

Introduction to Parsha #26: Sh'mini¹

READINGS: ***Torah:*** **Leviticus 9:1 – 11:47**
 Haftarah: **II Samuel 6:1 – 7:17**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 4:32-- 5:1-11**



It came to pass on the eighth day.
[Leviticus 9:1a]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *Kadosh*, the Prayer of Holiness

Vayehi bayom ha-sh'mini – And it came to pass on the eighth day ... ***kara Moshe l'Aharon ul'vanav*** – Moshe called Aharon and his sons forward ... ***ul'ziknei Yisra'el*** – and the elders of Yisrael **Leviticus 9:1.**

The sweet prophetic season of *Imanu-El* [God dwelling/abiding with us] that our Torah meditations presently have us enjoying promises to change everything about us – and our impact on the world - for the better. The adventure kicked into high gear a few months ago when the Holy One spoke to Moshe a few simple words designed to awaken in our hearts His vision for an ‘on-earth-as-it-is-in-Heaven’ command center. ***V'asu-li Mik'dash*** – i.e. *have them build for Me a place where My Kedusha energy can abide*, He said, ***v'shakanti b'tocham*** – *and I will dwell in/among them*. **Exodus 25:9.** Well, we built it, just as He told us to – and He came and adopted it as His earthly dwelling place, just as He said He would! Welcome to the era of *acclimating to the Divine Presence, tuning our hearts to Heaven's True Tone, and returning to the Divine Script and Plan.*

Then, with the prototypical/prophetic snow-globe era of *Imanu-El* fittingly inaugurated, the Holy One began meticulously laying out the protocols human beings interested in interacting with Him were to follow in order to bridge the gap between the powerful forcefield of *kedusha* (KJV ‘holiness’), *kavod* (KJV ‘glory’), and

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ohr (KJV ‘light’) that surrounds Him, on the one hand, and the oozing, toxic *tumah* that fallen human beings carry, on the other hand. See **Isaiah 6:1-5**, **Ezekiel 1:26-28**, **Acts 9:3-9**, and **Revelation 1:17**. Over the course of the eight chapters that open the scroll of Vayikra (KJV ‘*the book of Leviticus*’) the Holy One taught Moshe a stunning set of essential approach protocols that men could follow to deslime, detox, start to heal their gaping holes of uncleanness, and put on a protective ‘kippur’ of *kedusha*, *kavod*, and *ohr* – which would operate like a cocoon-suit of imputed righteousness that would allow men to safely share space with Him. The purpose of it all? He wants us to know how to respond to His invitation into His Courts and Chambers appropriately, encounter His Manifest Presence safely and respectfully, commune intimately with Him, and develop a deep, covenant-furthering, Grand Plan advancing, relationship with Him.

Now we see. Now we know. Now we understand. The Creator of the Universe wants to share space with us as much – if not more – than we want to share space with Him. So be it. We will go to Him. We will risk it all to just to be where He is. We will *sh’ma* His Voice. We will tremble at His words. Then we will offer our lives to His Grand Plans for Tikkun Nefesh, Tikkun Adam, Tikkun Aretz, and Tikkun Olam. Whatever it takes; whatever it costs; whatever He asks – we are ‘in’. He has captured our hearts with awe and wonder. Our minds can process and our mouths can utter only thanksgiving, praise, and surrender. We sense we are on the cusp of sealing off and healing the five gaping fissures that develop in men’s souls through prolonged exposure to the *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas* [KJV ‘evil’, ‘corruption’, and ‘violence/cruelty’] that runs rampant through our fallen world. **Genesis 6:5 & 8:21**. We are realizing that His Presence – and His Rabbi-like teachings on how to live a well-lived and meaningful life in spite the downward pull of our fallen humanity – offer us a window of opportunity to embark on a great journey back to functional wholeness. The *korban olah* approach/nearness protocols [see **Leviticus 1:1-17** and **6:9-13**] are leading us back toward Edenic levels of *shalom*². The *korban minchah* approach/nearness protocols [see **Leviticus 2:1-16** and **6:14-23**] are leading us toward

² The King James translators – and most who have blindly followed their lead since – translated the Hebrew word ‘shalom’ as ‘peace’. While peace (especially inner, of the mind, heart, and soul) is an essential part of the shalom spectrum, that is just a small part of the story. *Shalom* means enjoying the fruit of a deep, rich, relationship with the Creator and His Creation. It involves wholeness of body, mind, and soul; health and healthiness; a well-developed, maturing sense of identity, purpose, assignment, and mission; a sense of safety, security, and protection; satisfaction (or at least contentment with) one’s lot and means of provision, and inner strength to remain calm and on target no matter what enemy, danger, obstacle, challenge, threat, or distraction one encounters. *Shalom* is what covenant partners of the Holy One wish for one another, and for the world; hence it is our greeting, both coming and going.

Edenic levels of *emunah* [KJV ‘faith’³]. The *korban shelem* approach/nearness protocols [see **Leviticus 3:1-17, 7:11-21, and 8:22-32**] are reintroducing us to Edenic levels of *simchah* [KJV ‘joy’]. The *korban chata’t* approach/nearness protocols [see **Leviticus 4:1-35, 6:24-30, and 8:14-17**] are leading us back to Edenic levels of *Ahavat Adonai* [KJV ‘love of God’]. And the *korban asham* approach/nearness protocols [see **Leviticus 5:1 – 6:9 and 7:1-10**] are opening the door of our souls to Edenic levels of *tikvah* [KJV ‘hope’].

We are making progress on our assigned task of becoming kedusha-carriers and light-emitters like our Covenant Partner in Heaven. But alas, the magnitude of the distance we still have to travel in order to put on the full armor of holiness – *i.e.* beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of complaint and despair - is beginning to dawn on us. So this is what living in the Manifest Presence of the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth is like!

In Your Light We See ... Spots and Blemishes Everywhere!

The Holy One dwells among us now – and in His Light we see things in ourselves, in others, and in the world that we never saw before. In His Light, nothing can be hidden. Vast stores of hidden beauty and potential for good are revealed; at the same time, however, spots, wrinkles, bad attitudes, and fleshly weaknesses are exposed. We now have to *acknowledge* and *deal with such things* instead of just pretending they don’t exist or covering them up with fig leaves the way we did before. To top it all off, the greatest download of wisdom and revelation in human history is in full swing. The atmosphere is super-charged. Our hearts are bursting with life and hope. Our eyes are wide open with childlike wonder. Our ears are tuned in to and listening with bated breath for the slightest hint of a whisper from Heaven. Anticipation is building. Here we are, just *waiting for the other sandal to drop*. We don’t know whether to gird up our loins – or fall on our faces – or do both! But one thing is pretty sure – the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover our Bridegroom-King is processing us through on this Mountain is about to enter another, even more drastic phase.

Welcome to the oft-times awkward ‘*Dark but Lovely*’ phase of Divine Romance. We hear our King calling to us. We know He is wooing us to an even more meaningful – and far more impactful - level of Covenant life. But are we up to it? Like Adam on the great day following the Seventh Day of Creation - when the

³ Unfortunately, the English word ‘*faith*’ is a woefully inadequate translation of the Hebrew word ‘*emunah*’. While ‘*faith*’ is usually just defined in terms of intellectual belief or assent, *emunah* is the embracing of an entire approach to life, to circumstances, to people, and to our own flesh and pseudo-intellect that is centered around responsibly stewarding, being responsive to, and being accountable for the living neshamah that God-breathed into Adam in Genesis 2:7, and letting that lifeforce be our primary lens, motivator, and guide.

Holy One placed him in the beautiful garden He had planted in Eastward in Eden, and charged him with the responsibility to *abad* and *shamar* that Immaculate Ecosystem – we should be asking ourselves ‘are we even capable of doing this?’ But ... HOW? We are going to need VISION. We are going to need FOCUS. We are going to need DIRECTION. EMPOWERMENT. We are going to need WISDOM and REVELATION. We are going to need INSTRUCTION, INSPIRATION, GUIDANCE, and DISCIPLINE. We are going to need the Holy One to show us what to do, and when, and why, and how – and what definitely *not to do*, under any circumstances, for any reason, ever. And we are going to need Him to awaken and activate all our Divine Sparks with Holy Fire. We *can* do this – but we cannot do it without Him walking with us every step of the way, talking us through every situation we face and guiding us through every interaction and intersection along the way.

So ... What is a Sh'mini?

*Sh'mini*⁴ is Hebrew word meaning *eighth*. Whenever you see the word *sh'mini* [eight] in Torah therefore remember *to look beyond the earthly shadow to the Heavenly reality* that underlies the word. If you see 8 of anything - especially 8 days - think *transcendence*. The “eighth” of anything is always code language for a “*new beginning*”. This stems from the fact that it was after the seventh day [the *Shabbat*] that the Holy One placed His special creation in the *Gan Eden* [garden of Eden] and blessed him with the ability and potential to *be fruitful and multiply, take dominion over the rest of creation, and eat of its choicest fruit*. This was a “new beginning”. It reflected an exalted status for man – with vastly expanded potential for *fulfilling the Holy One's Divine purposes and partnering with the Holy One in creation*. That means that on the eighth day the Holy One began a new thing – *co-creation* with man. The prospects are *mind-boggling*.

Sh'mini is derived from the Hebrew verb root *shaman* - *shin*, *mem*, and *nun sofit*. Let us gaze intently at the Hebraic hieroglyphic presented by the *shin-mem-nun sofit shoshan* [root] for a moment. The first letter/pictograph of the *shoshan* is the *shin*. The *shin* is a picture of flames/tongues of fire⁵. It represents the manifestation of the Holy One's Presence such as was seen by Moshe at the burning bush, by all those redeemed from Egypt as a pillar of fire, by *Eliyahu* [Elijah] and the prophets

⁴ The Hebrew word *sh'mini* is Strong's Hebrew word #8066, pronounced *shem-ee-nee'*. The first usages of this word in Torah is found in Exodus 22:30. As part of His great *Mishpatim Discourse* at Sinai, the Holy One instructs us concerning the firstborn offspring of our oxen and sheep ***he shall be with its mother seven days; on yom ha-sh'mini*** – i.e. *the eighth day* - ***you are to present it to Me***.

⁵ Some modern sources see in the *shin* a pictograph of ‘teeth’. The key in Hebrew however is never the noun – it is always the *action* the noun is involved in. What do both flames of fire and teeth do? The answer is that they both put whatever they touch or impact under extreme pressure, and consume/destroy some things while releasing other things.

of Ba'al on Mount Carmel, and by all those in the 'upper room' on *Chag Shavuot* [the Feast of Pentecost] in c. 29 CE. The second letter/pictograph of the *shoresh* is the *mem*. The *mem* is a pictograph of *a wave in motion, cresting majestically*. The *mem* pictograph signifies that whatever came before it [in this case, the *shin*] is in motion, flowing into or toward whatever some next. The third letter/pictograph in the verb root *shaman* is the *nun sofit* – the final form the Hebrew letter *nun* ['n' sound] takes when it comes at the end of the word. The letter *nun* is a pictograph of *a son and/or heir*. The *nun sofit* is a pictograph of the *ultimate Son and/or Heir* – i.e. the 'seed of woman' spoken of in Genesis 3:15. This of course is none other than the Messiah Himself.

The full pictographic mural of the Hebrew verb root *shaman* is thus as follows: the *consuming fire-like radiance and energy of the Holy One flowing like a cresting wave toward, and engulfing, the Messiah*. This pictographic mural is what the parsha called *Sh'mini* – and every eighth day mentioned in Holy Writ for that matter - is all about. Everything we will read this week in Torah will work together to form that mural. What happens on earth involving Aharon and his sons will be only a re-enactment on earth of something the Holy One did in Heaven long ago – before the foundation of the world.

Learning the Essence, Substance and Shape of the Freedom Our Divine Bridegroom Has Wrought for Us

We are nearing the end of the year in which the Death Angel struck the houses of Egypt. Back in the Nile Delta the first crop of barley since the great plague of hail is just about ready for harvest. But we are a long way from the Nile now - and not a single blade of barley grows anywhere near our camp. We are in the middle of the desert, where the Holy One has carefully hidden us - the Apple of His Eye - away from the prying eyes of hostile nations. Indeed the barren mountain looming before us is so far off of the beaten path that very few of earth's citizens have ever heard of it, much less seen it. Despite the barrenness of the surroundings some extremely exciting things have been happening here. There has been a Divine Betrothal Covenant cut simultaneously in two tablets of stone and approximately two million human hearts. There has been a great breach of that Divine Betrothal Covenant on the part of one of the parties, and an even greater demonstration of love, grace, and forgiveness on the part of the other Party. We have witnessed firsthand the meaning of the Master's statement that ***he who has been forgiven many loves much***. This has been evidenced most recently by the appearance in our midst of the *Mish'kan* – the first earthly embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven since Noach's ark. Recently constructed at the foot of the mountain by lovesick, radically forgiven slaves, there the structure stands. An earthly replica of Heaven's Throne Room, it has been built exactly according to the pattern the Holy One

showed Moshe on the mountain. The manifest Presence of the Holy One has descended upon it and filled it to the uttermost. The Holy One Himself now sits enthroned upon this tent in resplendent glory.

Even more glorious, the Bridegroom-King has now invited the awakening throng of Bride-people He redeemed from bondage to *approach* and *commune with* Him there. But this presents a conundrum: Our Bridegroom-King is *holy* – and we ... well ... anyone can clearly see that we are *anything but holy*. So how can we possibly approach His Holiness? Blessed be His Name, out of His great love for us, HE HAS MADE A WAY! Out of His intense, burning desire for us to be *with Him where He is* He has written for us a series of meticulously-choreographed, carefully-scripted *protocols of approach* – protocols which He has designed in order to enable us to leave the un-holiness of our fallen humanity behind us and to put on in its place the radiant garments of a pure, spotless Bride. And here on the mountain of thorns He has written into the Covenant a way in which we can exchange *shame for honor, ashes for beauty, mourning for the oil of joy, and the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise*.

What our Divine Bridegroom He Whom Our Soul Loves has done *for* us is amazing – but it is child’s play compared to what He is doing *in* us. The freedom He has bought for us is *pregnant with world-changing power*. To our surprise we have discovered that the Holy One was not just interested in setting us *free from Pharaoh’s enslavement*. Now that the chains of bondage have been broken off of us, He is out to make sure we live lives of meaning and impact befitting the relationship He has forged with us.

We now know that we have not been placed here on this earth at such a time as this merely to obey some ‘commandments’. We are placed here to *co-create with the Author of Life*. We are not simply to ‘do’ things on this earth – we are, in cooperation with the Word of God, and flowing in the power of the *Ruach* of God, to *re-create upon earth realities that have their foundation in Heaven*. We are called to model on earth what it is like to *live in the eights* – and to cause others to aspire to live in the eights as well. How did a group of former slaves come to receive this magnificent calling? Let us go back and review a little recent history so that we can understand just what is going to be “beginning” in parsha *Sh’mini*.

Waiting For the Other Sandal to Drop

The grand quartet of spring *moedim* – *Passover, Unleavened Bread, the Day of Firstfruits, and the Counting of the Omer* – is unfolding around us. In the course of the celebration of these wondrous appointments with the Creator each year the Holy One calls to us sweetly from the stairs. He calls us higher. He counsels us to

remember the former things – *i.e.* to commemorate and relive the great miracles He performed for our ancestors in the past. But He does not stop there. He offers us the privilege of co-laboring with Him in the great redemptive works He has in mind for our generation. It is in this season that we are called to testify joyfully of how He has *delivered us from oppression*, has *liberated us from forced labor*, has *redeemed us* from every vestige of bondage, and has gloriously *freed our souls* from all the evil taskmasters of the world. This is our appointed time to declare exuberantly that we are *His People* – and that we consider ourselves blessed above all men because He has consented to be considered *our God*.

During these annual celebrations we reflect upon – and individually and collectively relive our experience of – the ‘*deliverance*’, the ‘*salvation*’, the ‘*redemption*’, the ‘*liberation*’, and the ‘*freedom*’ - to which our Divine Bridegroom has called us. We remind ourselves that the freedom our Beloved has wrought for us with a mighty Hand and an outstretched Arm is definitely not ‘*just some people talkin*’⁶. Nor is the kind of freedom we have been offered by the Holy One by any means ‘*just another word for nothing left to lose*’⁷. We have learned over the past year that the freedom the Holy One has wrought for us is *amazingly substantive*. It changes everything about us, starting with our understanding of who we are and why we are here.

Armed with this new, higher perspective, and overflowing with passion for the Holy One’s will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven therefore, let us re-engage with the Torah ... and its Divine Author, on the issue of *what kind of lifestyle we as free people should live*. Our Great Journey to Freedom has, you see, only just begun.

Longing For the Day of His Appearing

The *Mish’kan* is finally open and ready for visitors. Aharon and his sons have said goodbye to ‘normal life’, consecrated to a lifetime of humble service, and trained by Moshe to serve as ‘friends of the Bride’. The season of their consecration has passed. Today is a *new day*. This is *yom ha-sh’mini* – literally, the ‘*eighth day*’⁸.

⁶ The line comes from the lyrics of the classic soft-rock ballad *Desperado*, written by Frey and Henley when both were members of the California soft-rock group the Eagles.

⁷ Kristofferson made his declaration to the world that ‘*freedom’s just another word for nothin’ left to lose*’ in the famous chorus of ‘*Me and Bobby Magee*’.

⁸ From the way the text of *Sefer Vayikra* is worded it appears that everything described in chapters 9 through 24 of Leviticus occurred and/or was revealed on this very special day – the day Torah calls *yom ha-sh’mini*. The next obvious break in the narrative occurs in chapter 25, when the Divine Writer changes the format of discourse, beginning a new section with the interesting words: ‘And the Holy One spoke to Moshe ‘on Mount Sinai’’ We who are familiar with Torah know that every bit of the revelation of *Sefer Vayikra* occurred at Mount Sinai. The Divine Writer’s use of the phrase ‘on Mount Sinai’ suggests, therefore, that revelation of chapters 25 through 27 – with which *Sefer Vayikra* concludes - occurred at a later time, after the day fire fell from Heaven and Nadav and Avihu died, but nevertheless before the Cloud lifted from the *Mish’kan* and the Redeemed Community followed It away from Sinai.

This will be the day of the Holy One's Appearing. As Moshe puts it:

Hayom Adonai nir'ah aleichem

Today the Holy One will appear to you.

veyera aleichem kevod Adonai

And the glory of the Holy One will be manifest to you.

[Leviticus 9:4,6]

Our Bridegroom–King is about appear to us. His glory is about to be revealed in front of us all. Fire is about to fall from Heaven. Daniel 7:9-10 is about become a reality on earth as it is in Heaven⁹. The fire from on high is about to consume the special pieces of *korbanot* Aharon has laid out on the grates of the altar in the Mish'kan's outer court. Two of Aharon's sons will take censors in their hands, make their own kind of fire, and die right before our eyes. In the aftermath our Divine Bridegroom will begin a series of revelation downloads that will combine to form what I call the *Kedusha Discourse*. This 14-chapter long series of Divine Pronouncements will constitute the heart and soul of the Torah. Spanning six parshot, the grand *Kedusha Discourse* will challenge our flesh-indulgent minds with every word, and will expose the lukewarm-ness of our hearts at every turn.

The Longest and Deepest Divine Discourse Known to Man – the Kedusha Discourse of Torah - Looms Before Us

The grand *Kedusha Discourse* that we will begin to study this week will span six parshot of Torah. It will take us over a month of study to get through it. And it will challenge our flesh-indulgent minds - and expose the lukewarm-ness of our hearts - at every turn. What is the substance of this great Prophetic Download? It will be in this Discourse that our Bridegroom will set forth the core principles of His Ultimate Divine Make-Over Strategy. It is through the empowerment of this Discourse that He will assure that we as His Betrothed Bride-to-be are *made ready for the Great Wedding to Come*. It will be in this Discourse that the Holy One will lay out in detail the essential elements of the holiness and consecration that He expects from His Bride-to-be. He will tell us plainly exactly what kind of lifestyle changes it is going to take for the people He has desired, redeemed from bondage, and set aside for Himself to become *a Bride without spot, clothed in white linen, pure and bright*. Before this Discourse is done there will be a lot of pieces of your flesh and mine – as well as a good bit of childish shallow if not totally false theology – lying on the cutting room floor. But what we receive instead will make us forget about the pain of the cutting away. Indeed, our hearts will ask “Please

⁹ Daniel 7:9-10 is part of one of Daniel's prophetic visions of the Throne of Heaven. *I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame; its wheels a burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The courtiers were seated, and the books were opened.*

look again - Is there anything else that needs to go? Is there anything at all about me or the way I live that needs to receive a makeover? Oh, please, Holy One – please do not leave me bound up by my flesh or caught up in deception for a moment longer!”

The Holy One will begin the Discourse by explaining to what items He does and does not consider to be ‘food’ fitting for people who desire to sit with Him at His Table¹⁰. Every bride needs a diet – He will lay out ours for us. The Holy One will then expand the Discourse to cover a wide variety of intimate matters - things that go to the very heart of our Bridal commitment to do things ‘His Way’ instead of ‘our way’. Our Beloved will teach us to define all aspects, situations, people and things in the world the way He does – i.e. in terms of where they fit in relation to the offsetting spiritual dimensions of *tahor* and *tamei* [‘clean’ and ‘unclean’] and *kadosh* and *chol* [‘holy’ and ‘common’]. Ah, but we are getting a little ahead of ourselves. Let us go back and review a little recent history so that we can understand just what is going to be “beginning” in parsha *Sh’mini*.

A Brief Review of How We Got to Where We Are

Back in Exodus 40 we read that on the first of the lunar month *Nisan* in the first year after the descendants of *Ya’akov* [Jacob] were delivered from Egypt by the Holy One’s plague on the firstborn Moshe set up the *Mish’kan* [Tabernacle] according to the Holy One’s explicit instructions. Thereupon, we read that:

*... the Cloud covered the tent of meeting,
and the 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 glory filled the tent.*

[Exodus 40:34-35]

Seven “earth days” have passed since that wonderful event. On the first of those seven days a consecration ceremony was held for the priestly family. On that day Aharon and his four sons [Nadav, Avihu, Itamar, and Elazar] were clothed for the first time with priestly garments, were anointed for the first time with pure virgin olive oil, were sprinkled for the first time with the blood of atonement, were blessed by Moshe and by the people, and were thereby set apart to minister “atonement” to the Redeemed Community.

At the end of this “first day” ceremony however Moshe told Aharon and his sons to stay in the *Mish’kan* day and night for six more full days. **Leviticus 8:35**. What Aharon and his sons – or the Redeemed Community – did during the next six days we can only imagine. Suffice it to say that the six days were spent in His Divine

¹⁰ This part of the discourse is found in Leviticus chapter 11.

Presence, under His Cloud.

Aharon and his sons have now taken up their assigned place in the closest thing to the Garden of Eden that has existed on earth since the Fall. The era of the *Mish'kan* has at long last been inaugurated. The promise of Exodus 25:8 [... *have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them.*] has been given its initial fulfillment. And now at last *a new era of enhanced Covenantal experience* is about to begin.

Back to the Garden

Aharon and his sons have now been placed in their version of the Holy One's garden – the *Gan Mish'kan* – and have been blessed by the Holy One with the potential to function as “friends of the Bride” – co-creators of a holy people, a kingdom of priests, who would become a full-fledged covenant partner for the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov. The seven-day consecration period is at an end. The era of the *Mish'kan* has at long last been inaugurated. The promise of Exodus 25:8 [“... *have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them.* ”] has been given its initial fulfillment. So at this point it behooves us to remind ourselves why such things as a physical tabernacle in the wilderness and a priesthood of ordinary men were deemed necessary and appropriate for the Community that the Holy One had redeemed from Egypt.

Remember that the earthly Tabernacle and the Aharonic priesthood were both given to the Redeemed Community *in response to the Redeemed Community's request* in Exodus 20:18-21. At that time the people gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai for the Betrothal Ceremony they were simply not ready to deal with an intimate relationship with the Holy One. Hence when the Holy One spoke over them the beautiful words of Betrothal¹¹ that were to define the essence of the “new creation” bride the Redeemed of the Holy One were being prophetically empowered to become, they not only trembled at His Voice, as all men should, but they ran away. They pleaded for an earthly intermediary to hear His Words on their behalf and to teach them to them over time. In the Holy One's hearing they cried out to Moshe, saying: *Speak to us yourself and we will sh'ma. But do not have the Holy One speak to us, or we will die.* Exodus 20:19.

The Holy One graciously consented to the plea of His frightened, immature Bride-to-be. It was not His perfect Will, but it was something He could work with and from which He could bring forth good. In light of Moshe's mortality and the need for training for a period longer than Moshe would live, however, the Holy One went one step beyond what was requested and established Moshe's brother Aharon's family line as long-term intermediaries. He ordained that these “friends of the Bride” would:

¹¹ I am speaking of the so-called “*Ten Commandments*”, known in Hebrew as the *Aseret HaDibrot*.

[a] teach the Holy One's instructions for living [*i.e.* the mitzvah sections of *Torah*] to the Bride-People-in-Training, and

[b] chaperone the limited Betrothal-period interactions and communications that the protocol of the Betrothal agreement called for to be engaged in between the Holy One and His Betrothed Nation.

The place of the limited Betrothal-period interactions that Aharon and his sons were to chaperone and mediate was an agreed, pre-designated Place of Meeting [*the Mish'kan*] built especially for that purpose. This Place of Meeting was made from the “stuff” of Egypt and the desert, but it was *patterned after something eternal that the Holy One had shown Moshe on the Mountain. Exodus 25:8.*

The Divine Bridegroom had agreed to wait patiently for a people to develop through this system who would understand that they could be intimate with Him merely by the agency, and in faith in the efficacy, of the blood that had from the foundation of the world been dripping on the mercy seat in Heaven. While waiting for such a people to develop the Holy One gave the beloved covenant people alive at that time, and for several subsequent generations, a *pattern* to look at which was designed to *make them hungry for the reality behind the pattern* - the very one-on-One intimacy they found too intense to bear at the first meeting at Sinai. And as we have discussed previously, the Holy One also gave them Aharon and his sons -- to teach them how He *saw them* and *was empowering them to live*, and to mediate for them throughout the period of betrothal.

As our parsha for the week begins, the *eighth day* of Nisan, the day on which our Divine Bridegroom has ordained that Aharon and his sons – Nadav, Avihu, Itamar, and Elazar – will begin to function as “friends of the bride”, has dawned. Here are the opening lines transliterated (with translations underneath) from the ancient Hebrew scrolls:

Vayehi b'yom ha-sh'mini

And it came to pass on the eighth day

qara Moshe l'Aharon ulev'nav

[that] Moshe summoned Aharon, and his sons,

ul'ziknei Yisra'el

and the elders of Israel...

[Leviticus 9:1]

We will read in parsha *Sh'mini* how Aharon and his sons make their initial approach to the Divine Bridegroom at the brazen altar. We will get to be flies on the wall, observing them try out, for the first time, four of the five “pathways to intimacy” about which we read in detail in the first two *parshot* of *Sefer Vayikra*. We will see Aharon approach the Holy One through *korban olah*. Then we will see

him approach Holy One through *korban minchah*. A little later we will see him approach the Holy One through *korban shelem*. And we will also see him draw near the throne of grace through two separate approaches of *korban chata't*. This will not by any means be the last time Aharon will make these approaches. He and his descendants will do this kind of thing day in and day out for generations to come. But these particular approaches are very, very important. For they represent *the first fruits of Aharon's priesthood*. And in the Holy One's economy, if the first fruits are holy the whole batch is credited as holy. For the holiness of the first fruits is accounted to the remainder as holiness.

How Can These Things Be?

How can these things be, you ask? Remember that we are dealing with the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. Things in and having to do with the *Mish'kan* are not what they seem. Unlike modern-day churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, the *mish'kan* was not a religious shrine built by men to contain and promote man's ministry. The *mish'kan* was instead a supernatural 'portal' of Heavenly reality, built 'according to a pattern' shown to Moshe and according to a blueprint dictated to Moshe by the Voice of the Divine Bridegroom in the course of his 40-day visitation with the Holy One in the Heavenlies.

The *Mish'kan*, its services, and its priests, were *merely the tip of a veritable upside down spiritual iceberg*. Though the *mish'kan* was a finite structure, built on earth, it cast a big shadow – sending out reflections of eternal realities that were formulated in Heaven before the foundation of the World. The *mish'kan* was the Holy One's 'shadowbox' as it were – a stage on earth where human beings acted as the Holy One's shadow – showing the Holy One's truths pictorially. The priesthood/kingdom diplomacy of Aharon and his sons was therefore merely one aspect of the *mish'kan* 'shadowbox'.

Think about it. If you have ever played the 'shadow game' by holding up your hands in front of a dim light in a dark room and entertaining others with larger-than-life reflections on the wall you can understand what the Holy One intended the Aharonic priesthood to do. Hold one hand in front of the light with two fingers sticking up, and a rabbit's head appears on the wall. Hold up both hands, with fingers close together, and with your thumbs separated from the fingers and interlocked with each other, in front of the dim light, and the shadow on the wall looks like a bird in flight. Aharon and his sons, and the services of the *Mish'kan*, were like shadows cast on the wall of earth. The Holy One made the images and held them up in the Heavenly Light. Simultaneously, Aharon and his sons made corresponding actions on the 'screen' of the *Mish'kan*. Aharon and his sons were the Holy One's designated 'shadow people'. They were 'backlit' by the light of

Messiah. Like a person's shadow they did nothing independent of the one whose shadow they formed. Whatever the shadow-maker [in this case Messiah, as the High Priest of Heaven, serving in the Heavenly Throne Room] did, that is what they did - in the backlit 'shadow box' we know as the *Mish'kan*. What the *kohanim* [priests] after the order of Aharon were assigned to do was merely to live 'on the eights' – in a realm that 'shadowed' the Heavenly reality of redemption for mankind.

A Sh'mini Travelogue

Aharon will be spending a lot of time *front and center* in *Sh'mini*. The parsha opens with him being the first to enter the *Mish'kan* according to the new protocols the Holy One has been teaching us. Aharon will make his initial approach the Holy One via the protocols of *korban chata'at* [i.e. an approach for sin-cleansing]. One such approach will be made on his own behalf. He hungers to draw near the Holy One. He needs a personal encounter. He needs a redemption transaction. But Aharon is not just in this for himself. He will then immediately follow his personal approach of *korban chata't* with one he will make on behalf of Redeemed Community. Then, to express humble and heartfelt thanks to the Holy One for the post-forgiveness wholeness and harmony that has taken over the camp since the horror of the golden calf episode, [*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*] Aharon will follow the two approaches of *korban chata't* with an approach of *korban shelem* on behalf of all the people. This is going to be a good day. We will all eat together at the holy table of *shalom*.

Aharon will then do something that will blow our minds and cause us to tremble inside. As he stands aside the brazen altar he will turn to face us, will lift his hands lovingly toward us all, will lift his voice in a way and with a clear tone we have never heard from him, and he will *bless us*. It will feel like a father blessing his children. And we will be blessed indeed.

As Aharon is blessing us supernatural fire will fall from Heaven onto the altar. This Divine fire will sweep over everything Aharon has placed upon it. Every man, woman and child will witness this miracle. It will stun us. We will simultaneously fall on our faces in reverent awe, in childlike wonder, and in humble worship.

But ecstasy will soon turn to shock and aw. On the very same day fire fell from Heaven two of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, will choose to approach the altar in a way directly in opposition to the protocols according to which the Holy One had said He must be approached. Their flagrant act of rebellion will result in another kind of fire coming down from Heaven. This time the fire will consume them where they stood. As specially appointed representatives of the kingdom of the Holy One these two highest-level kingdom diplomats were subject to a *very*

high standard of loyalty. Their self-dealing was tantamount to high treason against the Kingdom which they had been appointed to represent to the people of earth. For the sake of the honor of Heaven judgment was both swift and stunning. No man played any part in it. No one's opinions mattered.

Aharon will stand aghast. Moshe will step in and order that the bodies of Nadav and Avihu be recovered, taken away, and buried with dignity. The Holy One will then initiate the great *Kedusha Discourse* of Torah – the Discourse in which our Divine Bridegroom downloads in detail the essential elements of His consecration protocol for His Kingdom of Priests and Holy Nation. Among the guidelines established for Aharon and his sons in the part of the Discourse we read this week will be the prohibition against consuming alcoholic beverages while serving in the *Mish'kan*. Among the guidelines established for everyone in the Redeemed Community in the section of the Discourse we read this week will be the instructions regarding what animal flesh we are – and are not – to consider to be 'food'. In this connection, Torah will introduce us much more specifically to the concepts of spiritual 'purity' - *i.e. tahor* status - and spiritual 'impurity' – *i.e. tamei* status.

Here We Are, In the Critical Throes of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover

For weeks we have been experiencing different aspects of the new beginning wrought for us by the Holy One's redemption and betrothal. We are *starting over*. We have to. After all *the Creator of the Universe is now enthroned in manifest splendor hardly a stone's throw away from our dwellings* – and His Presence is the ultimate *game-changer*. Business-as-usual is simply *not an option*. His Presence means absolutely *everything about us has to change*. We must adapt. Our former habits of thought, speech, and behavior, as well as all our ideas about how we should approach, cope with, and live life on planet earth, are therefore all under a powerful microscope right now. The ways of self-advancement and self-expression and fear of man we learned in Egypt – indeed all forms of both self-worship and man-worship – are in the process of being systematically eradicated. We have been called by our Divine Bridegroom to a much *deeper level of relationship* that requires a much *higher level of consecration*. This new era of consecration – the level of consecration befitting the Holy One's Bride-to-be - started with the dramatic inauguration of the *earthly Mish'kan's* brazen altar. After Aharon laid the fat portions of the first surrogate animal presented to the Holy One on behalf of the Community and himself, Torah tells us “... *the glory of the Holy One appeared to all the people, and fire came forth from the Presence of the Holy One and consumed the korban olah and the fat upon the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.* Leviticus 9:23-24.

When You See Fire – Always Consider the Source!

The arrival of the consuming fire of the Holy One's Presence at the brazen altar – in the outer courts of the *Mish'kan* where everyone has an open invitation to meet with the Holy One according to Divine protocols of approach¹² - *raises the stakes of consecration significantly*. In this new, higher dimension of holiness into which we now find ourselves transported we must develop a *greater fear* – the *fear of Heaven*. In this level of intimacy with the Holy One *the instructions of Torah are our only lifeline*, and that *we must not depart from them to the left or to the right*. In this realm *only a fool would try to impress either the Holy One or men with showy acts of piety*. We must instead acknowledge our dependence upon Him, let Him take the role of Bridegroom, and lead us, while we assume the submissive role of the Bride and follow Him. We *are not to go our own way and do what seems right or 'spiritual' in our own eyes*, but that instead *everything we do in this realm absolutely must be a sh'ma-response to the instructions of our Divine Bridegroom*.

We have seen that the very first action the Holy One called upon Aharon and his sons to take as they entered into the priesthood, before presuming to teach anyone anything or assist anyone in approaching and/or deepening relationship with the Holy One, was to make both a personal *korban chata't* – the approach of confession and receiving cleansing from the stain of sin - and a personal *korban olah* – the approach of total surrender. See **Leviticus 9:1-2, 7-14**. We then learned that once one makes these life-changing approaches to the Holy One's Presence, and thereby receives forgiveness of sin and the cleansing of all unrighteousness, he is *no longer free to do what seems right in his own eyes* – he must instead do *only what the Holy One says is to be done*. Nadav and Avihu provided us this sobering object lesson. The lesson of their deaths is that once the blood of Divine provision is applied to our sins we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price – the Holy One is now our God, and we are HIS. Everything we think, speak, and do now is to be about HIM, and according to HIS instruction and His timing. His Torah is now to be the source of our every thought, word, and action. We are no longer independent agents – we are now *ambassadors of the Great King*.

More recently we have learned that part of our mission on earth from this point forward will be to *discern between and keep separate on earth* four competing and perfectly balanced realms – the realms of the *kodesh* and the *chol* and the realms of the *tahor* and the *tamei*. The *kohanim* of the Holy One are called to clearly mark off and keep the realm of the *chol* contained, that it might not invade or pollute the realm of the *kodesh*, and are likewise and simultaneously to clearly mark off and

¹² See Exodus 29:42-44a.

keep the realm of the *tamei* contained in order that it may not invade or pollute the realm of the *tahor*. Our first and foremost mission is to *stand in the breach between these realms, let the lives we lead provide a buffer zone between them, and teach others to do the same. Leviticus 10:10.*

Next we learned that another essential element of our mission on earth from this point forward is going to be *to teach [Hebrew yarah, meaning to mark off a foundation upon which a structure can be built] the instructions for living the Holy One has given Moshe for the 'sons' of Yisrael/Ya'akov. Leviticus 10:11.* We are to live *exemplary* lives – lives that blaze a clear trail of holiness that others can follow. Clearly we have entered a deeper dimension of holiness than we have ever known.

Haftarah Sh'mini

II Samuel 6:1 – 7:17

The focus of this week's haftarah is on a traumatic event that occurred shortly after David became king over all Israel and established Jerusalem as his capital. As the curtain opens, Saul has been dead for right at eight years. For the first seven and a half of those years, David had been accepted only as the ruler for the tribe of Y'hudah, and Saul's son *Ish'boshet* reined over the other 11 tribes of Israel.

As the result of the blessing of the Holy One on David's campaigns against the Ph'lishtim however, upon the assassination of *Ish'boshet* by some of his own people, all twelve tribes of Israel decided to accept David as their king. Shortly thereafter David's armies took the city of Jerusalem from the *Yebusi* [Jebusites], and David had his palace built there on Mount *Tziyon*. David then decided to go and retrieve the *aron ha-kodesh* [i.e. the holy ark] – the last remnant from the *Mish'kan* built at Mount Sinai – and bring it to Jerusalem.

*David again gathered together all the chosen men of Yisra'el, thirty thousand.
David arose, and went with all the people who were with him,
from Ba'ale-Ye'udah, to bring up from there the ark of Elohim ...*

Please note that the Biblical account in II Samuel does not state David's motivation for wanting to bring the ark up to Jerusalem. The account is clear however that there was neither a 'God-directive' nor a prophetic instruction from the Holy One directing him to do so. The retrieval of the ark was all *David's idea*.

It started with great fanfare:

*They set the ark of Elohim on a new cart,
and brought it out of the house of Avinadav that was in the hill:
and Uzzah and Achyo, the sons of Avinadav, drove the new cart.*

*David and all the house of Yisra'el played unto the Holy One
with all manner of [instruments made of] fir-wood, and with harps,*

and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with castanets, and with cymbals.

But then *something* went horribly wrong.

*When they came to the threshing floor of Nakhon,
Uzzah put forth [his hand] to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled.
The anger of the Holy One was kindled against Uzzah;
and God struck him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*

The events which followed and which shape the narrative of this week's haftarah introduce into the Davidic kingdom the aspect of *holy awe* [Hebrew *yare* - the beginning of knowledge] – which will make up a major theme of our study of parsha *Sh'mini*.

Suggested B'rit Chadasha Readings For the Week of Sh'mini

Acts 4:32 - 5:1-11

Our readings from the Apostolic Scriptures this week will continue with the theme of 'shock and awe' that carries forth from our Torah and haftarah readings. At the center of our B'rit Chadasha discussions will be the deaths of *Ananias* and *Safira*.

The outpouring of the *Ruach HaQodesh* that occurred in Jerusalem on *Chag Ha-Shavuot* [the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost] in the year of Messiah's death truly changed the world. In Acts 4:32-37 we read that after the *Ruach* was poured out:

*The multitude of those who evidenced emunah were of one heart and soul.
Not one of them claimed that anything of the things that he possessed
was his own, but they had all things common.
With great power, the shalach'im [apostles] gave their testimony
of the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua.*

*Great grace was on them all.
For neither was there among them any who lacked*

Wow - what a truly wonderful and exciting time followed immediately after the outpouring of the *Ruach*! But even in that idyllic setting we soon found out that all that glittered in connection with this new movement was not necessarily gold.

*May the Holy One appear to us this day,
and send fire to cleanse our hearts and our land.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week of Parsha Sh'mini

Kadosh - The Prayer of His Holiness

Atah Kadosh v'shemecha kadosh

You are Holy - and Your Name is Holy

u'k'doshim b'chol yom y'hal'lecha selah

Seekers and holy ones join in the worship of You, this day and every day

Baruch Atah Adonai ha-El ha-kadosh

Blessed are You, O Holy One, for You are a holy God]