

*Shiur L'Yom Shishi*¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Pekudei:*** **Exodus 40:16-38**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 8:12-21**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 3:18-23**

The cloud of the Holy One was above the Mish'kan

[Exodus 40:39a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 90:13-15;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Gevurot*, Part II

Vaya'as Moshe kechol asher tzivah Adonai oto ken asah – And Moshe did/made everything exactly as the Holy One instructed him to do/make it ... *Vayehi b'chodesh harishon b'shanah ha-shenit b'echad l'chodesh hukam ha-Mishkan* – and at the start of the 2nd year, on the 1st day of the 1st month, he raised up the Tabernacle. **Exodus 40:16-17.**

It is a bittersweet day, Beloved. For weeks the Holy One's glorious *Book of Great-Nation-Building Signs and Wonders* has been regaling us with Divine Romance. This book has taken our relationship with the Creator of the Universe from *Introduction to Courtship to Betrothal*. The resplendent prose of this *sefer* has re-introduced us to the God of our forefathers in ways that we will never forget. It has elevated us. It has inspired us. It has empowered us. It. With today's aliyah, however, we turn the final page.

From Slime to Sublime

What does – or should - this book mean to the reader? Oh, the story of redemption and potential it tells! When the narrative of this *sefer Torah* began we were slaves in Egypt – scattered souls subjected to systematic abuse, paranoia, pogroms, and recurring plots of genocide. Remember seeing babies thrown into the Nile? Remember building Pharaoh's store cities? Remember being ordered to perform the impossible task of gathering straw from the fields as well as making bricks at the kilns – with no reduction in quota? When the book of Great-Nation-Building Signs and Wonders concludes, however, Pharaoh – and Egypt, for that matter – will hold no power over us. No longer are we slaving away in his fields and slime pits; now we are the beatified Bride-People of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov at the 'mountain of God', being trained to serve a dual role as courtiers in the courts, chambers, and Throne Room of Heaven and ambassadors to the nations.

The Great Storyteller has used the lilting verse of this book to transform not only

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our circumstances, but us. Absolutely everything about us has changed. From our worldview; to our frame of reference; to our sense of personal and communal identity, life-mission, and destiny; to our thought-life and self-talk; to our attitude; to the quality, vocabulary, and impact of our speech; to our behavior patterns – everything is fresh, new, and wonderfully alive. We have caught the Vision – and absorbed the energy – of the King’s Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind as a species and for the restoration of Creation to its intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom.

The inspired chronicles of Sefer *Sh’mot* have touched us deeply. Deep has called unto deep. We have been consumed with yearning for full communion with, and meaningful service to, our Bridegroom-King/Redeemer. The passionate throes of individual and national redemption have begun in us a spiritual rebirth process – one that is not only renewing our minds, but totally redefining our identity, our perspective, our mission, and our destiny. We have not only been taught what the Holy One’s glorious attributes of mercy look like but we have experienced what each of those things feel like. This book has taught us how our Bridegroom-King’s empowering forgiveness heals human hearts and equips them to bring the Beauty Realm of Heaven to earth in visible, practical, functional ways. This book has held up both a mirror and a magnifying glass before our faces, showing us the areas in which, despite our physically redeemed state, we are still vulnerable to fleshly temptation, pseudo-intellectual distraction, manipulation by smooth-talking demagogues, self-centeredness, and stubborn rebelliousness. This book has become for us far more than a book of national history; it has become a part of our DNA. We do not just read or study this book - we *relive it* over and over and over and over again.

This time last year everyone in this camp was a slave of Egypt, held captive by a Pharaoh with a bad attitude. We are approaching the one-year anniversary of the plague of the firstborn (14 Nisan the previous year) that broke the will of that hard-hearted Pharaoh and catapulted us to this wild ride called *freedom*. What wonders we have seen – what high and low moments we have experienced – since then. We have truly lived ‘the great adventure’.

The Great Adventure

The day after we left Egypt we enjoyed our first meal as free men. We ate *matzah* together at the place called *Sukkot* - but that was only the beginning. Just when we were beginning to feel safe we saw a cloud of dust arising behind us. We soon heard the unmistakable sound of war chariots at full charge – headed in our direction. This *could not* be good. Was the Holy One with us - or *wasn’t He*? The emotions were overwhelming. We desperately wanted to believe a miracle of

salvation would occur, but there seemed to be no basis for hope whatever. The chariots and spears were real. We were no match for the fury of Pharaoh or the skill of the Egyptian army. And the sea hemmed us in. So there on the banks of the Sea of Reeds we *cowered in fear*. We were not resigned to such a horrible death; but we saw no way to escape it.

Then, suddenly ... *it* happened. How can we explain it? How can we describe it? Human language is insufficient. Let's just say '*Redemption intervened*'. We stood and saw *Yeshuat-Adonai* –the Salvation/Deliverance Arm of our Great King's Right Hand. A strong East Wind began to blow, and the sea split in two right before our eyes. Gravity reset – and went all perpendicular. Two towering vertical walls of water formed – one on our left and one on our right. And one-by-one, in perfect peace, we walked right between those walls of water, through the seabed, until we were completely out of harm's way. Then, as gravity reset once again, and returned to vertical, we then *watched in awe as the very* walls of water through which we had just passed nonchalantly collapse on, the Egyptian charioteers who had sought our demise and wash them away forever. Miraculously, all our attackers' swords, spears, bows and quivers achieved buoyancy like driftwood and floated to the shore for us to use against anyone else foolish enough to attack us along the way the Holy One had mapped out for us to travel. In an instant we went from a frightened gaggle of holocaust victims to the best armed civilian militia in human history.

Overcome with the amazing power and zealous protection of our Divine Courtier we danced and *sang with irrepressible joy*. But that was only a foretaste of what was yet to come. Since then we have watched the Holy One *turn bitter waters sweet* for us. We have seen Him give untrained slaves with a young stonecutter for a general and with prayer and uplifted hands as their only artillery a tremendous victory over an army of seasoned Amalekite warriors. We have seen *living water pour forth from a rock* and *manna fall from the morning skies*.

We arrived here at this mountain and experienced *the Glorious Theophany* – the unforgettable Covenant ceremony pursuant to which we became the equivalent of the Betrothed Bride-to-be of the Creator of the Universe. Then in the heat of mid-Summer we experienced the low point of our sojourn in this place. It was as if we all simultaneously suffered a collective attack of spiritual amnesia. We forgot who we were, where we had come from, and where we were going. Even as we ate the Holy One's manna and drank of His ever-flowing river of living water under the Chuppah of Heaven we asked Aharon to mold for us a physical object we could worship as a god, and he did so. He melted down the filthy, recycled gold we pulled out of our ears and noses into the shape of a calf. And in a fit of sensuality

we danced and cavorted before that silly idol, and openly declared it, instead of the Holy One, to be ‘our god who brought us forth from the land of Egypt’.

The scorching late-summer months were therefore times of *post-traumatic confusion*, devastating *sorrow*, overpowering *guilt* and debilitating *fear*. Alas, all the wonderful things the Holy One had proclaimed over us just a short time ago during the Glorious Theophany seemed *so far from us* then. Unsure what the Bridegroom we had wronged so horribly would do with us, we ran and hid in our individual tents much as Adam and Chava had cowered behind the nearest bushes. And just like our forefathers-in-sin we knew full well that the fig-leaf coverings we had molded for ourselves could never hide our nakedness before His Glorious, Holy Gaze.

This state of uncertainty lasted well over a month. Moshe ventured alone back up the mountain and discussed our fate with the Holy One and was once again gone a full 40 days and 40 nights. The silence from Heaven seemed deafening. The not-knowing seemed too much to bear. At last, on the tenth day of the seventh month, we saw Moshe’s shape in the distance emerging from the Marvelous Cloud atop the mountain. Our individual and collective hearts raced with hope-against-hope mingled with fear-upon-fear. Were we to be cast aside – or stoned - as an unfaithful bride-to-be caught red-handed in adultery deserved? Or would the Divine Bridegroom stun us with some new manifestation of His Glorious Personhood and redefine our relationship with Him forever?

As soon as we saw Moshe’s face we knew the answer. His countenance was absolutely glowing. His eyes were overflowing with peace and love. His voice was tender and sweet. And our eyes could scarce believe it. In his hands the Friend of the Bridegroom held two tablets that to us were like unto the most welcome love letters that could ever exist. Inscribed with the very finger of the Holy One, these tablets constituted conclusive evidence that the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven had not only *forgiven us every individual and collective transgression* but had *completely wiped our slate clean*, had *cast our sin and shame into the depths of the sea*, and had *restored us all to full betrothal status as if nothing had ever happened*.

Oh how wonderful! Oh how amazing! Oh how humbling! And oh how transforming! We were forgiven! We were restored! We *were* – we *are* – and we *will always be* - His Beloved, and He *was*, He *is*, and He *will always be* ours!

The Awakening of Deep Reservoirs of Bridal Affection

Up to this moment we had respected, admired, and even feared the Holy One. Now

what we felt was something entirely different. Now, you see, we *loved Him*. Now we were *lovesick for Him!*

Ever since that glorious day we have been flowing in a *passionate dance of love* with our Divine Covenant partner. Washed clean of our sin, reassured in the covenant, and restored to intimate fellowship, we have responded with enthusiasm and passion to His call to build on earth, out of earthly materials, a scale model of His Heavenly Throne Room of Heaven. In stunned gratitude for all the Holy One has done for us we have whole-heartedly and with the reckless abandon of young lovers thrown into this project all our individual and collective resources, our energies, and skills. We *smile because of Him*. We *live for Him*. We *delight in Him*.

We have become passionate, extravagant lovers of God. We have enthusiastically opened and emptied all our treasure chests. We have willingly offered our hands, our backs, and our hearts to the glorious endeavor into which our Bridegroom has commissioned us. And He *sings, dances, rejoices over us!* We are *the apple of His Eye*. He Who watches over us *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, our Bridegroom-King surrounds and protects us.

Yes, moving on from this book will be bittersweet indeed. But we are comforted by knowing that even greater adventures, and even more stunning revelations, await us in the next sefer Torah – Sefer Vayikra – *i.e.* the ‘Sinai Sequel’ book that has come to be known in the Western world as ‘Leviticus’.

An Appointed Time For Transitions and Segues

In light of the fact that the aliyah we read today contains the final verses of *Sh'mot* we might expect to find within its lines *a faint signal of transition – i.e.* the chronicling of a focus-shifting event that marks the *closing of one era* and the *opening of another*. We might also expect the action-filled ‘book of miracles’ to end with an appropriate “bang”. We will not be disappointed on either account. Before we read ‘***ki anan Adonai al-ha-Mish'kan yomam*** – and the cloud of the Holy One was upon the Mish'kan by day ... ***v'esh tihyeh laylah*** – and fire was on it by night ... ***bo l'eynei chol-beit-Yisra'el b'chol-mas'seihem*** - and it went visibly before all the House of Israel in all their travels’, close the book, and say *Chazaq! Chazaq! V'nitchazeik!* [Be Strong! Be Strong! And May we all be strengthened together!]², some truly amazing things are going to happen – things that will set the stage for the rest of Torah – and dramatically change the course of human history.

² It is a custom among the Jewish people, particularly the Ashkenazim, that when the reading of a Book of Torah is completed in a synagogue or study group those present for the final reading all recite this phrase in unison.

The final aliyah of *Sh'mot* will contain some *supernatural fireworks* that I think you will agree make the wildest Independence Day, World Cup, or Super Bowl extravaganzas we have seen look tame by comparison. Oh what a crescendo! Oh what an epilogue!

Diving Right In

For the final moments of the Exodus narrative let us leave our 21st Century desks and armchairs and try to actually *enter into* the camp of the Redeemed at the base of *Mount Sinai*. Imagine yourself among the Redeemed Community in the desert at the base of the Mountain. You are part of a three million strong refugee throng camped in the shadow of the majestic peak from which every one of us heard the Great *Shofar* of Heaven sounding. The Hovering above that peak is the turbulent Cloud out of which we all heard the Most Beautiful Voice in the Universe speaking Hebrew words that shook us to the core. The winter has almost passed. Evening temperatures are becoming milder, and daylight temperatures are slowly warming. Our days are gradually catching up to our nights in length. Meanwhile our senses are awakened daily by the scent of new growth in the junipers and *joshua* trees. The sound of rushing water constantly bursts forth from the Great Rock to provide Creation's most peaceful background music. Wherever the living water from that fountain flows the desert sands bring forth brilliant red *calanit* flowers, bluish-purple blossoms of hyssop, and milky-white buds of heather.

This is a season to sit under and delight in our Beloved's shade. Manna falls from Heaven daily to nurture us. No enemy attacks from without. No divisive, rebellious, or murmuring spirit disturbs us from within. We rest a little more securely each day in the forgiveness, blessing, and shalom of the one we used to call 'the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov'. We are now getting more and more comfortable calling Him '*our God*', even as we are learning what it means for Him to call us '*His people*'. All is well with our world. We are receiving healing for the wounds that were inflicted upon us against our wills in Egypt and for those we foolishly inflicted upon ourselves in the first few months of our sojourn here at Sinai. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.

The Empowering Of the Bridegroom's Breath – The Wind That Fills Our Sails And Directs Us On Our Bridal Journey

The Holy One has designed a glorious plan of Redemption in which He intends to co-labor with us. He wants us to bring the beauty and the sweet shalom of Heaven to all people, ethnicities, tribes, tongues, and nations of the earth. To further this end He has gifted us with supernatural wisdom, skill, energy, unity, and an

amazing level of *shalom* which we have never before even heard of, much less experienced. He has taught us, and we have finally begun to truly understand, the purpose and beauty of His *Shabbat* (Sabbath).

The *Ruach Elohim* [Breath/Spirit of God] has rested mightily upon us all, but none more than *Betzalel* of the tribe of Y'hudah and *Ohaliav* of the tribe of Dan. And now as we sense the twelfth new moon since the plague of darkness approaching we look around and see to our amazement that *the work is done*. In the camp, awaiting assembly, stands every component of the structure the Holy One asked us to build. Intricately fashioned linen curtains, veils, and coverings are stacked beside furnishings and fixtures unlike anything ever seen on this planet before. Glorious vessels of acacia wood, gold, silver and bronze lay side-by-side. Beautiful garments bedecked with precious jewels await Aharon and his sons. Pure vessels overflowing with specially formulated oil for anointing and with fragrant incense for burning stand in perfect order, awaiting the breaking of their seals.

It is time. The glorious moment for which we have been waiting has arrived. We are ready to commemorate our first “new year” since becoming free men. And to top it all off, in order to celebrate our shining moment of deliverance to the fullest we are preparing our camp *to host the manifest presence of the Creator of the Universe Himself!*

The First New Year’s Celebration for the Redeemed Community

Torah tells us how we celebrated the first new year of our betrothal to the Most High - we *raised up the Mish’kan!*

B'echad l'chodesh hukam ha-Mish'kan
on the first day of the month the mish'kan was raised up.

Vayakem Moshe et-ha-Mishkan vayiten et-adanav
Moshe raised up the mish'kan, and laid its bases/sockets,

Through the medium of Torah the Divine Writer then enables us to follow Moshe around as he spends the entire New Years’ Day fulfilling the Holy One’s instruction to “**set up**” the Tabernacle. Moshe is absolutely a-flurry with activity.

The Hebrew verb used to describe Moshe’s action in relation to setting up the *Mish’kan* is ***quwm***³. This Hebrew verb, in the form employed here, means to *raise up, to cause to stand* [e.g. from a prostrate state], to cause to established, or to cause to be confirmed or become fixed. Some illustrative Biblical usages of this word include:

³ ***Quwm*** is *kuf, vav, mem sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word # 6965, it is pronounced ***koom***.

*And I will **establish** [quwm] my covenant with you;
neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood;
neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth*

[Genesis 9:11]

*... and I will **raise up** [quwm] your ruins'.*

[Isaiah 44:26]

***Arise** [quwmi] **shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Holy One has risen upon you.***

[Isaiah 60:1]

For Moshe to “raise up” [Hebrew *quwm*] the *Mish'kan* meant much more than merely the pitching of a tent. In summarizing the Amidah then being prayed by all Jews, Yeshua taught us to pray: ***Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*** Matthew 7:10. This is virtually what happened on the first day of Nisan as Moshe and the people of God established a replica on earth of the thing that the Holy One had showed Moshe in Heaven. Notice the repetition after every paragraph of the narrative of the following phrase: ***ka'asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe – just/exactly as the Holy One instructed Moshe.*** Exodus 40:19, 21, 23, 25,29, and 32.

Let's follow Moshe around for a little while, shall we? First we see him putting up the framework for, putting together, and pitching the inner tent, with each of its four sets of special coverings. Then it was time for him to set the ark of the testimony – the cornerstone of the *Mish'kan* - in its assigned place. With tender loving care, he then laid the tablets of testimony to rest in the ark – to serve as the epicenter and power source of camp of the redeemed forever. Imagine Moshe's sense of awe and reverence as he placed these precious tablets – which he had seen inscribed by the Finger of God – in the place prepared for them from before the Foundation of the World. There was not even a hint of throwing these tablets down in a temper tantrum this time. There was no vigilante rage in Moshe at all. He now understood the tablets for what they were intended to be – not a harsh, cruel, impossible standard by which to judge and condemn men who do not measure up to them, but a Divine Empowerment intended to inspire and energize men who aspire to them.

But Moshe could not dwell on that thought for long. He had much more to do. He had to place the beautiful, *cherubim*-themed *kaporet* – often called the ‘mercy seat’ – upon which the Holy One would cause His Manifest Presence to abide, over the tablets. I imagine him polishing the wings and faces of the cherubim, and the expanse of gold laid out between them, to a state of stunning beauty. Can you imagine the sense of awe he felt as he made the ‘mercy seat’ ready for our Glorious Bridegroom's Enthronement.

After setting the mercy seat atop the ark, Moshe moved to the entrance to the inner chamber where these things would reside. The entrance was to be closed off – sealed for a future day. To seal it, Moshe took in hand the intricately woven cherubim-themed linen veil that *B'tzalel* and his craftsmen had made for this passageway. Expanse by expanse, loop by loop, he carefully hung it between the pillars. For the first time, there was on earth a 'holy of holies'. Imagine Moshe's exhilaration.

With the holy of holies fully prepared for the indwelling presence of the Holy One, Moshe turned his attention to the 'holy place' – or inner sanctum. First of all, he set the golden table of showbread in place. Come the next Shabbat, on this table would be placed twelve loaves of freshly baked unleavened bread, together with precious frankincense, fresh salt, and fragrant wine.

Next Moshe brought in and set in place the heavy, seven-branched golden menorah. He carefully filled its glowing bowls with pure, finely pressed olive oil. Then he cut and installed wicks of fine linen. And finally, he lit the lamps for the first time – perhaps whispering, as he did so: ***Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel ha-menorah*** – i.e. *Blessed are You, O Holy One our god, King of the Universe, Who has set us apart by entrusting to us His Mitzvot, and Who has instructed us to kindle the lamps of the Menorah.* ***Selah***, Beloved! Arise and shine, for your light has come – and the glory of the Holy One is rising upon you!

Next, right in front of the veil that led to the Holy of Holies, Moshe set in place the beautiful golden altar of incense. He called for wood, and started the first fire the golden altar had ever known. When the coals on the grate of the small altar began to glow, he took three fingers worth of the aromatic blend of spices *B'tzalel* and *Aholiav* had apothecated, and sprinkled it on the coals. Quickly the 'holy place' filled with sweet-smelling smoke, ascending toward the Heavens. The 'clouds of the Presence' became a tangible reality. ***Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. Psalm 68:3-5.***

After setting the table in place, positioning and lighting the menorah, and arranging and lighting the altar of incense, Moshe moved to the entrance to the 'holy place' where these things would reside. This entrance was also to be closed off – part of the unseen realm to be visited only by selfless *kohanim* and dressed in fine linen

robes of imputed righteousness, whose hands and feet have undergone mikveh in the living waters of consecration and rebirth. To seal this opening, Moshe took in hand another intricately woven cherubim-themed linen veil. Expanse by expanse, loop by loop, this veil was carefully hung between the pillars.

Now that the inner court was all set up, illumined brightly by a seven-branched lamp, and filled with clouds of glory smelling like sweet incense, Moshe turned his attention to the outer court. First he had to set up the framework for the walls of the outer court. The guy wires had to be installed, stretched, and pinned in place. Then the clasps and hooks had to be put in place and linen draperies hung, one by one. Then he turned his attention to the furnishings of the outer court. First he set in place, and readied for its critically important *avodah*, the brazen altar at which the Holy One had promised to meet and commune with B'nei Yisrael on a day-by-day basis. He lit no fire on this altar – for the fire that would burn upon this altar had to come from its counterpart in Heaven, not from any substance, fuel, or work of man upon the earth. When the altar was in place, and ready for Divine Visitation, Moshe turned his attention to the bronze laver. He set the shimmering reflective basin, made from the mirrors of the women, in place on the bronze stand. Then he called for – or perhaps went and drew – living water from the stream that had, for months now, continually flowed into the Camp from the Rock of Refidim. Imagine the holiness of the moment – as precious living water flowed into, and spilled over the edges of, the reflective basin. As this was happening, perhaps Moshe heard a Voice from Heaven saying: ***I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; They will spring up among the grass - like willows by the watercourses! One will say, 'I am the Holy One's'; another will call himself by the name of Ya'akov; another will write with his hand, 'The Holy One's,' and name himself by the name Yisrael [Isaiah 44:3-5], and/or '... in 'that day', a fountain will be opened for the House of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. Zechariah 13:1.***

With the furnishings of the outer court now in place, Moshe turned his attention to the outer court itself, and the 'Way' of entrance through which B'nei Yisrael – and all who desired to meet with and/or pay homage to the Holy One – would pass. For generations, this linen partition would be the focus of meditation and deep longing. As the Psalmists among the sons of Korach said: ***How lovely are Your Mish'kanot, O Holy One of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Holy One For one day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84:1-2, 10.***

Then, Moshe called for vessels of oil, pressed from the beaten flesh of the best olives, and blended with the sweet, healing spices that release ‘the aroma of Messiah’. Throughout the *Mish’kan* he went, liberally anointing every furnishing, implement, and vessel. It would never be enough that the *Mish’kan* and its implements met the technical requirements of Torah; it must absolutely overwhelm the senses of all who come near with the sweet fragrance, and shine with the Brilliance of the Face of, our Glorious Bridegroom-King.

Aharon and his sons were then called forth. This was Moshe’s brother – and his nephews. Moshe first played the prototypical ‘baptist’, and led each of these men – whose lives would never be the same - in *mikveh*. As each went under the living water, imagine him whispering: *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your Yeshua, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways Psalm 51:1-13.*

The scent of myrrh and cinnamon fill the air. Life is good. The *Mish’kan* is set up and ready for visitors at last. And here is the really, really good news. You are ... I am ... we are ... the Tabernacle. You are ... I am ... we all are ... the appointed beachhead for the next invasion of earth by the Kingdom of Heaven. Your life is ... my life is ... our lives are ... the specially designed stage on which the great passion play of redemption is to be acted out in our generation.

It is show time - and time to raise the roof. Lights! Camera! ACTION!

For Once - Getting it All ‘Right’!

On this first new year’s day after the Exodus the dual promises the Holy One’s people made in Exodus 24 - to “*na’aseh*” [We will do/build/make ...] and to “*nish’ma*” [We will pay attention, and listen, and hear, and let the words we hear change our thinking, our speech, and our actions, and determine what we do/build/make ...] - actually *came together* for the first time. For once we did *exactly* what the Holy One said. We did not add to the Holy One’s instructions nor did we subtract from them. We did not ignore the Holy One’s words nor did we write them off as the product of too much late-night pizza. We did not twist them to suit our fancy. We did not build something to show off our creativity or attract a crowd to us. We did not come up with what we deemed to be a more “visitor friendly” plan. And as this occurred ... well Beloved, as this occurred *heaven touched earth*.

I am not saying that we became sinless or perfect or “worthy”. I am just saying that for a few months we actually let our Divine Bridegroom’s Word do in us what He intended for it to do. You see, it was **He** that brought off this miracle, not us. All we did was just put aside our agendas for a little while and let His agenda take the priority it deserved. You know - ***on earth as it is in Heaven.***

And so the *Mish’kan* - the place of learning intimate communion with the Holy One, and the stage for the great passion play of the Holy One’s redemption of all who seek relationship with Him - is now in place. There were not to be altars and worship halls distributed throughout the camp (or Israel, or the world) for the convenience of those seeking to “do the religious stuff”. There was just to be one laver, one altar, one ark, and one mercy seat for all 2 million or so people. And much of the action was to go on in secluded chambers inside a tent where no one could see. All eyes were supposed to *be focused on the Holy One.* Alas for such a focus, Beloved.

And, of course, the Main Actor in the Divine Drama – the Divine *Leading Man* – most definitely did not disappoint us on opening night at the *Mish’kan*.

The Leading Man Dazzles us With the Ultimate Grand Entrance

Moshe has finally, at long last, come to a blessed state of rest after his flurry of activity.⁴ He has done absolutely everything he was told to do ‘*exactly as the Holy One commanded.*’ It doesn’t get any better than this, right?

Oh yes Beloved, it does. Just wait until you see the Bridegroom-King show up and make the Ultimate Grand Entrance! Men can do a lot of things well. Particularly when men do things in *sh’ma*-response to the directions of the Holy One the work of men’s hand can be inspiringly beautiful. But the best that men – even inspired, prophetic, Divinely-empowered men like Betzalel and Oholiav and Moshe - can do is like filthy rags in comparison to the merest whispers of the Creator Himself. For truly:

*He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.
He binds up the water in His thick clouds,
yet the clouds are not broken under it.
He covers the face of [His] throne, [And] spreads His cloud over it.
He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters,*

⁴ Moshe did not merely set up and inaugurate the *mish’kan* on this day, as awesome as that would have been. He also anointed and consecrated Aharon and his sons, presided over the first korbanot, received on behalf of the Levi’im 6 carts and oxen donated by the tribal leaders, but also saw the death of his nephews, Aharon’s sons Nadav and Avihu.

*at the boundary of light and darkness.
The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His rebuke.
He stirs up the sea with His power,
and by His understanding He breaks up the storm.
By His Spirit He adorned the heavens; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
And Indeed these [are] the mere edges of His ways,
and how small a whisper we hear of Him!
But the thunder of His power who can understand?"*
[Iyov [Job] 26:7-14]

Lest we be overly impressed by what the anointed men in our midst have done or can do, the Holy One Himself insured that what we would remember this day was not what Moshe had done, or what Betzalel and Oholiav and all the skilled craftsmen and willing givers of our fledgling nation had done this day, but *what He Whom our soul loves did.*

Fireworks shows are child's play compared to what we saw on this first new years' day celebration. What 3 million or so of us simultaneously experienced in the desert at the foot of Mt. Sinai that day is forever imprinted upon our collective national psyche. Even as we were preparing to call it a day and head back to our tents and resume 'normal life' the earth all around us started shaking violently.

We fell on our faces in awe. Then that "mighty rushing wind" sound we had come to recognize so well from the day of the Glorious Theophany started up again. But this time it was not confined to the farthest reaches and upper peaks of the mountain. This time it rushed down the mountain and totally engulfed the camp. Our tents swayed back and forth as if they would be torn from the earth. Even the garments we wore flapped back and forth fiercely under the force of supernatural gusts. Our hair stood straight out. Something that felt like lightning coursed through our bodies. Our eyes were thick with blowing sand. All our senses were engaged to the point of overwhelm. And then suddenly the Bridegroom's Presence was everywhere.

Our Bridegroom-King was above us – but He was also below us. He was beside us; but He was also all around us - and inside us as well As Torah puts it:

*Then the **anan** [cloud] covered the tent of meeting,
and the **k'vod** [weight, retinue, glory] of the Holy One filled the tent.

Moshe wasn't able to enter into the tent of meeting,
because the cloud stayed on it,
and the Holy One's **k'vod** [weight, retinue, glory] filled the tent.
[Exodus 40:34-35]*

It was as if we were back under the *chuppah* in the third month and the great

shofar of the Holy One, our Bridegroom, was blowing again. Could it be that despite our adultery with a false god; despite our immaturity and lack of “faith”; and despite our stubbornness, hardness of heart and stiffness of neck; despite our insistence that we could not bear to hear His Voice – the Holy One has restored us by His Word, has *accepted* us, *revealed Himself* to us, and *consented to dwell with us*, right in our midst? Could it really be that He truly has agreed to draw near and walk amidst *us* of all people? Could it be we will never have to walk alone? Yes Beloved. That is exactly the essence of what happened that new year’s day.

We’ll Never Walk Alone!

We will indeed never walk alone! We have been granted the inestimable privilege of getting to know, commune with, and be taught by our Bridegroom-King intimately – in *this* life! The One Who Created the Heavens and the Earth has consented *to take us as His people*, and to *interact with us at the highest level of intimacy we, in our weakness and immaturity, can tolerate*. He has consented to step out of Heaven’s Glorious Courts and *meet us where we are*. Just as He previously gave us the *Aseret HaDibrot* (the Ten Prophetic Words) and the *mitzvot* of Torah as a *shitre eyrusin* [covenant document of betrothal] for us to study and practice during the betrothal period so that we could learn to be the Bride to Him He created us to be, He has now consented to take up His Throne in the *Mish’kan* we have built for Him to inhabit. He has consented to let us learn to “play house” with Him in a way and at a level completely unimaginable to us just a few weeks ago.

Our Bridegroom-King has written for us – and will personally, along with Moshe, direct and coach us in all the acts and scenes of – a passion play through which we will have the privilege of portraying for all the world to see as a *second witness* (along with the wonder of His Creation) of His plan of redemption. Oh, what a Bridegroom! Oh, what a King! Oh, what a Covenant. Oh, what a God! Bless His holy Name, forever.

Chazaq, chazaq, venitchazeik!

Be strengthened, Be strengthened

(in your relationship with the Holy One, and in grasping of the significance of Torah in your life)

May all of us be strengthened!

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Today’s assigned verses of Torah describe the actual sequence followed by Moshe in assembling the completed parts of the *Mish’kan* at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Make a list, in sequential order, of the things Moshe did to put the Tabernacle into place. I noticed 26 things Moshe did. How many did you see?
2. Beginning in verse 29 of today’s Torah reading Moshe sets up the brazen altar

near the entrance to the *Mish'kan* and sets up the bronze laver or basin between the altar and the Holy Place.

[A] What two types of “offerings” did Moshe present as he set up the brazen altar?

[B] What did Moshe and Aharon do with the water in the bronze laver?

[C] How many times does it say in today’s verses Torah that Moshe did “as the Holy One instructed”?

[D] Obviously, the Torah intends for the reader to know that the *Mish'kan* was inaugurated just in time for the celebration of the first anniversary of Pesach [the Passover]. What part was the *Mish'kan* to play in the observance of the Festival of *Pesach*? [Hint: Read Leviticus 23:4-8 *and* Numbers 28:16-25 before answering].

3. In the last five verses of *Sefer Sh'mot* the Holy One answers the prayers spoken by Moshe in Exodus 33:15-16, and returns to dwell in the midst of the Redeemed Community.

[A] Our English texts tell us that the Holy One’s “glory” “filled” the *Mish'kan*. In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words translated “*glory*” [Hebrew *k’vod*, *kof*, *beit*, *dalet*, Strong’s #3513, as first used in Genesis 13:2] and “*filled*” [Hebrew *male’*, *mem*, *lamed*, *alef* Strong’s #4390, as first used in Genesis 1:22, 28]. Write these two words in Hebrew consonants, with appropriate vowel markings. Then search out the verb roots of these words, and write those verb roots. Finally, describe the Hebraic word pictures you see developing as you meditate on these two Hebrew words, their verb roots, and their first usages in Torah.

[B] Imagine that you were Aharon’s son Itamar when this happened. Write a “journal entry” for this day as if you were Itamar and had seen it all happen. Don’t forget to include “who, what, when, where, how, and why”.

4. In yesterday’s Haftarah aliyah we read of the Divine manifestation that occurred at the inauguration of the *Mikdash* [Temple] of Shlomo, centuries after the events we have been reading about in Torah. Yesterday’s reading described this manifestation as follows:

*It came to pass, when the Kohanim were come out of the holy place,
that the anan [cloud] filled the house of the Holy One,
so that the Kohanim could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud;
for the k’vod [glory] of the Holy One filled the house of the Holy One.*

If you will look closely at the remaining verses of haftarah *Pekudei*, however, you will see a major difference between Moshe’s attitude and focus when such events occurred and the attitude and focus of Shlomo. As you read the following passage, examine your heart and your life, and ask the Holy One to reveal to you whether you are approaching Him *more like Moshe* - or *more like Shlomo*.

In other words, would someone looking at your life believe the Holy One's glory is most important to you – or that *your* glory is your first priority?

*Then spoke Shlomo,
“The Holy One has said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.
I have surely built you a house of habitation, a place for you to dwell in forever.”*

*The king turned his face about, and blessed all the assembly of Yisra'el:
and all the assembly of Yisra'el stood.*

*He said, “Blessed be the Holy One, the God of Yisra'el,
who spoke with his mouth to David your father,
and has with his hand fulfilled it, saying,
Since the day that I brought forth my people Yisra'el out of Mitzrayim,
I chose no city out of all the tribes of Yisra'el to build a house,
that my name might be there;
but I chose David to be over my people Yisra'el.*

*Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house
for the Name of the Holy One, the God of Yisra'el.*

*But the Holy One said to David my father,
“Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name,
you did well that it was in your heart: nevertheless you will not build the house;
but your son who will come forth out of your loins,
he will build the house for my name.”*

*The Holy One has established his word that he spoke;
for I am risen up in the room of David my father,
and sit on the throne of Yisra'el, as the Holy One promised,
and have built the house for the name of the Holy One, the God of Yisra'el.*

*There have I set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Holy One,
which he made with our fathers when he brought them out of the land of Mitzrayim.*

[I Kings 8:12-21]

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word our English Bibles translate as “cloud” [*anan*, *ayin*, *nun*, *nun sofit*, Strong's # 6051, first used in Genesis 9:13]. Write the Hebrew word and its verb root in Hebrew consonants with appropriate vowel markings. Then describe the Hebraic word picture that you see developing as you meditate on those words and their first usage.

[B] Who did Shlomo praise most in the *b'racha* [blessing] he spoke when the '*anan* [cloud] of the Holy One's glory filled the Temple?

5. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha Shaul tells us we should *know* that we are the present tabernacle and temple of God and that the Spirit of the Holy One dwells in us *in the same way the Radiant Cloud previously rested on the Mish'kan and the Mik'dash*. But let us consider what he is saying in the light of our experience. How do you know that God's “glory” and “Presence” abides

within you? Here is the final reading from the Apostolic Scriptures corresponding to parsha *Pikudei*:

*Let no one deceive himself.
If anyone thinks that he is wise among you in this world,
let him become a fool, that he may become wise.*

*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with the Holy One.
For it is written, "He has taken the wise in their craftiness."
And again, "The Holy One knows the reasoning of the wise,
that it is worthless."*

*Therefore let no one boast in men.
For all things are yours, whether Sha'ul, or Apollos, or Kefa,
or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.*

*All are yours, and you are Messiah's,
and Messiah is the Holy One's.*

[I Corinthians 3:18-23]

[A] What outward “signs” are there that the *Ruach* [Breath/spirit] of the Holy One dwells in you? [Consider in this regard that the Greek word translated as “know” in verse 16 is *eido*, Strong’s Greek word # 1492, which means to see, to perceive with the eyes, to perceive by any of the senses, to pay attention, observe, to look at and behold, and thereby experience something visually.] The magi saw [*eido*] Messiah’s star in the East [Matt. 2:2], and *knew* from that visual experience the spiritual significance of what was happening in their lifetime. There should be visible signs you, and others can see, as well – or Shaul would say something is *wrong*!

[B] What does the Indwelling Presence of the Holy One’s *Ruach* in you change *about* you?

[C] In verse 18 Shaul speaks of he who “*thinks that he is wise*”. We all know that Shlomo [Solomon] has been reported – in the TaNaKh -- to be a very wise man. Shaul, however, seems to be contrasting Shlomo’s “wisdom” – exhibited in his reaction to the *Holy One*’s presence – to David’s [Godly] wisdom in the same context – for David became a “fool” and debased himself in the eyes of the world (and even his wife) in reaction to the Holy One’s Manifest Presence while Shlomo exalted himself and lauded his own accomplishments when he had a similar occurrence. Which of them was “wise”, and which a “fool”, in your eyes? Explain your answer.

[D] We have discussed previously that Shlomo and Hiram, in building the *Mik'dash*, departed in many particulars from the Holy One’s revelation of what the dwelling place for His Name should look like (the pattern shown to Moshe on the mountain), and even incorporated pagan architecture (the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, modeled after the Phoenician myth about the “two pillars of Herakles”). We have also seen in today’s aliyah that Shlomo’s attitude was “not quite right”. With these problems, why do you think the Holy One still consented to let His Manifest

Presence fill [Hebrew, *male*'] the structure that Shlomo and Hiram built? Explain your answer, and tell what this says to you about the Holy One's characteristics, personality, and covenant faithfulness.

Chazaq, chazaq, venitchazeik!

Be strengthened, Be strengthened, and May all of us be strengthened!

*Good Shabbos, And May the Shabbat, and the light of the New Moon
bring the freshness of Springtime into your life.
Find rest in His arms of love, Beloved.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 90:13-15

*Turn, Holy One! How long?
Bring consolation to your servants!*

*Satisfy us in the morning with your **chesed** [covenant-based lovingkindness],
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

*Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
For as many years as we have seen evil.*