

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Tetzaveh:*** **Exodus 29:1-35**
 Haftarah: **Ezekiel 43:18-21**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Hebrews 13:9-14**

Consecrate/set apart Aharon and his sons.

[Exodus 29:9(b)]

Today's Meditation is Psalms 119:113-120;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *Tzuri v'Goeli* [My Rock and My Redeemer]

Vezeh ha-davar asher ta'aseh lahem – *And this is that which you are to do to them [and cause them to do] ...* ***l'kadesh otam l'chahen li*** - *to set them apart for My representation.*
Exodus 29:1

The Holy One set up Creation in a way that makes nurturing family relationships vital to the survival of the Ecosystem. From the beginning, a person has never been just a person to the Holy One. Instead, every he and every she is a *zera* – *i.e.* a seed. He/she is a forest waiting to be planted; a harvest waiting to be sown. He/she is a finger of flame in the midst of a great multi-generational fire; one of the innumerable frequencies which will join together to make up the song of the universe. A key feature of the Holy One's Grand Redemptive Plan, therefore, is building strong, healthy, families, households, and bloodlines – families, households, and bloodlines that are *Mitzvot*, *Mashiach*, and *Malkhut ha-Shamayim*² *focused* instead of being *flesh obsessed*, *emotion driven*, *sentimentality manipulated*, *sensuality seduced*, and *pseudo-intellectualism toxic*. **Genesis 6:18; Genesis 18:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:9-10; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Deuteronomy 11:19; Malachi 4:6; & Ephesians 6:1-4.** But alas, we know all too well that not everyone has or follows a lifestyle consistent with this revelation. We all know and have been touched by far too many broken families, dysfunctional households, and corrupted bloodlines. We have all experienced the toxicity unhealthy family relationships introduce into the world. So many in the world grew up – or are in the process of growing up – in a household with an absent, alcoholic, addicted, abusive, workaholic, womanizing, and/or communicationally-challenged father. Just as many in our day had – or have - a manic-depressive, manipulative, narcissistic, nagging, complaining, fault-finding, self-obsessed, hypochondriacal, and/or sadistically sharp-tongued mother. Far too many had – or presently have - to deal with both. We all know how generationally repeating addictions, genetic propensities, and inherited diseases of the body, the mind, and soul destabilize

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² *Malchut ha-shamayim* is the Hebrew phrase often translated as 'the Kingdom of Heaven'.

every culture in which they are found. We have seen the havoc that is unleashed on society and the damage done to Creation every time a father or mother, son or daughter, sister or brother bucks and runs from the prescribed Covenant Way. Brethren, these things should not be! And *yet*

Avodat Mishpachah

Consider, therefore, a very different paradigm: one where fathers and mothers are honored, where brothers serve as each other's 'keepers', open their hands to one another (share provision and abundance), and faithfully and mutually resist the inclination to hate – or even feel enmity toward - one another in their hearts. Dare to imagine a FULLY FUNCTIONAL FAMILY, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY CONSECRATED TO THE KING. Dare we imagine hundreds of thousands of such families across the world, each FULLY COMMITTED TO THE HOLY ONE, AND LIVING ACCORDING TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF HIS TORAH, APPLYING KINGDOM-OF-HEAVEN WISDOM TO EVERY SITUATION THEY ENCOUNTER, and MODELING KINGDOM-OF-HEAVEN ATTRIBUTES. How might such household impact the world? How much wisdom could it introduce? How much healing could it effectuate? How much *shalom* could it impart? How much *kedusha energy* and *Divine Light* could it bring to bear upon the earth? The Holy One was hoping you would ask! Welcome to 'family HIS way'! Welcome to His vision for what a Redeemed Covenant household – even in this fallen world - can look like when His Throne is made the center-of-gravity of all its operations.

... And His Household Following

The Creator does not see or relate to human beings as isolated individuals. He will never entrust His Grand Plan to a few flash-in-the-pan 'lone ranger' superheroes. He wants cross-generational relationships, well-rooted commitments, and long-lasting effects. He therefore always plants the solitary in – or causes them to start - FAMILIES. Think of Adam, and why the Holy One determined that '*it is not good that the man should be alone.*' Think of Noah, and who it was that the Holy One called to go with him on the ark. Think of Avraham, and how the Holy One's conversations and interactions with Him centered around his 'seed'. Think of how the Covenant flowed from Avraham through the bloodline, first to Yitzhak, then to Ya'akov, then to the tribes and clans. Think of Moshe, who was not called to serve the Holy One alone, but was instructed, again and again, to co-labor with, and to invest great amounts of time and energy into training and commissioning the bloodline of, his brother Aharon. To the Holy One, you see, it is never about any human being's natural gifts, talents, or charisma – no matter how impressive those things may be to human beings. To the Holy One the Kingdom's work is, always has been, and always will be, best assigned to and birthed out of closely connected HOUSEHOLDS and BLOODLINES. While each person within a family bears

responsibility for his own personal adherence to the Covenant protocols, he or she works that out – must work that out - in a family/household/bloodline context. The Holy One will never be content to waste anointing oil on un-consecrated, unproven, ungrounded vessels. He will never classify us by nor label us according to our ideologies, national allegiances, political positions, institutional attachments, organizational memberships, or peer-group affiliations. Much less does He ever consider us statistical representatives of any race, socio-economic class, culture, nation, or ethnicity. We are so much more to Him than any of those things. We are His Family. Carriers of His spiritual DNA, our families are the key to His Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind as a species, tribe by tribe and household by household, and for the restoration of every square inch of Creation to its originally intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom. We are the hope of redemption for the *family* [Hebrew, *mishpachah*] into which He caused us to be born. We are the vessels of healing He plans to use in the *household* [Hebrew *bayit*] in which He causes us to abide. We are the instruments of *tikkun* [*i.e.* restoration, repair] He has in mind for the *bloodline* [Hebrew *toldot*] from which we devolved and into which we will beget others. And we are His messengers of good tidings, joy, and shalom for the *generation* [Hebrew *dor*] in which we are called to live, work, struggle, and overcome.

The redemptive/restorative plan of our Great King does not revolve around local churches or synagogues, diocese, conventions, denominations, associations, ministry organizations, institutions, or ministerial alliances; it revolves, instead, around families. Its power flows best from houses, not meeting halls. Its healing energy flows best from ordinary husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, siblings, and grands, not professional clergymen or ministry organization CEOs. This is because family life – as opposed to ‘public ministry’ life, keeps us humble, and requires us to be REAL - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Holy One has therefore ordained for the kingdom of Heaven to expand through households. So, since that is the case, we are provided a pattern after which kingdom families are to be established. To what kind of family model would the Holy One have us aspire? What is the highest and best real-time flesh and blood example of a Covenant household that Torah has to offer? What is a redeemed and Kingdom-focused bloodline supposed to look like; how is it to dress, to eat, to marry, to raise children, to minister to the Creator, and to serve its fellow man? Enter Aharon and his sons. This family is to be our model. They are to serve as our example. They are forerunners, calling us all to greater Kedusha and fruitfulness. They represent the achievable aspiration. Just consult Psalm 133 as often as necessary if you have trouble getting your mind around this stunning element of Kingdom reality. It reads:

Hinei mah tov unmanayim - *i.e. Behold how good and how pleasant it is*

for brothers to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head, flowing down the beard of Aharon,
running down to the fringes of his garments.
It is like the dew of Hermon descending onto the mountains of Tziyon,
for there the Holy One commanded the blessing,
even Chayim al-ha-Olam.

Do not misunderstand me, however. Aharon and his sons are far from perfect. None of them are superheroes. None has any superpower. They are just ordinary, redeemed human beings – flesh and blood people who have to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and all issues of life, great and small - like you and me. They have to deal with the same personal, emotional, financial, and relational, and national struggles every other human being has to deal with. So what is special about them? That is what remains to be determined – worked out day after day, through trial after trial, offense after offense, and challenge after challenge. It has something to do with learning to prioritize the will and ways of the Holy One over personal opinion, self-will, or self-interest. But one thing is for sure: the family/household/bloodline of Aharon have been called to live their lives *under a powerful and highly intrusive microscope*. They, as a family, a household, and a bloodline, represent the ‘control group’ for the Greatest of all Spiritual case studies. They are being prepared for levels of Kingdom significance – not to mention cross-cultural and trans-generational impact - far beyond either human capability or human imagination. Though they are ordinary mortals like us - prone as are we to do things like *going off on tangents; wallowing in self-pity; straining at gnats while swallowing camels; fretting over evildoers, yet winking at perversions* engaged in by people we consider ‘like us’; *over-reacting to every stimulus or situation sensually, sentimentally, pseudo-intellectually, romantically, sexually, and emotionally; jumping to insupportable conclusions; rushing to judgments; listening to, agreeing with, and repeating shallow bullet points of human-generated ideology, philosophy, and political theory; and spouting worn-out cliché’s of human-designed religion* – Aharon, his sons, and his sons’ sons have been chosen to play the most important human role in the Tabernacle’s Divine Passion Play.

Aharon and his sons have been chosen to model what I like to call *the Great Covenantal Breakthrough*. They are called to demonstrate for us, for our children, for our children’s children, and for all people in all generations and from all ethnicities and cultures, what it actually looks like in real time for a family to truly ‘*come out of her, My People!*’. They are being called as a family and as a bloodline to show us what it takes to be – and raise up generations of - true *visionaries, forerunners, and trailblazers* in the Kingdom of Heaven. They have been called to demonstrate that it is possible for a family to leave behind the ‘normal’ post-Fall

state of mankind – namely, wallowing in uncleanness, indulging vile passions, embracing futile thinking, and listening to and repeating profane babbling – and begin to flourish in the realm of beauty, goodness, honor, majesty and holiness. But how is this possible? How does a human being – albeit redeemed from bondage and called into Covenant with the Creator - actually overcome the relentless downward gravitational pull of his fallen flesh, his voracious sensual appetite, and his propensity toward hyperactive emotions, and embark on a life of ministering in the spirit? How does one cast down the vain imaginations of his fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge compromised pseudo-intellect, his ideological predispositions, his personal vanity, and his ethnic, cultural, and self-promoting pride and take on the status, garb, and role of a selfless servant? Is it really possible to cross over from the realm of the common to the realm of the holy – and, if so, what are the essential protocols one needs to complete that journey?

In today's aliyah the Holy One reveals the *separation protocol* through which He wants every person who will serve as a *kohen of the Mish'kan* to enter into 'the *avodah*' of the Beauty realm - *i.e.* to bring the atmosphere, attitude, vision, and redemptive mindset of Heaven's King to earth.

But wait - the *Mish'kan* isn't even built yet! It will be months before it – or Aharon, for that matter – is ready for priestly service. So ... why this? Why now? The first batch of materials necessary for its construction hasn't even been collected. The first artisan has not been commissioned. The first hammer has not fallen. The first furnishing has not been built. There is no brazen altar. There is no holy place. There is no holy of holies. Not a single 'priestly garment' has yet been sewn. Not one of the *avodah* protocols the Holy One has in mind for the priesthood of Aharon can be performed. The site upon which the *Mish'kan* will be built has not even been selected, much less prepared for construction. What is more, the Holy One knows that we still have a lot of dark days – including a disgusting golden calf debacle, a bloody day of Mosaic rage, and a trembling rehab season of *ish petach oholo* [every man (sitting) at the entrance to his tent] – to go through before anyone in the camp even finds out that there is supposed to *be* a priesthood – much less is ready to implement one.

A Kingdom of 'Priests'? What Does Even Look Like?

What is all this grossly premature talk about priests and priestly service, and priestly ordination procedures about? Why is the Holy One giving instructions He knows that we really cannot, at this point, even understand in context – much less perform? If we can't *do* what the Holy One is talking about now, why does He insist on talking about it? If we can't 'fulfill' it now, and mark it off of our 'to do' list, why does He even bring it up?

Ah, such are the ways of Kingdom *emunah*, Beloved. It is not about understanding – it is about *being awakened* in the spirit. It is not about being ordered around like slaves – it is about being captivated like lovers. It is not about performing; it is about embracing and trusting. This is His Way. He wants to open our minds - and hearts – to matters of destiny. He wants us to imagine what He plans for us before we can see it. Remember, *emunah* - often called ‘faith’ or ‘faithfulness’ – is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. **Hebrews 11:1**. In order to train us in the disciplines of *emunah*, our Bridegroom-King is teaching us to *ponder on*, and find our *anchor in*, the *eternal unseen*. He wants us to practice visualizing everything about which He speaks coming to pass **‘on earth as it is in Heaven’**. He wants us to meditate on, and take substantive mental hold of, all the things He urges us to hope for. As the Master told His disciples: ***You do not understand now ... but someday you will.*** John 13:7. And as Moshe will teach us near the end of his life: ***The secret things are of the Holy One our God, but those things which are revealed are for us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Torah.*** Deuteronomy 29:29.

Learn to embrace the great mysteries of Bridegroom-speak, Dear One! If you cannot do so, our King’s Beauty Realm - and the abundant life and sweet shalom He promises - will elude you.

***Open Our Eyes, Oh Holy One,
That We May See Wondrous Things In Your Torah!***

And so, even though there is no physical *Mish’kan* in our world – or prospect of one anytime soon – the Holy One nevertheless calls us to spend precious moments at this time each year meditating on and teaching our children and children’s children the Holy One’s protocols for consecrating *kohanim*. As Kefa said –right before the miracle of the great catch of fish – *‘Master ... at your word I will let down the net.’* Luke 5:5. And as David sang to the Holy One: *I rejoice at Your Word - as one who finds great treasure.* Psalm 119:162.

The Holy One is setting a stage – preparing our hearts for participation in a great passion play. The consecration/dedication of the *kohanim* constitutes the First Act of the Play. What are the stage props the Holy One wants us to use? A powerful, headstrong bull. Two strong young rams. A basket full to the brim with different varieties of unleavened bread products. Water for washing. Beautiful costumes – eye-catching in their beauty; inspiring of awe and honor. Vessels of pure oil, ready to be lavishly applied. Blood – to be drawn, poured out, strategically sprinkled, and dramatically dabbed on right ears, right thumbs, and right large toes. Wood on an altar, ready to be consumed with Holy fire. Strips of animal fat. A pillar of smoke. A pleasing, fragrant aroma filling the air. The first feast held in the Courts of the

Mish'kan. This is going to be good. And what is more, this will mark only the third time the Creator will instruct that any – in this case three – of His precious creations be slain for a higher purpose. The first time was Genesis 15 [the Avrahamic covenant cutting ceremony]. The second was Exodus 12 [the killing and eating of the Passover lamb]. The consecration ceremony of the Aharonic priesthood marks the third. That means that the Holy One never told Yitzchak to slay an animal. Nor did He tell Ya'akov to do so. Nor Yosef. Nor any of the heads of the tribes of Yisrael. The Holy One has never been 'into' animal sacrifices. He still isn't. Something bigger than that is going on. Before we get to that, however, perhaps it behooves us to consider who, exactly, is a 'priest' - in Hebrew, *kohen* - anyway? And what *kohanim* are called to actually do.

Who is a Kohen - and What is Kahan-ing?

The idea of a *kohen* is not actually new – or exclusive to the *Mish'kan*. Aharon is not the first *kohen* mentioned in Torah – that honor belongs to Melki-Tzedek. The man who pioneered the role of *kohen* was bi-vocational, serving both as king of Salem and as *kohen l'El Elyon* – i.e. *priest of the Most High God*. **Genesis 14:18**. As a *kohen*, the first thing he did in relation to Avraham was to *serve him*. Though he was a king, he put aside his kingly garments and authority, and brought out to a mere man – a weary shepherd, no less - *lechem v'yayin* – bread and wine. After serving Avraham bread and wine the way a household servant would, however, he did something even more humble – he blessed both Avraham and God. Specifically, he said: *Baruch Avram l'El Elyon* – i.e. *blessed of God Most High be Avram ... kineh shamayim v'ereetz* – founder of Heavens and earth ... *v'baruch El Elyon asher migen tzareiyecha b'yadeicha* – and bless the Most High God, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

In this simple encounter lies the secret of the *kohen*. A *kohen* is one who, first of all, embraces and humbly models *the radical discipline of self-denial*. Some call it humility. Others meekness. Whatever one calls it, however, it is the opposite of self-importance. It is the antithesis of entitlement, narcissism, glory seeking, and pride. As Shaul of Tarsus describes it: ***Let this mindset be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death*** **Philippians 2:5-8.**

What does Melki-Tzedek teach us that a functioning *kohen* does? First of all, he brings a Heavenly perspective into every interaction, encounter, conversation, and situation. He focuses not on death but on life. He focuses not on diseases but on healing. He focuses not on the trauma of war or human drama, but on the prospect

and possibilities of and for *shalom*. He focuses not on the attitudes, words, or behaviors of men but on the glorious plans and wonderful workings of God. He does not focus on limitations, restrictions, failures, or sins. He focuses instead on potential – and on what it will take to bring that potential forth – *i.e.* Vision, Provision, Blessing, and Kingdom Investment of Time, passion, inspiration, and resources. Think of Eli in the era of the Judges. Think of Tzadok in the days of David. Think of Hilkiyah in the days of Yosiah. Think of Yechezkiel [‘Ezekiel’] in the season of Babylonian exile.

What impact can/should a kohen have on the world around him? Think of Ezra in the days of Nehemiah. Think of Yehoshua [*i.e.* ‘Joshua’] in the days of Zerubbabel. Think of Mattitiyahu [*i.e.* ‘Mattathias’] and Yehudah [*i.e.* ‘Judah’] Maccabeus in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and the prototypical abomination that causes desolation. Think of Yochanan the Immerser [*i.e.* ‘John the Baptist’] in the days of Yeshua.

What should every *kohen* do in service of the Holy One?

... The lips of a kohen should keep knowledge, and people should seek the Torah from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Holy One of hosts.

[Malachi 2:7]

Now, during the week of *Tetzaveh*, when we focus all our attention on the garments, the personality, and the function of people who inhabit and serve in the Beauty Realm, is our King's appointed time for us to catch the wave, so to speak - and arise, shine, and start to co-*kohen* with Messiah. The possibilities are intriguing – indeed mesmerizing. But they are also quite daunting. *How in the world ...?* we want to say. He might reply: *‘Hush, My Child. Let us start with ‘Wax on – wax off!’*

A Powerful Calling – That is Upon Every Person the Holy One Has Redeemed

The Holy One’s Grand Redemptive Plan involves all of us – once we have accepted our place in Covenant with Him – learning to serve Him and the people of the world as *kohanim*. He actually intends for us to co-labor with Him to establish His kingdom, and cause His Will to be done in meaningful ways, on earth. As soon as the Holy One got us to Sinai therefore He promised to train us to serve on earth as His ‘*mamlakat kohanim*’ – *i.e.* *kingdom of priests*. **Exodus 19:6**. Our Bridegroom-King sees a whole lot more potential in us that we see in ourselves. He knows that, even though we are just fallen human beings like our earthly neighbors, we can actually be trained to accomplish *amazing things* when touched by His Strong Right Hand, empowered by His Presence, and disciplined under His Word!

What the Holy One envisions concerning us can – indeed, *will* happen – but only as, when, and to the extent we His People surrender our self-will in favor of the delight that comes from *sh'ma-ing* His voice, *sh'mar-ing* His covenant, and *asah-ing* His Kingdom. The Holy One's Redemptive Plan hinges upon us - or someone - bringing this to pass by actually functioning as *kohanim* – *i.e.* royal ambassadors/emissaries – and doing so 24/7/365, in real time, in the context of all our interactions with the various families, nations, and people-groups of the earth. The Plan involves us doing this with our allies and enemies alike. It is a radical plan, of course. It will require us to work in very, very close communion with the Holy One –thinking like Him, speaking only what we hear Him saying, and doing only what we see Him doing. It will require us to learn forbearance and to value and cultivate patient endurance. It will require us to walk in kindness, gentleness, meekness, and humility as well as wisdom. It will require us to develop a habit of resisting temptations like folly, lust, pride, greed, jealousy, and selfishness.

What Does Kahan-ing Look Like Through a Hebraic Lens?

In today's society the English word 'priest' does not mean what it used to. The use of that word by the Vatican over the centuries to describe men to whom a position of ecclesiastical authority has been assigned by the Pope, and the use of the same word by groups such as Satanists to describe their spiritual leaders, has given the word 'priest' an unpleasant, if not downright disgusting, connotation.

Alas, in light of what has been brought to light recently as having gone on in the name of the 'priesthood' I for one *cringe* at the thought of being called a 'priest'. The thought of a kingdom of 'priests' – as that term is used today – is, well, to be frank, a little bit *scary*! But the Holy One did not intend for His designation of His people as a ***mamlakat kohanim*** to be a cultural *slur*. The assignment as *kohanim* is supposed to constitute a *prophetic elevation*, not a form of slander or ridicule. What we need to do, however, is to realize we are not – and do not want to be - 'priests' in any sense ordinary people who live in our times can understand. Indeed, the English terms 'priest' and 'priesthood' have clearly outlived any usefulness they ever had. The English language has changed. The English mindset has changed. All of Western Culture has changed. The terms 'priest' and 'priesthood' have therefore lost any semblance of positive value. They have become simply uninspiring *terms of ecclesiology*. They have *no life* left in them. Their usage does not point people to the Holy One – indeed, talking in terms of 'priests and 'priesthood' generally (and often justifiably) makes them want to run away.

Thank Heaven the Holy One did not speak to Moshe in English. The Holy One never once called us – or anyone else for that matter – 'priests'. That is just some

Englishman's translation of what the Holy One said in Hebrew that He was re-creating us to be. King James' State-sponsored Anglican church had priests. The Catholic Church with which James II of England was at war had priests. We are not called to be - or have in our communities of faith - 'priests' like that. We are called to be - and have in our communities of faith - something else entirely. We are called to be - and have - *kohanim*! A kingdom [Hebrew *mamlakat*] of *kohanim* is precisely what the Holy One considers the key to *tikkun olam* [restoration of this world to what He created it to be]. It therefore behooves us I believe to spend a little time discovering exactly what a true *kohen* is and does. Consider it *a journey of self-discovery*.

Discovering Our Identity and Purpose Through Kahan-ing

Like virtually all ancient Hebrew words, the word *kohen* is at its root not a *noun* but a *verb*. The verb root of the noun *kohen* is *kahan*. One is a *kohen* only when and *to the extent* one *kahans*. Understand therefore that one is not a *kohen* because he has been given a title or placed in a position, or because he wears a priest's robe, or because he is paid a salary to do religious or spiritual stuff. One is a *kohen* if at all not because of an office³ or title but because *the atmosphere-shifting functions of a kahan, - as those functions are described and prophetically modeled for us in Torah - are the main thing he actually does*.

So what does it mean to *kahan*? It does not mean to *preside over religious services, rituals, or sacraments*. In its *pa'al* form the verb *kahan* means *to presage, to predict, to prophesy*, and, by extension, *to undertake to represent and advance another's cause*. It means to *act as a deputy, or delegate, by [with authorization] presenting the words of the one whose cause he has undertaken to third persons*. It means to *stand up on behalf of another person [or God] who has authorized him to do so and speak on that person [or God's] behalf*. It means to *faithfully labor in the authorizing person's cause*⁴.

The Holy One thus created and called all He redeemed to prophesy in His Name (meaning *in direct quotation of Him* - not out of their own desires or their own understanding), and to act as His deputy or delegate, presenting His Torah (*i.e.* teaching, instructions for living) to others.

³ The King James Version's translation of the Hebrew adverbial phrase *l'kohanim* in this parsha as 'in the office of priest' is clearly not sustainable. There is no word in the Hebrew phrase *l'kohanim* even arguably equivalent to 'office'. King James' translators clearly read into the text the Anglican and Catholic practice of paid, titled, and 'officed' priests.

⁴ See Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, p. 385. See especially the part of the text that relates to Hebrew word number 3547.

Learning First by Observation, Then Through Engaging in Avodah

Obviously the most essential prerequisite to speaking the Holy One's words on the Holy One's behalf is to first clearly HEAR and effectively INTERNALIZE the Holy One's words ourselves. A deputy or delegate cannot (or at least should not) speak what he has not heard his principal (the one he represents) speak. So when the Redeemed Community decided on the mountain that it was not ready to hear the Holy One's voice, it postponed its ability to *kahan* on the Holy One's behalf. Instead as we have discussed the Redeemed Community as one voice cried out for someone – specifically Moshe – to model for them what it means to *kahan*. If they *saw it done* and *experienced it being done in regard to them*, they reasoned, they could eventually learn to do it themselves.

The Holy One consented to the request of the Redeemed for a “model”. But He made it clear from the first that one does not need to be sinless to *kahan* for Him. The Holy One chose the single individual with the least claim to sinlessness in the camp to model the “*kahan-ing*” process. Aharon, who would be the chief instrument of the people's sin with the golden calf, was His choice. It was as if the Holy One was saying “*I will show you that absolutely anyone can kahan!*” Anyone, that is, Whom the Holy One appoints and empowers. In yesterday's aliyah the Holy One made it clear that those who *kahan* for Him are supposed to *look very different* than the society in which they live. They are not to be slaves to popular fashion. They are not to try to “fit in” with and look like those to whom they are supposed to be teaching the Holy One's words and ways and thoughts. They are to *model garments of righteousness*. Every emissary is, after all, supposed to wear *the uniform of the kingdom he represents*.

Every Picture In Torah Really Does Tell a Story

The Hebraic word picture underlying the verb *kahan* is as always wonderfully illustrative. The first letter of the word is the *kaf* [k sound]. This letter is a Hebraic picture of *a winged creature in flight, descending with wings spread* on an object or person. Keep in mind that the picture of a descending winged creature was not only the specific picture presented by the mercy seat on the ark; it was also the image woven into the fabric of all the curtains - and the veil - of the *mish'kan*. The second letter of the word is a *hey* [h sound]. The *hey* is a Hebrew pictograph of the *window, or opening in the wall, of a tent*. Since a window, or opening, of a tent both lets in light and allows circulation of breezes, the pictograph of the *hey* is a symbolic representation of *revelation* and *inspiration*. The third letter of the verb *kahan* is a *nun sofit* [n sound], which is a Hebrew pictograph representing the *ultimate Son or Heir – i.e. the Great Prince, Messiah*. Now let's put all that together in ‘mural’ form. We see *a winged creature [seraf? dove?]* descending and giving *revelation and inspiration [hey]* concerning the *Messiah [nun sofit]*. In other words,

according to its underlying Hebraic word picture to *kahan* is to *reveal Messiah according to a Divinely imparted message, delivered by angels /serafim*.

Death to Self

Today's aliyah deals with the "7-days of creation" the Holy One ordains for Aharon's modeling agency. Aharon will have to *put off the old* and *put on the new*. He will have to be clothed in a righteousness that he does not possess. The Holy One tells Moshe that the first thing that is to be done in the courts of the *mish'kan*, once it is built is:

V'et-Aharon v'et-banav takriv el-petach Ohel Mo'ed

Aharon and his sons are to be brought by you to the door of the Communion Tent,

v'rachatzta otam b'mayim

*and you are to wash them in water*⁵.

[Exodus 29:4]

The last phrase, ***v'rachatzta otam b'mayim*** [literally translated 'and wash them in water'], is the key to understanding what is going on. What is 'water' [Hebrew, *mayim*⁶]? A miraculous compound of hydrogen and oxygen, water is the primary source and vivifying factor of all sustenance and, by extension, all life as we know it. Without water, there is simply no hope of life – be it plant life, animal life, or human life. Recognizing this, Hebrew tradition sees the physical attributes of water – i.e. the inherent capacity to vivify – as being mirrored in the spiritual realm. In Hebrew thought therefore water is seen as endowed by the Creator with the power not just to sustain the flesh, but to *purify the soul*, and to *restore and replenish life to the neshamah* [God-breathed spirit] of a man. Rashi interprets the phrase ***v'rachatzta otam b'mayim*** [literally 'and wash them in water'] in a symbolic way, to mean 'and immerse them in a *mikveh*'⁷. This is a picture of passing from death to life, from a common state to a holy one, and from a *tamei* state, defiled by uncleanness, into a *tahor* vibrant with wholeness, wellness, and shalom.

⁵ Torah does not say that the Holy One created water, yet water is stated to have been present as early as Genesis 1:2. Water is thus a spiritual substance that existed before creation.

⁶ In Hebrew, water is always considered in the plural form, hence *mayim*, which ends in the plural masculine *yod mem* suffix. There is no 'water' in Hebrew thought – only 'waters'. One drop of condensed water vapor on a window is still as much *mayim* as is an ocean. This is the opposite phenomenon seen with regard to the Hebrew word *zarah* [seed]. No matter whether a person is speaking of one seed or 100,000,000, the word is always singular.

⁷ The most common usage of *mikveh* is that of a woman upon completing menstruation. When a woman completes her monthly cycle of menstruation, before presenting herself to her husband, she immerses herself in a *mikveh*. This is not done to wash off dirt. The woman immerses herself in order to renew herself like the moon, and recommit herself to be to her husband as a virgin bride. As the new moon signals a completely new cycle of days, so the *mikveh* signals a completely new cycle of life and hope for humankind in relation to the Divine instruction to '***be fruitful, and multiply***', as set forth in Genesis 1:28. By tradition, however, *mikveh* is also used by men on various occasions, such as the *groom's mikveh* on his wedding day, the *conversion mikveh* on the day of a man's conversion, and the *mikveh* of *Yom Kippur*, among other times and circumstances.

What does a *mikveh* have to do with death, burial and resurrection? The Hebrew word *mikveh* is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *qavah*⁸. Literally this verb means *to wait in hopeful expectation*, and involves

As is the case with both of those states, in *mikveh* a person is stripped of all power, prowess, talent, and merit. As in the case of the womb and the grave, in *mikveh* a person completely abdicates control, and is totally reliant upon a life giver. Immersion in the *mikveh* can thus be understood as a ‘watershed event’ in which an individual voluntarily surrenders to the will of the Holy One. In the waters of the *mikveh*, a person’s *self-will and drive for self-determination are abandoned*. A *mikveh* is a voluntarily relinquishment of one form of existence in faith that an infinitely higher form of existence awaits once the waters subside.

In keeping with this theme, immersion in a *mikveh* is considered not only a ritual act portraying an inward purification, revitalization, and rejuvenation [as many forms of denominational Christianity define the rite of *baptism*], but as *an actual experience of spiritual death, rest, and rebirth*. In a *mikveh*, you see, every part of a person’s body is immersed in water. As one’s head goes under the water, he has to stop breathing, symbolizing his death and/or re-entry into the womb. As one rests under the water, he cannot breathe, symbolizing burial and/or resting *in utero* dependence. As one comes up out of the water, one breathes the breath of life anew, symbolizing his resurrection and/or rebirth.

The Mikveh

The particular *mikveh* of Aharon and his sons at Sinai with which the service of the *mish'kan* was to be inaugurated was very, very special. Why? Because the waters that were available at Mount Sinai – in the driest part of the desert – were *not natural waters*. What source of *mayim* [water] was available at Sinai? The story is told in Exodus 17:1-2 and 5-6 as follows:

Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the instruction of the Holy One, and camped in Refidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

Therefore the people contended with Moshe, and said,

"Give us water, that we may drink."

And the Holy One said to Moshe, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel.

Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go.

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horev;

and you are to strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."

⁸ *Qavah* is *quf, vav, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #6960, it is pronounced *kaw-vaw’*.

And Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The only water at Sinai was the water the Holy One brought forth from the 'rock of Horev'. It was that supernatural water in which Moshe was told to give Aharon and his sons *mikveh*. Shaul of Tarsus identifies this water source for us:

They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Messiah.

[I Corinthians 10:4]

Okay, so the source of the waters in which Aharon and his sons were to make *mikveh* was the Rock that **was Messiah**. Ask yourself - *when did water pour forth from Messiah?* The answer is found in Yochanan's account of the crucifixion:

But when they [i.e. the Roman soldiers] came to Yeshua

... one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

[John 19:33-34]

The point, of course, is that the message of Messiah – even His death, burial and resurrection - is all through Torah's narratives regarding the *mish'kan*, the priesthood of Aharon, and the Sinai experience. This truth excites some of us, but it infuriates others. Why, that latter group asks, did the Holy One not just come right out and tell us, in plain language, Who Messiah was, what He has done/will do, and when and in what form He would appear on the earth? Why all the symbolism, all the types, shadows, and vague allusions?

Perhaps it is for the same reason that Yeshua of Natzret spoke in parables, rather than plainly. The Holy One's way is not to appeal to the intellect of a man – because *man's intellect can never connect with or relate to the spiritual realm*. Yeshua related this to what I call the *sh'ma* principle - the spiritual truth that the only kind of communication that is real, lasting, and enduring is Spirit-to-spirit communication. Those who are the Holy One's sheep know Him, and *sh'ma* His Voice. Hence Yeshua spoke in parables, then concluded with the enigmatic phrase: *He who has ears to sh'ma, let him sh'ma."*

The first time Yeshua did this His talmidim came to him and asked Him:

"Why do you speak to them in parables?"

He answered them "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven,

but it is not given to them. For whoever has, to him will be given,

and he will have abundance, but whoever doesn't have,

from him will be taken away even that which he has.

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they don't see,

and hearing, they don't sh'ma, neither do they understand.

In them the prophecy of Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] is fulfilled, which says,

'Hearing you will hear, and will in no way understand;

Seeing you will see, and will in no way perceive: for this people's heart has grown callous,

Their ears are dull of hearing; they have closed their eyes;

Or else perhaps they might perceive with their eyes, sh'ma with their ears,

yada [i.e. know intimately and experientially] **with their heart,**
and shuv [i.e. turn back to the Torah] **again; and I would heal them.'**

**"But blessed are your eyes, for they ra'ah; and your ears, for they sh'ma.
For most assuredly I tell you that many prophets and righteous men
desired to see the things which you ra'ah, and didn't ra'ah them;
and to hear the things which you sh'ma, and didn't sh'ma them.**

[Matthew 13:9-13]

The Holy One understands human nature. He knows that when He wants to get the attention of someone who loves Him and who hangs on His every word *all He has to do is whisper*, and they will respond with Bride-like passion and zeal! He also knows that no matter how plainly or loudly He speaks to people who do *not* know Him or love Him and Who do *not* want to hear what He has to say *they will not hear, not understand*, and will *just take offense at His words*. Yeshua explained it as follows:

*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,
and I will raise him up in the last day.*

It is written in the prophets, 'They will all be taught by God.'

*Therefore everyone who **sh'mas** the Father, and has learned, comes to me.*

[John 6:44-45]

*It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing.
The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.*

[John 6:63-64]

Why don't you understand my speech? Because you can't sh'ma my word.

He who is of God sh'ma's the words of God.

The reason you don't sh'ma is because you are not of God."

[John 8:43,47]

*The Y'hudim therefore came around him and said to him,
"How long will you hold us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."*

Yeshua answered them, "I told you, and you don't aman.

The mitzvot that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me.

*But you don't aman, because you are not of my sheep,
as I told you. My sheep sh'ma my voice,
and I yada them, and they follow me.*

[John 10:24-27]

Do you now understand? If you have perceived the essence of Messiah in the narrative of the *mish'kan*, its furnishings, its services, and its priesthood, it is not because I or any other man has explained it to you. If you have begun to see Messiah in the *mish'kan* it is only because your *neshamah* has been made alive and is teaching your heart, mind, and flesh to *sh'ma* the voice of the Holy One. You are in the process of becoming a *sh'ma* person.

The Portrayal of the Resurrected Messiah's Investiture, Anointing, and Coronation - And Our Transformation!

The symbolic representation of Messiah in the narrative of the *mish'kan* and in the priesthood has begun. After telling Moshe to immerse Aharon and his sons in a *mikveh* the Holy One tells Moshe what to do immediately following the ascension of Aharon and his sons from the waters of *mikveh*. In Exodus 29:5-7 the Holy One tells Moshe that as soon as Aharon has ascended from the waters He is clothe him with the special garments of the *Kohen Gadol*. Moshe is instructed:

***Take up the garments! Put the tunic on Aharon,
and the robe of the ephod,
the ephod, and the breastplate.
Gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod.
Put the turban on his head
and put the holy crown on the turban.
And then take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.***

[Exodus 29:5-7]

This is what it looks like to set a person apart for the calling of a *kohen*. To *kahan* for the Holy One a person must leave the old things of the prior life in the flesh behind, and receive instead new things – things reflecting the goodness, the beauty, and the exquisite majesty of the Kingdom of Heaven.

To *kahan* on behalf of the Kingdom of Heaven one must consider as worthless - in comparison to the glory one receives from the Bridegroom-King, at least - all one's former worldview, one's prior self-concept, one's earlier dreams of glory, one's former ways of interacting with others, one's pre-existing attitudes and biases, and one's prior perspective on the purpose and meaning of life. Old thoughts, opinions, and priorities must be laid aside. Old ways of reaction to stress, irritation, and intimidation must give way to the Mind and Wisdom of the Holy One. Old ideas and ideologies, causes and crusades must yield to a *superior majesty* – *i.e.* the majesty of His Mercy, of His Patience, of His Perspective, and of His Forgiveness. Old pet peeves, anger-triggers, phobias and coping mechanisms must be discarded as the toxic waste they are - to be replaced with His longsuffering and His Commitment to healing the broken-hearted and setting free the captive. See **Philippians 2:1-16**.

We are called to be a kingdom of priests. But if we are to actually function as faithful ambassadors and emissaries of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth – whether in the courts of the *Mish'kan* or in our dealings with real people in the present-day spheres of influence assigned to us, a *death-like phenomenon* must occur in respect to the former things of our personality, persona, and personhood. Yeshua would describe the process as '*deny[ing] self*'. **Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:24; and Luke 9:23.**

We are no longer *living for ourselves*. We have surrendered that unclean and destructive way of approaching life for the superior majesty, and great privilege, of serving as ambassadors of the Bridegroom-Kingdom and emissaries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Holy One further instructed Moshe to:

***Bring [Aharon's] sons and put tunics on them.
And gird them with sashes, Aharon and his sons, and put the head coverings on them.
Kehunah [i.e. the empowerment of kahan-ing] will be theirs. It is decreed forever.
Thus are Aharon and his sons to be elevated to & activated in their highest purpose.
[Exodus 27:9]***

The *mish'kan* is, as we have seen, a place of the richest kind of symbolism possible - a place that *exists in and constitutes a portal between* two realms, one of which is earthly and one of which is heavenly. Just as every structural element, furnishing, wall hanging and tent peg in the earthly realm is symbolic of an eternal truth of the Heavenly realm, so are all human actors who come to the *mish'kan's* earthly realm and all human activities engaged in by those actors while there symbolic of things eternal and Divine. It should not be surprising therefore that the first 'act' to be played out in the *mish'kan's* earthly courts is to be the symbolic death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah and of his *talmidim*. For the purposes of our studies this week, and as part of the Eternal Passion Play introduced by the *Mish'kan*, the part of Messiah will be played prophetically by Aharon, and the part of the *talmidim* will be played prototypically by Aharon's natural sons. But there is more going on here than meets the eye. There is another law I see at work in the members of *mishpachah Aharon*.

Introducing the Law of Offsetting Spiritual/Physical Parallels

We are all familiar with the Sir Isaac Newton's third law of physics. This states that in the physical realm *every action has an equal and opposite reaction*⁹. Let me introduce you to a similar 'law' that operates in the spiritual realm, Dear Reader. I call it *the law of offsetting spiritual/physical parallels*. Here it is:

***Every object or action of man that the Holy One directs to be done
in the earthly mish'kan, in the physical realm, corresponds to both:***

***[1] an eternal reality related to Messiah in the Heavenly Mish'kan, &
[2] a relation-building truth which each of us is to find a way
to represent to the world in real time, in real life situations,
in the course of our earthly walk with our Bridegroom-King.***

⁹ The statement means that in every interaction, there is a pair of forces acting on the two interacting objects. The size of the forces on the first object equals the size of the force on the second object. The direction of the force on the first object is opposite to the direction of the force on the second object. Forces always come in pairs – called equal and opposite action-reaction force pairs.

Let's apply the law of offsetting spiritual/physical parallels to the passage we just read about what Moshe did in the *Mish'kan* after Aharon and his sons had *mikveh*. Under the *law of offsetting spiritual/physical parallels* we would see that Moshe's physical act of dressing of Aharon in the garments of the High Priest on earth corresponds to the investiture of Messiah as the High Priest of Heaven, after the order of Melchi-Tzedek, as seen and declared by David in Psalm 110. The relevant passage reads as follows:

*The Holy One said to my lord, "Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
The Holy One shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The Holy One has sworn and will not relent,
"You are a kohen forever according to the order of Melchi-Tzedek."*

The second phase of the post-*mikveh* instructions consists of the anointing of Aharon with *shemen ha-mish'chah* [the oil of anointing] likewise corresponds to a spiritual event in the Heavens – the anointing of Messiah. David also saw and declared this event, as follows:

*My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.*

*You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness
more than Your companions.*

*All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia,
Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.*

[Psalm 45:1-8; see also Hebrews 1:8-9,
where this passage is quoted in relation to Messiah]

Beloved, please pause with me, and marvel concerning this. *Before* the *mish'kan* of earth was ever built *Before* the first item or animal of *korban* was presented at its altar *Before* the first tithe or first fruit presentation was made at it ... *and before* the first pilgrimage festival was observed in its courts, the ultimate reality to which those things, and indeed every aspect of the *mish'kan* and its service was designed by the Holy One to point, was vividly portrayed in the ordination ceremony the Holy One described to Moshe on the mountain. May we forever say:

Bar'chu et Adonai
Blessed is He Who is the Holy One

Baruch Adonai ha-m'vorach l'olam va'ed

Blessed is the Holy One, the Blessed One, Now and forevermore.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam

Blessed are You, O Holy One our God, King of the Universe

Asher bachar banu mi-kol ha-amim v'natan lanu et torato

Who chose us from all the peoples/nations and gave us His Torah

Baruch atah Adonai, Noten ha-Torah

Blessed are You, O Lord, Giver of the Torah.

Now on to the final aspect of the *Law of Offsetting Spiritual/Physical Parallels* – the part that says we are supposed to find a way in the course of our lives to bring the relation-building truth underlying the actions we see take place in the *mish'kan* to life in the real world in real time. How can we do something on earth, in the affairs of real life, that will testify to the world the same message that anointing the High Priest who would preside over the avodah of the *mish'kan* with oil was designed to deliver? You might begin by asking Mary of Bethany, Dear Reader!

Questions for Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah the procedure is given for the sanctification by Moshe of those who will serve as priests of the Most High God. Before any person -including Moshe's own brother Aharon - can put on priestly robes and perform priestly duties, the person must be "consecrated".

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word translated in verse 1 as "consecrate" [KJV "hallow"]. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[B] List the "ingredients" which the Holy One told Moshe to use in the consecration ceremony.

[C] Where was the ceremony to begin?

[D] What was the first action to be performed in connection with the ceremony? Who was to perform this action?

[E] Read John 13:3-8. Why do you think Yeshua did what is recorded here?

[F] Make a step-by-step list of the things that the Holy One told Moshe to do in connection with the consecration of Aharon and his sons as priests.

[G] What was to be done with the remains of the bull offered for a sin offering?

[H] Who was to eat of the flesh of that offering?

[I] For which kind(s) of approach/offering were the rams to be used?

[J] Who was to eat of the flesh of the rams? Where was this to occur?

[K] With what two substances were Aharon and his sons to be anointed?

[L] What were to be the first type of offerings to be made by Aharon and his sons?

[M] Compare verses 33-34 of chapter 29 with Hebrews 13:10-13. What is the difference between the sanctification of a priest by Moshe and the sanctification of a priest by Yeshua?

[N] How long was the consecration ceremony the Holy One commanded Moshe to conduct to continue?

2. In today's Haftarah aliyah the Holy One commands Ezekiel concerning the consecration of the altar at which the priests after the order of Tzadok were to serve.

*He said to me, "Son of man, this is what the Holy One Elohim says:
These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they will make it,
to present olahot thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon.
Give to the Kohanim the Levi'im who are of the seed of Tzadok,
who are near to me, to minister to me, says the Holy One Elohim, a young bull for a chatat.
Take of the blood of it, and put it on the four horns of it,
and on the four corners of the ledge, and on the border round about:
thus shall you cleanse it and make atonement for it.
Also take the bull of korban for chatat, and burn it in the appointed place of the house,
outside of the sanctuary.*

[A] What was to be the first *korban* [surrogate of approach] used in the consecration of the sons of Tzadok and their altar?

[B] What was to be done with the carcass of this animal?

3. In today's reading from the book of Hebrews the inspired writer discusses things that make limited sense unless you are familiar with today's Torah and Haftarah readings.

*Don't be carried away by various and strange teachings,
for it is good that the heart be established by grace,
not by food, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.*

*We have an altar from which those who serve the holy tabernacle have no right to eat.
For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the Kohen Gadol
as a korban of chatat, are burned outside of the camp.*

*Therefore Yeshua also, that he might sanctify the people
through his own blood, suffered outside of the gate.
Let us therefore go forth to him outside of the camp, bearing his reproach.*

[Hebrews 13:9-14]

[A] What will sustain and nourish a priest set apart by and unto Yeshua?

[B] What is the food portion allocated for priests set apart by and to Yeshua?

[C] Do you think verses 9-10 have anything to do with whether a believer in Yeshua should accept as food animals that do not meet the food definitions of Leviticus 11? Explain your answer.

[D] What is the difference in the altar that we, as priests set apart by and to Yeshua, have from altar that priests set apart by Moshe had? What has made the difference?

[E] According to verse 12, what is the reason Yeshua died?

[F] What are we, who are set apart by and to Yeshua, called upon to do as a result of our consecration ceremony? *I.e.* what is our priestly function? [Hint: you need to look first at verse 13, then ahead to verse 15]

[G] What does verse 14 mean to you?

May we willingly submit to being sanctified as His priests forever.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:113-120 [***Samech***]

*I hate the double-minded, but I love Your Torah
You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.*

*Depart from me, you evildoers –
for I will keep the mitzvot of my God!*

*Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live;
and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.*

Hold me up, and I shall be safe - and I will observe Your statutes continually.

*You reject all those who stray from Your statutes,
for their deceit is falsehood.*

*You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross;
therefore I love Your testimonies.*

*My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am in awe of Your ***mish'patim***.*