies; to political theories; to emotionally-charged ideological rhetoric; to religious institutions; to educational, informational and entertainment industries; to the political, economic systems; and to the civil rights/social justice movements which the nations espouse. Now we understand that our Covenant calling involves us unlearning the ways of the world, and actually learning the ways of the Heavenly Courts. Now we understand that being free from oppression means being free to *THINK LIKE THE HOLY ONE THINKS*, to value what He values, and to prioritize what He prioritizes. We will have to learn how to SEE PEOPLE, SITUATIONS, TIMES, AND THINGS THROUGH HIS PERSPECTIVE instead of through the imperfect lenses of our own ideals, our paradigm of self-interest, our short-sighted grid of opinions and defense-mechanisms, and our woefully inadequate senses of human ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’.

Wow – what a *shift!* What a *dramatic life-style restructuring!* This means we can never again just mindlessly rush to do what some earthly taskmaster, political or religious leader demands without first passing it through the Divine Prism of the

Living Words of our Glorious Bridegroom. It means we cannot do just what some Pharaoh or Imam or president or king orders us to do OR what some temptress or manipulative friend seductively suggests, winsomely cajoles or irritatingly nags us to do – but must instead do only what HE, the Divine Bridegroom, has said is right, and proper, and just for us to do.

If nothing else, this makes it clear that if we are going to commit to do what is upright in the Holy One's eyes instead of following the crowd or our own hearts, our first priority is going to have to be *to actually get to know Him a whole lot better*. We are going to have to have a real, substantive, give-and-take kind of relationship with Him. We are going to have to *make an effort to learn to recognize what is and is not upright - and worth spending time, money, passion and energy on - in His eyes*. Is that kind of thing *possible*? Well, it had *better be* – if we want to survive the desert and the coming deception that is even now coming to the world.

3. The Third Essential - a Single-Focus Approach to Life

Thirdly the Holy One told us at *Marah* that we must in order to survive **'give full ear to all His directions'**. Full ear. Undistracted, undivided attention. Unconflicted loyalty. That means that we must *focus hard on hearing everything He has to say*. It means we must not listen to any other voice or seek out for ourselves any other source of information. It also means we must *not let ourselves be distracted by the affairs of life, the drama and trauma of interpersonal relationships, or the crises of politics or weather or finances*. It means we must *value the Holy One's messages to His Creation above all other communications*.

4. The Fourth Essential – Cultivating a Sh'mar-ing Heart- and Passion-Focus

And *fourthly* the Holy One told us at *Marah* that in order to survive in the wilderness called life we must in addition to all the above **carefully guard** [Hebrew, *sh'mar*] **all His instructions**. Wow. The redemption the Holy One has wrought for us is about a whole lot more than just us getting set free from bondage. He wants His redemption to be for us the *beginning of a totally new life, characterized by a stunningly different lifestyle*. And He is warning us that His instructions as to how life should be lived are not just to be viewed by us merely as additional information we process intellectually along with other theories and philosophies of life, or as interesting reading, or as helpful suggestions for success. He warns us that keeping His instructions for living always in the forefront of our minds, and free and clear of psychological sociological, cultural barnacles is absolutely MISSION-CRITICAL.

Are you getting it? This means that if we are to survive we must learn to treasure His instructions for living as absolutely *our most valuable possession in the world*.

It means we must devote serious time, effort, and energy in *meditating on them* and *memorizing them* and *talking about them* and *applying them to real life situations* every day of our life. It means we must be very diligent to follow His instructions and directions for living *wholeheartedly, excitedly – even passionately*. It means we must be careful not only *leave nothing He tells us to do undone*, but also that we must be careful *not leave anything He tells us to do half-done*.

Doing all of four of these things consistently is, of course, far beyond human capability. And that is, I suspect, is *precisely the point*. The Holy One wants us to know that *we absolutely cannot do the things we have to do in order to survive the wilderness experience in our own strength or power*. We absolutely must learn to *rest in Him*, and to *trust in Him to supply us His strength and accomplish that which is necessary through us using His power*. This is indeed a radical lifestyle shift that the Holy One has called us to!

How Specific Did the Holy One Get At Marah?

Did the Holy One give any specific instructions for living at **Marah** – or did He just lay out the four general principles of relationship discussed above? There is some evidence in the text of the Torah that at least one specific topic was covered – the subject of the sanctity of the 7th day Sabbath. For in the next chapter, when explaining the double portion of Manna showered down on the sixth day of the week [what Western culture knows as Thursday at sundown to Friday at sundown], Moshe will say: ***This is what the Holy One has spoken about – tomorrow is the day of rest, the Holy Shabbat (Sabbath) to the Holy One.*** Exodus 16:23.

Wait a minute, some might say. When prior to this point in time had the Holy One spoken about the ‘day of rest’, the ‘Holy Shabbat’, to our forefathers? The only logical answer, say the sages, is that He did so at Marah ... when He set up for us to observe and re-orient to what Torah calls *chok umishpat*. Understanding and appreciating the Shabbat is, you see, one of the Holy One’s most important survival techniques. As a sage of Israel has said “*More than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel.*”²

Next Stop: The Perfect Oasis – Elim

Meanwhile, we are *walking again*. The desert seems to have no end. Our *feet are burning*. Our *eyes are stinging*. Our *babies are crying*. We are hot ... and tired ... and thirsty ... and getting more and more irritable every minute. But wait – what is that I see up there on the horizon? Is that *another oasis ... at last?* Yes *it is*. The next place of consequence we are going to pass on the way from the Red Sea to

² This quote is attributed to *Ahad Ha'Am*, who was born in 1856 in the Ukraine to a Hasidic family, and whose real name was Asher Ginzberg. In his adult years as a Zionist leader, he adopted *Ahad Ha'am*, meaning *one of the people*, as his pen name.

Mount Sinai is a mysterious oasis called '*Elim*'³. This is also an important *station* – as was *Marah*. Our arrival and subsequent sojourn at *Elim* was orchestrated and choreographed by the Holy One for a developmental purpose as well. This time, however, it will be a whole lot more pleasant. *Elim*, you see, is like *an exotic honeymoon destination*.

The name *Elim* is a bit mysterious, but it is believed to be the plural form of the noun *ayil* [*alef, yod, lamed*, often translated '*ram*'⁴, but literally meaning '*strong one*'⁵]. Much like beautiful *Ein Gedi* in Eretz Yisrael, this oasis was most likely populated by abundant populations of deer and mountain goats, watched over by *the 'strong ones'* – i.e. the dominant bucks and rams - of those species.

The *Ruach HaQodesh* does not give a whole lot of details about our stay at this place. In fact, all we are really told by Torah about this place is that it had *12 springs* and *70 date palms*. Springs? Date Palms? How nice! The pillar of fire/cloud is stopping here? *WAY COOL!* Twelve fountains pouring forth pure, sweet living water in abundance; all the sweet, tasty, refreshing dates we could ever want to eat? Palm trees everywhere? *Well ALL-RIGHT!* If our thoughtful Bridegroom wants to interrupt our arduous journey through the desert with a few weeks' stopover at a pristine, palm-tree laden resort to give us a foretaste of what His land of milk and honey is like, *who are we to complain?* He taught us essential survival techniques back at *Marah* - maybe He wants us to practice them a little, to see what this new life is going to be like. And if he wants to hang a sign on our door saying, '*Privacy Please*', such that what happens while we are here is just our little secret, well hey, *that's His business too!* As for me, I just hope He arranges for us all to stop off at a similar place, with similar privacy and protection, the next time some Pharaoh, *Fuhrer*, Prime Minister, Imam, Caliph, or king decides to expel us from what we thought was our home. For now, however ... *this is the life*. No Pharaoh. No Egyptian chariot corps. Not a drop of bitter water anywhere. *Twelve springs* - one for every tribe⁶. *Seventy date palms* - one for every tribal elder to sit under⁷ and discuss the Sabbath instructions we received at *Marah* with

³ *Elim* is *alef, yod, lamed, mem sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word #362, it is pronounced *ay-leem* '.

⁴ As in Genesis 15:9 and 22:13.

⁵ As it is so translated a few verses earlier, in Exodus 15:15 [part of the Song of the Sea].

⁶ The number 12 is a very significant number to the Hebrew mindset. Twelve symbolic of *a basic group* that when aggregated together makes up a whole. For instance, twelve represents the number of new moons it takes to complete a 'year' on the agricultural cycle, and the number of major constellations visible in the Heavens. Hence Torah makes a point to tell us that Yish'mael had 12 sons. So, of course, did Ya'akov. Yeshua followed this pattern of 'election', surrounding Himself with, and sending out to the villages of the Galil, 12 *shalachim* [i.e. *apostles*].

⁷ The number 70, like the number 12 mentioned earlier, is a significant number to the Hebrew mind. It is seen as representing *universality*. Hence Genesis 10 describes how the world was repopulated after the flood by exactly 70 descendants of Noach. Torah makes it a point to tell us that there were also exactly 70

us. Nothing else to do but *snack on fresh, juicy dates and sip cool water in the shade of swaying palm fronds.*

The ultimate land of milk and honey awaits us, of course. This little oasis, while beautiful, and a welcome break from our long trek through the desert, is by no means the Holy One's best. It is not our *final destination* – much less our *place of ultimate destiny*. But it is where the pillar of fire and cloud has stopped. It is where Moshe has instructed us to set up camp. And for a few brief but wonderful moments, that is all that really matters.

Next Leg of the Great Journey - the Wilderness of Sin

Eventually the pillar of fire and cloud moved on from our wonderful little stopover at *Elim*. And when the pillar moved on *we moved on as well* – on to the next stretch of desert, the area called *Sin*⁸. Torah tells us: ***They ... came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Mitzrayim.***

When we move into the watershed of the *wadi* called *Sin*, things are going to change dramatically. *Elim* it is *not*. There are no bubbling springs in this area. There are no palm trees. There are no scrumptious dates. There are no umbrella drinks. No steel-hammer band belts out 'Ev'ry l'il thingz gon'be awright!'. There are none of those things here. No, sir - not in the Wilderness of *Sin*. This place is just *hot, dry, barren wilderness*. And that is how the Holy One wants it. It is all part of the Plan. Every single one of the stops we are making - the pleasant ones and the not-so-pleasant ones – are 100% pre-arranged by our Divine Bridegroom. He has spread the desert before us as an obstacle course of epic proportions. He has a grand plan to mature His Betrothed Bride, to strengthen her, and to challenge her over and over again, at every turn, to transcend her painfully low expectations, her insensitive spiritual eyes, ears and heart, her timid spirit, her over-indulged appetites, and her totally uncreative attitude of self-absorption.

members of Ya'akov's family that went into exile in Egypt in the time of Yosef. The prophet Yirmayahu makes it clear that the Babylonian Captivity was designed to last for exactly 70 years. **Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10**. According to Daniel the 'time of the Gentiles' after the Babylonian captivity are numbered by the Holy One to consist of 70 'weeks of years. In later days there were exactly 70 members of the Sanhedrin [hence, Yeshua sent out 70 disciples to teach His Torah interpretations and perform wonders in His Name]. Traditionally, it is held that at the Tower of Bavel, when the Holy One confused the languages and dispersed the people, He divided them into exactly 70 nations. Traditionally, it is also taught that, at Sinai, when the Holy One declared the 'ten sayings', He proclaimed them in 70 languages [all the languages He had created at Bavel] at the same time. Moreover, as is referenced in the body of this shiur at this footnote, there were 70 tribal elders appointed by Moshe. **Numbers 11:16**. Yeshua also famously taught that we are to forgive our brother 7 x 70 times.

⁸ *Sin* is *samech, yod, nun sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word #5512, it is pronounced 'seen' and refers to a place of thorns growing in clay-like soil.

Let's take the challenge! Let's run the course! It's the glory of a Bride to look for, read carefully, and cherish every single love letter her Bridegroom has left hidden for her along the path that leads to the *Chuppah*.

Time for a Little Test!

It is going to be in the Wilderness of Sin that the Holy One is going to *really* begin to test the sh'ma-responsiveness of His newly redeemed community. It is here that He is going to *offend our minds* in order to *reveal our hearts*. It is here He is going to test us to see if we have learned the critical lessons He tried to teach us at the *Yam Suf* and at *Marah* – that *the key to our survival* is to learn to *sh'ma* our Bridegroom's Voice – and only His voice – and to *sh'mar* our Bridegroom's directions and instructions. The Holy One very badly wants us to know, you see, that *we simply cannot live independently of Him*. He is *our life*. His Words are *our food*. His exhaled breath is *the air that we breathe*. Clinging to the promises of the covenant He cut with Avraham is absolutely *the only chance we have of surviving* - much less *fulfilling our purpose and destiny*.

Alas this critical lesson is not one that will be easily learned. For Torah tells us that after we left the pristine beauty of *Elim* and headed back into the dry, dusty desert we murmured against Moshe and Aharon, saying:

***We wish that we had died by the hand of the Holy One
in the land of Mitzrayim, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread,
for you have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.***

[Exodus 16:2-3]

We wish we had died by the hand of the Holy One in the land of Mitzrayim? You mean on the night of the Firstborn? You mean that, instead of sitting at *shalom* with our families, enjoying roasted lamb and matzah dipped in bitter herbs, protected by the lamb's blood sign on our doorposts, we wish we could have been struck down by the death angel like the Egyptians? And you mean that now we wish we could be like Esav, and sell our birthright in the Great Plan of Redemption and Restoration, all for a helping of stew?

Of course, the murmuring and complaining and *k'vetching* we did out in the heat of the desert of Sin *did not by any means take the Holy One by surprise*. He knew it was going to happen all along. In fact, He actually orchestrated the events that would bring it about very carefully. The Holy One first lavished us with the best food the earth has to offer - then He snatched it away. That is good. Now He will introduce us to the concept of food His Way. It will be here in the Wilderness of Sin that He will first give the people *manna from Heaven*. It is here in this part of the Wilderness that the Holy One has planned to introduce us to the Bride Diet He desires for His Bride to eat in order to wean her off the fleshly tastes and appetites she acquired in Egypt. For it is here [in Exodus 16:4] that He tells Moshe: ***Behold, I***

will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day ... If we will not learn to hunger for and appreciate whatever our Bridegroom provides for us as a Bride diet ... well, we are not ready to be a Bride, are we?

Why Manna?

It may come as a surprise to some that the main reason the Holy One gave us manna was not to *feed His people*. He had managed to feed the people just fine at *Elim* and other places we have sojourned thus far. Keeping us from starving to death physically was not the point. His arm was not too short. Think about it - the *waters parted for Him* – why would the earth not have yielded a bountiful harvest *at the mere breath of His mouth?* Hmmmmn. So if keeping us from starving was not the reason the Holy One rained down *the mysterious substance we call 'manna' from Heaven, well ...* what was the reason? Ah, that is the part of this story that constitutes treasure hidden in plain view. The main reason manna was given was actually to *teach our forefathers another critical lesson* about the radical new lifestyle to which we have been called. For it will be here in the Wilderness of Sin that the Holy One will introduce to His Redeemed Community *the most wonderful gift He will give them this side of Messiah*. That most wonderful gift is ... a fresh take on *the Shabbat* [Sabbath]!

Re-Introducing the Healing, Renewing, Cleansing Power of the Sabbath to the Realm of Human Experience

The introduction was brief. The Holy One just instructed Moshe concerning the effect of the Shabbat on the *Manna* [Hebrew, *man hu* (*what is it?*)] that He was about to start showering upon them from Heaven. Here is how the Holy One broaches the subject:

Hineni mantir lachem lechem min-ha-shamayim

Behold, I will make bread in great quantities rain down to you from the Heavens.

V'yatza ha-am v'laktu dvar-yom

The people will go out and gather enough for each day.

b'yomo l'ma'an anaseinu ha-yelech b'torati im-lo

I will test them to see whether or not they will walk in My instructions.

V'hayah b'yom ha-shishi v'hechinu et asher-yavi'u

On the sixth day they will have to prepare what they bring home.

v'hayah mishneh- al asher-yilkeitu yom yom

It will be twice as much as they gather every other day.'

[Exodus 16:4-5]

Do you get the picture? On Sunday through Thursday the Holy One made sure that

our ancestors woke up to *a veritable buffet of manna*. Somehow in the night or at the first light supernatural food fell on the desert floor around our ancestors' camp like snow on a meadow. Each morning Sunday through Thursday our ancestors would go out and *pick up all the manna their families could eat that day*. They did not have to work to produce it – but they *did* have to *go out physically onto the desert floor and gather it*, and they had to *plan meals around it*, and they had to *prepare it as they saw fit*. Ah, but *then came Friday morning*. Torah tells us: *And when **yom ha-shishi** – the sixth day - came they gathered twice the food, two omers for each one. All the leaders of the community came and reported it to Moshe. Exodus 16:22.*

Moshe then explained to the leaders of the community how this pre-Sabbath double portion fit in the Holy One's redemptive plan:

Hu asher diber Adonai

'This is what the Holy One has said

Shabaton Shabat-kodesh l'Adonai machar

Tomorrow is a day of rest, the Holy One's holy Sabbath.

et asher-tofu eifu v'et asher-tevash'lu basheilu

Bake what you want to bake, and cook what you want to cook [today].

v'et kol ha-odef ha-nichu lachem l'mish'meret ad ha-boker

Whatever you have left over, put aside carefully until morning.'

[Exodus 16:23]

On the morning of the sixth day, no matter where we were, we would wake up to find that the Holy One had provided an 'extra portion'. But on the next morning – the morning of the seventh day, if we went out in search of manna, we would find none. Moshe explained: ***Ha-yom ki-Shabat ha-yom l'Adonai*** – *Today is the Sabbath of the Holy One. You will not find [anything] in the field today.* ***Sheshet yamim tilkeituhu -*** *You are to gather [this food] during the six weekdays,* ***uvayom ha-shvi'i Shabat*** - *but the seventh day is the Sabbath,* ***lo yiheyeh-bo*** – *i.e. on that [day] none will come.'* **Exodus 15:25-26.** And then Moshe taught us:

Re'u ki-Adonai natan lachem ha-Shabat

You must see/realize - the Holy One has given you Sabbath bread.

al-ken hu noten lachem b'yom ha-shishi

That is why He gave you food for two days on Friday.

lechem yomayim sh'vu ish tachtav al-yetze

[On the Sabbath] every person is to remain in his residence.

ish mimeikomo b'yom ha-shvi'i

*Everyone is to stay in his **makom** [place] on the 7th day.'*

[Exodus 16:29]

We who have been studying the Torah therefore know that the Shabbat has always

been as much an essential part of Creation as the heavens, the earth, the waters above and the waters beneath, the dry land and the seas of earth, the plants bearing seed and the trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, all the living creatures of the air, the water, and the soil, and even man. We who have been studying Torah know that the Sabbath existed long before the manna gift of Exodus 16. We know that on the seventh day of Creation the Holy One not only *rested from His work*, but: ***V'yevarech Elohim et-yom ha-shvi'i*** - i.e. God *blessed* the seventh day, ***v'yekadesh oto*** - i.e. and He *made it holy*.” We who have been studying Torah have therefore known even prior to reading today’s aliyah that the 7th day has never been - and will never be - *like other days* of the week. We know that the seventh day has been *infused by the Holy One with an essential, over-riding aura of both blessing and holiness*. By ‘blessing’ the Seventh day the Holy One forever and all time made that day an *island in time where Heaven touches earth* in a unique manner - a period of seconds, minutes, and hours over which the supernatural, creative, prophetic blessing of the Holy One *hovers waiting for a person on which to light*. By blessing the *Shabbat* the Holy One made it an “enchanted garden”, providing a portal for human beings to step through the mundane into the holy, through the temporal into the eternal. During the blessed seconds, minutes, and hours of Shabbat each *breath we take*, each *thought we think*, each *morsel of food we ingest*, each *conversation in which we engage* with our family members and friends, each *swallow of water or wine*, each *prayer we may pray*, is – or can be – BLESSED – mixed as it were with the sweet residue of the blessing the Holy One spoke lovingly over His Creation.

The Shabbat, you see, was given to us as *our primary point of connection with the wonder of Creation*. Each and every Shabbat we are given the opportunity to step out of time as we know it and *relive the Creation from the perspective of the Holy One*. To the extent we avail ourselves of that opportunity we are virtually guaranteed to continue forever to be childlike in faith, trusting Him with every fiber of our being, innocently gazing in wide-eyed wonder at His Marvelous Works, falling on our faces like the *Serafim*, and proclaiming with them ***“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty! The whole earth is full of His Glory!”***

Next Stop: Refidim

The next stop along the Bridal Pathway prepared by the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven for His Beloved was a place called *Refidim*⁹. Here again the issue will appear to be water to drink. But the Holy One this time will not simply show His Redeemed how to sweeten bitter water. He will, instead, demonstrate both His

⁹ In the eyes of some sages, "Refidim" implies "weakness of hands," They liken this to neglect of Torah. According to this theory, when the Jewish people become weak in walking out the Torah - and start to rely only upon Torah study without ‘hands-on’ application – the Holy One allows Amalek to attack.

Love and His Power to us in a *totally new and even more wonderful way* – He will give us *water from a rock*. What an Awesome Bridegroom!!! How totally worthy He is of all our love, all our attention, and all our devotion! Here is how Torah describes what happened when we arrived at Refidim:

*[T] here was no water for the people to drink.
Therefore the people quarreled with Moshe, and said, "Give us water to drink."
Moshe said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Holy One?"*

*The people were thirsty for water there;
and the people murmured against Moshe, and said, "Why have you brought us up
out of Mitzrayim, to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"*

[Exodus 17:1-3]

How, you ask, could the same people who just a few days ago danced, beat tambourines, and shouted with all their might: *"I will sing to the Holy One for he has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea ..."* now use *the same voices they had lifted in ecstatic praise* to murmur, complain, and accuse the Holy One of trying to kill them and their children? *How, you wonder, could the same lips which only recently cried: "... The Holy One is my strength and song; He has become my Yeshuah: He is my God, and I will enshrine him; my father's God, and I will exalt him ..."* so soon bitterly declare: *"We wish that we had died ... in the land of Mitzrayim, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we ate our fill of bread."*

The seasoned among the Holy One's people have come to understand something about times of ecstatic release of praise and holy awe. The truth is that ecstatic corporate worship experiences, pleasurable as they may be and should be – are, even at their very best, extremely *short-lived*. They are a mere *interlude*, introducing the celebrants individually and collectively to a new, deeper, but alas, *much tougher* challenge of faith. They are like *a landing on a staircase* - where one rests for a moment before beginning the next, even more challenging, level of steep ascent. And the emphasis is on *"even more challenging"*. Yes the Egyptian *army* now lies buried beneath the waves of the Sea of Reeds - but the Egyptian *way of thinking* is still alive and well - in the hearts and minds of our ancestors who as of yet know no other way of thinking, acting, or living. We left Egypt not just with Egyptian silver, gold, and garments – we left Egypt loaded down with *Egyptian thoughts and attitudes and mindsets*. These Egyptian thoughts and attitudes are totally *inconsistent with*, and *anathema to*, what the Holy One wants to reveal to us at Sinai – and ultimately in the Land of Promise. The enemy *without* – Pharaoh's army, with its chariots and spears - has indeed been vanquished. However – and mark this well - it is always the enemy *within* which must be subjugated before one can become what the Holy One has purposed to create. And it is the enemy *within* our ancestors that is the Holy One's next target. Fortunately, the Holy One is just

as skillful in dealing with the enemy within as He has proven Himself to be in dealing with Pharaoh's chariots. Ten strategic strikes He released on Egypt – ten strategic strikes He is about to release on the Egyptian thoughts and attitudes resident in us.

You see, the Holy One knows that little things like *water* and *food*, *sore feet*, and *stomachaches*, are all it takes to give our soaring “Song of the Sea” spirits a “reality check”. Ever since the famine we read about near the end of Genesis - multiple generations prior to the events of today's aliyah – Pharaoh had provided our ancestor's food, the Nile had provided their water, and Egypt had provided all their life's activities and experiences. The only voices of instruction that had ever mattered to the generation that now stood in the desert were the voices of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. The God of the patriarchs was not, most likely denied, but was merely considered *irrelevant* - at least from anything other than a purely “spiritual” standpoint. It was not He but Pharaoh upon whom they thought their sustenance, their bread, their water, their very lives, depended. The Holy One was, of course, their “God” – in a religious sort of way- but *Pharaoh* was their provider, and *Egypt* was their life.

In light of the Holy One's plans for us at Sinai and in Kena'an this way of thinking is *going to have to change*. In light of the events of this week's aliyah, the change was going to have to happen NOW. For this reason the Holy One purposed to wean His Redeemed - soon to be His *Betrothed* - from the Egyptian way of living, thinking, eating, and drinking. The Sea of Reeds was polluted with blood and decaying Egyptian flesh. They had to move on. The next few days would present a major challenge. But something had to happen *inside us* between the Sea of Reeds and Sinai in order that, when the time was right for Him to speak His words of love, this time our ears would respond to His Voice, and we would grasp and understand the precise He was going to use to describe our new way of life. We had to “detox”. And “detox-ing” is never pleasant, and never brings out the best in anyone. So yes, as the hunger and the thirst and the blisters and the sunburn wore on us, we grumbled and complained. I dare say we even cursed. But the Holy One was not put off by our grumbling and complaining - He saw us not as we were, but *as we were created to be*. It was a little tough on Moshe, of course – he had to listen to all the complaints. But the Holy One knew exactly what He was doing.

Wars and Rumors of War!

If you will recall, *Beshelach* began with the announcement that the Holy One was going to lead us to our new home via a *road less traveled* instead of by the ancient – and much shorter - *Way of Philistia*. Do you remember the reason why He was going to do this? Torah told us it was because He reasoned that “*if the people*

encountered armed resistance, they would lose heart and return to Egypt.” Exodus 13:17(b). Since that time, of course, our bridges to Egypt have [for the time being at least] been burned. As we get ready to conclude *Beshelach* however the Holy One feels that our training has now progressed to the point where experiencing a little warfare can actually *do us good*. Hence when a group of desert hoodlums descended from Esav’s grandson Amalek decided to attack us¹⁰, the Holy One did not stop them in their tracks as He had stopped the Egyptian approach at the Sea of Reeds. He did not provide a way for us to escape the battle. Instead Torah tells us: ***Vayavo Amalek*** - *i.e. and then Amalek came, **vayilachem im-Yisra'el biRefidim** – and they attacked Israel at Refidim.* What did Moshe do in response to this attack? He said to a young man most people called Hoshea: ***Bechar-lanu anashim*** - *i.e. choose for us men, **vetze hilachem b'Amalek** - and prepare for battle against Amalek.*

The Holy One has a *fresh Word of instruction for every challenge He allows us to experience*. We have to learn to *seek fresh revelation, and be responsive to the Word He release, in every season*. The strategy of the Holy One for this challenge was not ‘*Stand and see the deliverance of the Holy One*’. This time the instruction was totally different: *i.e. ‘Choose Men, and Prepare for Battle!’* The Holy One’s chosen people have to learn they cannot always just sit back and wait for the Holy One to provide them a miraculous deliverance. A new challenge requires a new strategy. Part of our training as His Betrothed Bride-to-Be involves learning when and under what circumstances we are being called to lace up combat boots and wield those Egyptian swords that washed upon the shore of the Sea of Reeds when the situation demands it.

While this time we would have to *pick up swords, stand in the breach, and fight hand-to-hand and tooth and nail*, rest assured that the Holy One was neither disinterested nor uninvolved. As Y’hoshua led the troops of the redeemed community in defense of the camp:

Moshe Aharon v’Chur alu rosh ha-giv’ah
Moshe, Aharon and Chur went up to the top of the hill.

V’hayah ka’asher yarim Moshe yado vegavar Yisra’el
As long as Moshe held his hands up, Israel would be winning,

V’cha’asher yaniach yado vegavar Amalek
but as soon as he let his hands down, the battle would go in Amalek’s favor.

Videi Moshe k’vedim vayikchu-even vayasimu tachtav
When Moshe’s hands became weary, they took a stone and placed it under him,

¹⁰ Amalek’s attack was particularly despicable because not only did Amalek attack us when all other nations were in awe of what the Holy One had done for us, but also because the sages picture Amalek’s strike being directed against the weakest and most helpless members of the camp.

vayeshev aleiha v'Aharon v'Chur tamchu veyadav

so that he would be able to sit on it. Aharon and Chur then held his hands,

mizeh echad umizeh echad vayehi yadav emunah ad-bo ha-shamesh

one on each side, and his hands remained steady until sunset.

V'yachalosh Y'hoshua et-Amalek v'et-amo lefi-charev

Y'hoshua was thus able to break the ranks of Amalek and its allies with the sword.

What did the position of Moshe's hands, up on the hill, have to do with the battle raging on the desert sands in the camp of the Redeemed? *Everything*, it appears. When Moshe's hands were *raised* toward Heaven Y'hoshua's warriors would take the advantage. The moment Moshe's hands were lowered to his side however the advantage would immediately shift to the Amaleki. And that is why when up on the hilltop *Aharon* [of the tribe of Levi] and *Chur* [of the tribe of Y'hudah] joined forces and held up Moshe's hands, the battle below was decisively won, and Amalek was routed.¹¹. Sound crazy? In the natural it is as crazy as it gets. But it teaches a very significant spiritual lesson. The lesson is that *what happens when the Holy One's people are attacked has a lot more to do with what is going on above, in the spiritual realm, than with the weaponry and warfare skills possessed by our warriors*. Oh, the Holy One requires us to do our part, to be sure. We have to *prepare* and *train* and *provide weapons* to our young and old men alike. We have to *stand firm* against our enemies, and *be willing to endure horrible injury and/or death* – and to *sometimes inflict those things on others*. We have to *care for our wounded* and *bury our dead with honor*. But we face no enemy alone. Anyone who attacks Israel attacks the apple of the Holy One's eye. They have to deal with Him as well as with us. And while we may, in time, be tempted to make treaties of peace with those who attack us, or their descendants, the Holy One will not. The Holy One said:

Ketov zot zikaron b'sefer v'sim b'oznei Yehoshua

Write this in the Book as a reminder and establish it carefully in Yehoshua's ears;

ki-machoh emchah et-zecher Amalek mitachat ha-shamayim

I will totally obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.'

[Exodus 17:14]

Please note that the narrative of Torah does not at the conclusion of the narrative of the battle with Amalek report *a single casualty* – or even a single injury – amongst our people. While this time the Holy One did not intervene in a visibly manifest way to turn aside the attack of our enemy, His watchful care was nonetheless very, very real, and very, very tangible.

¹¹ According to an ancient midrash, Moshe raised his hands to pray for Israel to be successful in battle. And, according to the sages, the three pillars of the world who fought the spiritual side of the war with Amalek – *i.e.* Moshe, Aharon, and Chur - symbolize the three pillars on which the sages say the world stands - Torah study, service to the Holy One, and kind deeds" **Pirkei Avot 1:2**.

Our First Communal Altar

Our *parsha ha-shavua* concludes with the building of an altar – our first altar as a redeemed nation. Here are the parsha’s final words:

Vayiven Moshe mizbe'ach vayikra sh'mo Adonai Nisi

Moshe built an altar, and he named it 'The Holy One-is-my-Banner.'

Vayomer ki-yad al-kes Yah

He said, 'The Hand is on God's Throne.'

milchamah l'Adonai b'Amalek midor dor

The Holy One shall be at war with Amalek for all generations.'

[Exodus 17:8-16]

Essential Lessons of the Trip from Yam Suf to Sinai

The secret to what the Holy One was doing with us during the course of the journey from *Yam Suf* [the Sea of Reeds] to Sinai lies in two short verses in yesterday’s aliyah. In Exodus 15:26 the Holy One explained *the new way of living* He was going to teach His people. ***Man does not live by bread alone***, Moshe will later record, ***but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the Holy One***. To introduce this concept - which I call the “*sh'ma* lifestyle” - the Holy One had Moshe instruct the people:

***If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Holy One your God,
and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His mitzvot,
and keep all His statutes,***

***I will put none of the diseases on you that I have put on the Egyptians;
for I, the Holy One, am your healer.***

Then in Exodus 16:4 the Holy One spoke to Moshe again, saying:

***Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you;
and the people are to go out and gather a day's portion every day,
that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My Torah.***

The Holy One is not – in giving sweet water from a rock, manna from heaven, and quail on the wind - responding to His people’s grumbling. We His people are not *the initiators* of these things. The Holy One knew before He selected for us this route through the hottest, driest part of the desert – instead of the well-traveled road along the Mediterranean Coastline – that we would get hot and sore and tired and hungry and thirsty. He knew that we would pout, and that we would fuss, and that we would lose our comfortable façade of spirituality. He knew that we would grumble and complain and throw tantrums like spoiled children.

The truth is that the Holy One is not nearly as concerned with our *comfort* and *convenience* as He is with our *purpose* and *destiny* and *calling in life*. Do you understand now? He wanted us to grumble. Why? Because He wanted us to get it

out of our system as early on as possible. What the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov is doing, you see, by leading us through the back side of the desert, is purposely de-toxifying us. Do not think for a moment that what is happening is that He is feeling sorry for us and responding to our grumbling. What is happening is that He is pushing us to be who we were created to be. What is happening is that we are grumbling in response to what He is doing to de-toxify us. He is not responding to us – He is training us. He is purifying us through tests and trials. We can cry and whine all we want - it will not change a thing. He is very, very patient with us, but He is making it clear that HE is in charge, and NOT US! He is, you see, in the process of teaching us a radical new lifestyle. And He knows full well that the old one will not die easily ... or of its own accord. But it HAS TO DIE. We will have to learn to live by His voice, not our appetites. We will have to live by His Decree, not our opinions. And we have to learn what it is like to be a bride of the Most High God instead of a slave of a pharaoh. Ah, but now the seventh day approaches. Come my Beloved, let us greet the Bride.

Questions For Today's Study

1. From the *Yam Suf* (Sea of Reeds), the redeemed remnant went into the “*Wilderness of Shur*”. A little while later, they enter the “*Wilderness of Sin*”.

[A] In your Bible Dictionary, look up the places Torah calls *Shur* and *Sin*. What do those words mean?

[B] At *Marah*, the redeemed remnant “murmured” against Moshe and the Holy One. What was their complaint?

[C] What did the Holy One show Moshe at *Marah*?

[D] Look up the Hebrew word for what the Holy One showed Moshe at *Marah*. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[E] What mitzvah did the Holy One give the redeemed at *Marah*?

[F] What promise did the Holy One give along with this *mitzvah*?

[G] The redeemed also murmured against Moshe and Aharon when they got to the Wilderness of Sin. What was their complaint this time?

[H] What did the Holy One do in response to the complaint of the redeemed in the Wilderness of Sin?

[I] What “test” did the Holy One build into this response?

[J] How did the redeemed do on this “test”?

[K] The Holy One caused a supernatural occurrence to happen at twilight/sundown each day (except on Shabbat) after the redeemed left Egypt. What did He cause to happen?

[L] What did the Holy One cause to happen each morning (except on Shabbat)?

[M] What instructions did Moshe give concerning the Manna that the Holy One provided in the morning on the sixth day?

[N] What is the seventh day called in today's aliyah?

[O] What instructions were given in this aliyah about the *Shabbat*?

[P] We often think of the miracles of the Holy One as one-time incidents confined to a single location. How long did the Holy One provide Manna for the redeemed remnant?

[Q] To put this in context calculate how many times altogether the redeemed remnant woke up to find Manna had supernaturally appeared for them.

[R] In how many different locations did manna to appear?

[S] What complaint did the people make at *Refidim*?

[T] What question did the Redeemed ask, according to Exodus 17:7?

[U] How did the Holy One instruct Moshe to respond to this complaint?

[V] What were the two names Moshe gave to *Refidim*?

[W] Look up those two names in your Bible Dictionary, Strong's, and Gesenius. What do those names mean?

2. After the Holy One produces water from "the rock at Horev" in response to the blow of Moshe's staff, the redeemed remnant is attacked - the first instance of warfare for the Holy One's chosen remnant.

[A] Who initiated this attack?

[B] From whom were these attackers descended?

[C] Look up this group of people in your Bible Dictionary, and make a list of the dealings such people had with the Holy One's chosen people over the Biblical period.

[D] In Exodus 17:9 we are introduced to someone new, a man from the tribe of Efrayim. Who is this man?

[E] What is the meaning of this man's name?

[F] What principles do you see in this "first instance" of warfare that reflect the way the Holy One's people should approach a fight?

[G] What did the Holy One to write for memorial after this battle?

[H] Why do you think the Holy One said this? [Before answering, read Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Numbers 24:30, and I Samuel 15:2-6].

3. In Judges 5, after the battle of Mount *Tabor*, *D'vorah* [Deborah] and Barak take up a "*shir*" [song].

Then sang D'vorah and Barak the son of Avino'am on that day, saying,

"For that the leaders took the lead in Yisra'el,

For that the people offered themselves willingly, Bless the Holy One."

As we will see, the "Song of the Sea" this is not! The focus is totally different. Alas, the "first instance" has been corrupted. See if you can detect the root problem with the corruption as you search through the song of D'vorah to answer these questions.

[A] List every specific thing you can find in verses 1-12 for which D'vorah and/or Barak gave the Holy One praise.

[B] What does the phrase “*a mother in Israel*”, as used in verse 7, mean?

[C] What differences do you see between the song of D'vorah/ Barak from the song of Moshe/Miryam?

[D] Which of the tribes are praised/flattered in this song?

[E] Which of the tribes are rebuked?

[F] What is the reason for the rebuke? Was it in any way justified [see Judges 4:6, specifying who was to make up the army for this battle]?

[G] Did the promise of verse 3 receive any fulfillment, or do we have something else here, something impure?

[H] In the last segment of the song of D'vorah/Barak, a scene is described which they imagine is being played out in Sisera's home as a result of the actions of Yael [Jael]. Was Yael a Hebrew?

[I] At the Passover Seder we stop and remove from our cups ten drops of wine [one for each plague of suffering which the Holy One wrought on Egypt]. Why do we do this, and how does this compare to the gloating of D'vorah/Barak over the grief of the mother of Sisera?

4. In the commentary above we spoke about what the Holy One was “doing” after the Exodus by subjecting our ancestors to extreme heat, extreme hunger, and extreme thirst in the deserts of the Sinai peninsula. We suggested that the provision of manna, water from a rock, divine assistance in warfare, divine healing, etc., were *not knee-jerk responses to the peoples' demands, but were divinely planned all along* – to increase our people's reliance upon, and relationship with the Holy One, and to make that relationship “real” rather than merely “religious”. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today Yeshua speaks on a very similar subject. Yeshua began by discussing the will of the One who sent Him in connection with what was taking place in Israel at the time He spoke.

This is the will of my Father who sent me, that of all he has given to me I should lose nothing, but should raise him up at the last day. This is the will of the One who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

[A] What two things does Yeshua say are the will of the one Who sent Him?

[B] Much is made in religious circles about the “will of God”. What do you think this term means?

[C] What does Yeshua say is God's will for Him to do with those who believe in Him “at the last day”?

5. Yeshua's discussion about the will of the Father went right over the heads of the religious leaders. They chose to totally ignore what He said about the Holy One's will, and to focus on something totally different.

*The Y'hudim therefore murmured concerning him, because he said,
"I am the bread which came down out of heaven."
They said, "Isn't this Yeshua, the son of Yosef, whose father and mother we know?
How then does he say, 'I have come down out of heaven?'"*

[A] What part of what the Master said in this discourse caught the attention of the religious leaders?

[B] Why did the leaders have a problem with this statement?

6. Yeshua then explained to the religious leaders the real reason they were having a problem believing in Him. Of course, it had nothing to do with the identity of His earthly parents.

*It is written in the prophets, 'They will all be taught by the Holy One.'
Therefore everyone who hears from the Father, and has learned, comes to me.
Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from the Holy One.
He has seen the Father.
Most assuredly, I tell you, he who *aman's* Me has eternal life.
I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.
This is the bread that comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die.
I am the living bread that came down out of heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.
Yes, the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

[A] What two things characterize the ones who “comes to” Yeshua, according to verse 45?

[B] In Strong’s Concordance and Gesenius’ Hebrew Lexicon look up the words our English Bibles translate as “learn” and “listen” in verse 45.

[i] Write the Greek words and their meanings.

[ii] Using Strong’s, what Hebrew word do you conclude Yeshua actually used to convey the meaning of “learn”.

[iii] Using Strong’s, what Hebrew word do you conclude Yeshua actually used to convey the meaning of “listen/hear”.

[iv] Do a study on the two Hebrew words you have identified, and write an essay describing the difference in shades of meaning between the English, Greek, and Hebrew concepts of “learn” and “listen”.

[C] What, according to verses 40-51, is the purpose and will of the Holy One for all who “see” the Son and “believe on” Him?

*May you know the supernatural provision and protection of the Holy One,
and may your eyes see and your heart receive His wonderful Messiah.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 78:17-30

*Yet they still went on to sin against him, to rebel against Ha-Elyon in the desert.
They tempted God in their heart by asking food according to their desire.
Yes, they spoke against God. They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"*

*Behold, he struck the rock, so that waters gushed out,
Streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Will he provide flesh for his people?"*

Therefore the Holy One heard, and was angry.

*A fire was kindled against Ya`akov; anger also went up against Yisra'el,
because they didn't believe in God, and didn't trust in his **Yeshuah**.*

*Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven.
He rained down manna on them to eat, and gave them food from the sky.*

Man ate the bread of angels. He sent them food to the full.

He caused the east wind to blow in the sky.

By his power he guided the south wind.

He rained also flesh on them as the dust; winged birds as the sand of the seas.

He let them fall in the midst of their camp, around their habitations.

So they ate, and were well filled. He gave them their own desire.

They didn't turn from their cravings. Their food was yet in their mouths ...