

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Metzora:*** **Leviticus 14:33-57**
 Haftarah: **II Kings 7:10-16**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 6:20-21**

He who owns the house is to go and speak to the Kohen.
[Leviticus 14:35b]

Today's Meditation is Iyov [Job] 3:1-13;
The Amidah prayer Focus for This Week is Petition No. 3, *S'lach* [Forgiveness]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe v'el-Aharon l'emor – And the Holy One spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying ... ***Ki tavo'u el-eretz Kena'an asher ani noten lachem la'achuzah*** – when you get to the land of Kena'an, which I am placing in your stewardship ... ***v'natati nega tzara'at b'veit eretz achuzatchem*** - I will put the mark of tzra'at upon the houses of the land you are given to steward. **Leviticus 14:33-34.**

Today's aliyah is about *houses* – you know, the dwellings in which we live, eat, raise families, have Torah studies, and show hospitality to friends and strangers. What kind of houses should the Redeemed of the Holy One live? What should they look like? What should go on in them? What kind of conversations, activities, interactions, priorities and atmospheres should characterize them?

On the other hand, what should the houses of the redeemed definitely NOT look like? What should definitely NOT go on in them? What kind of conversations, activities, interactions, priorities and atmospheres should most definitely NOT characterize them? It makes one think, doesn't it?

Getting an Inspired Vision for the House and the Home

Do you have a vision for what kind of home the Holy One wants you to have? Do you have an understanding as to what kind of attitudes, speech, behaviors, and material things, if you allow them in your life, your home, and your family activities and relationships, will hinder if not derail the Holy One's vision and your dream?

What kind of home environments do you think the Holy One envisions His Redeemed modeling to the world? What scents, sounds, and mood should be present in them? What decorating motifs do you think fit in with the Bridegroom-King's Plan – and which do not? What should go on in the houses of the

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Redeemed? What kinds and qualities of conversations, activities, interactions, priorities and atmospheres should characterize those dwellings? On the other hand, what should the houses of the redeemed definitely NOT look like? What should definitely NOT go on in them? What kind of conversations, activities, interactions, priorities and atmospheres should most definitely NOT characterize them? It makes one think, doesn't it?

It is time to get serious about – and take responsibility for – what we bring into, and what we say and do in, our houses. We cannot and should not try to control what others who live there – especially adults - bring into the house, speak into the atmosphere there, or do there, of course. But we most definitely can – and should - take responsibility for every thought, word, and action emanating from within us. Our tents and tabernacles should inspire pagans to sigh 'how lovely' – even when they are made of wood and stone. And out of our homes should flow love, mercy, kindness and forgiveness, all mingled with the beautiful sound of the praises and the wise counsel of our King.

*Is There a Fountain of Shalom, Simchah, Tikvah
And Good Will Toward Men Flowing In Your Home?*

We are a specially chosen people - a kingdom of priests and a Holy Nation unto Him. The places we eat, sleep, observe the Sabbath, take our wives, honor our parents, raise our families, and generally learn how to get along and work with each other and cultivate relationship with the Holy One should be little beachheads of Heaven on earth. So, I ask you - is there *shalom* in your home? Whatever your answer, have you considered why that might – or might not – be the case? Our houses are not just *places to toss our hat and 'let it all hang out'*. Neither are they to be *palaces to show off our wealth, or museums to show off our artistic flair, or moated castles that isolate and protect us from the world around us*. Our houses are **spiritual habitations** – places of *gladness, thanksgiving, prayer, bonding, blessing, worship, study and meditation*.

What Does the Torah Say About the Houses of the Redeemed?

Torah tells us several things about our houses. It started at the first *Pesach*, where the Holy One told us that **the blood of the Pesach Lamb was to be a sign for us on the houses in which we lived**. As part of our commemoration of *Pesach* He told us that we are, as the full moon approaches in the first month of the Biblical year, to remove all *se'or* [leaven] **and chametz** [leavened products] from our houses. We are then to meticulously keep them free of *se'or* and *chametz* for seven full days. **Exodus 12:13, 15, 19**. The calling of the Holy One upon our home-life then expanded greatly in Deuteronomy 6:7. There Moshe told us that **the primary thing we are supposed to do in our homes is speak about the mitzvot of the**

Holy One's Torah when we sit there. See also Deuteronomy 11:20. Then in Deuteronomy 6:9 Moshe instructed us to **inscribe the mitzvot of the Holy One's Torah on the doorposts of our houses – and on our gates as well.** In Deuteronomy 7 we were instructed that *we are not to bring any detestable thing into our house.* If we bring a detestable thing – anything the Holy One calls an abomination – into our houses we are assured that we will, like the detestable thing we brought in, thereby set ourselves and our households apart from the Holy One , and bring about our home's destruction. **Deuteronomy 7:26.**

The Psalmist picked up on these Torah truths and put them in language we could understand and put into practice. taught us that we are to *walk in our houses with blameless hearts, that while there we are to set no vile thing before our eyes.* He also taught us that we are to let no one dwell in our houses who practices deceit. **Psalm 101:2,3,7.** Indeed, the houses in which the people of the Holy One dwell are to be very, very *special places.* They are to be safe places. They are to be welcoming places. They are to be joyful places. They are to be exciting places. They are to be places of *celebration, of Torah teaching, of purity, of prayer, and of Messianic fervor.* So ... is *your house* that kind of place, Beloved? If not, why not?

Are You Ready for a 'Home Study'?

In some jurisdictions no child custody decision is made until a licensed professional counselor performs and reports to the court the results of what is called a 'home study'. This occurs when an appointed counselor visits the homes of the parents or potential custodians of children to evaluate how good or how toxic the environment is for the welfare and development of the children. So ... if the Holy One were to order a 'home study' of *your residence*, what would He find? How much shalom is there? How much joy? How much practical evidence of love? How much Messianic fervor? What does Sabbath look like there? What do the six 'work days' look like? How much Torah discussion – and practice – goes on in your house in an ordinary day? A week? A month? A year? How much prayer, praise and worship go on there on a week-by-week basis? Do you walk with a *'blameless heart'* in your house? Are there any *'detestable things'* allowed there? Go room by room. How about the entryway – what is there, and what message does it send? What is in the living room? The kitchen? The den? The Bedroom? The Bathroom? The Closet? The Garage? The music room? The library? The computer/game room?

What kind of entertainment fills the airwaves? What celebrations take place in your house? Is the atmosphere in the home alive with affirmation and encouragement - or is it rife with complaint, criticism, judgmentalism and

sarcasm? Are Kingdom-quality love, joy, and hope modeled there? How about Kingdom-quality kindness, longsuffering, meekness, goodness, and self-control?

What values are inscribed on the doorposts and the gates of the house in which you live? What is the focus of the conversations that echo through your house on a day-to-day basis? Is *truthfulness* –or *deceitfulness* – more prevalent?

Those are tough questions I know, dear ones. But they need to be asked - and re-asked, and asked again. Part of our purpose and destiny, you see, involves making our residences into houses of *shalom* – living, breathing Torah lifestyle centers. Unfortunately, sometimes our houses reflect anything but the kind of peace, joy, and focus that people in intimate relationship with, and in the process of becoming like, the Holy One should reflect. Sometimes, alas, our houses wind up having *spots* and *blemishes* – just like us. Hmmm - I wonder if there is a connection.

Houses With Spots and Blemishes

Eretz Yisrael - the wonderful bridal chamber the Divine Bridegroom has prepared from before the foundation of the world for His Betrothed Bride - is a marvelous place. Even there, however, the *houses will not always be perfect*. In fact, the Holy One makes it crystal clear to us long before we leave Sinai that even in the land of Promise the Holy One *is going to have to strike some of our houses with tzara'at*. For in His own Voice He tells us:

Ki tavo'u el-eretz Kena'an

When you come to the land of Canaan,

asher ani noten lachem l'achuzah

which I am giving to you as an inheritance,

v'natati nega tzara'at b'veyt eretz achuzatchem

I will place the mark of tzara'at in a house in the land you inherit.

[Leviticus 14:33-34]

When we get to the land of promise, take possession of it, and finally have standing houses to dwell in instead of tents, the Holy One warns us that He is actually going to give some of those houses *nega* [i.e. the mark] of *tzara'at*. *What meaneth this?* The verb the Holy One uses to describe the impartation of the *nega* of *tzara'at* is *natati* [or *I will appoint unto, entrust in stewardship, or 'give'*]. *Natati* is a form of the same verb the Holy One uses to describe His *entrustment* of the land of Kena'an to Avraham's seed forever. The Hebrew thus makes it clear – selected houses in the Holy Land won't just be '*infected*' with *mildew* because of excessive moisture - as houses sometimes are elsewhere in the world. Selected houses in the Holy Land will be purposely given *nega tzara'at* by the Holy One. What is even more amazing, it appears that the Holy One actually intends the Divine gift of *nega tzara'at* to selected houses in Eretz Yisrael to be *a part of His covenant blessing*

upon His people. Why? How can *nega tzara'at* be either a gift or a blessing?

Let the Rocks Cry Out!

The Holy One instructs us what is to happen when He gives a house in the Holy Land the mark of *nega tzara'at*. Keep in mind that the Torah is, as will be clear in a few verses, speaking of houses the walls of which are made of stone. The *nega tzara'at* always involves the stones that make up the house. When *nega tzara'at* is present therefore, it is *the rocks that cry out*. When this happens, Torah tells us:

Uva asher-lo ha-bayit v'higid l'kohen l'emor

The owner of the house is to come and tell the priest,

kenega nir'ah li b'bayit

'Something like a mark appeared to me in the house.'

[Leviticus 14:35]

The first thing that is to happen when the rocks of a house cry out is that a *kohen* is to be sought out and called to make an inspection.

V'tzivah ha-kohen ufinu et-ha-bayit beterem

The priest shall give orders that the house be emptied out

yavo ha-kohen lir'ot et-ha-nega

before [any] priest comes to see the mark,

v'lo yitma kol-asher b'bayit

so that everything in the house will not become tamei.

v'achar ken yavo ha-kohen lir'ot et-ha-bayit

Only then shall a priest come to see the house.

V'ra'ah et-ha-nega v'hineh ha-nega b'kirot ha-bayit

He is to examine the mark [to determine if] the mark on the wall of the house

shka'arurot yerakrakot o adamdamot

consists of penetrating streaks that are bright green or bright red,

umar'eyhen shafal min-ha-kir

which appear to be below [the surface of] the wall.

Penetrating streaks of *bright green* or *bright red* in the stone walls of a house mean something is badly wrong with the atmosphere in that home – and that something drastic needs to be done.

The House-Redeeming Process – Step One

If upon his inspection the *kohen* determines that the questionable blemish on the house consists of *streaks of bright green or bright red* and extend deeper than the surface of the wall, the *kohen* is to board up the house and it is to remain vacant for seven days. After the seven days have elapsed, the *kohen* is to return to the house and conduct another examination, to determine if the spot or blemish has grown.

The House-Redeeming Process – Step Two

If upon his second inspection the kohen determines the spot or blemish has grown during the 7-day quarantine period, the kohen is to order removal of all the stones upon which the green or red mark of *tzara'at* is visible. These stones are to be disposed of outside the city, in a place reserved for tamei things.

After all stones which the *kohen* deems to contain *nega tzara'at* are removed, the *kohen* is to cause the walls on the inside of the house to be scraped and scrubbed. All the dust and residue scraped from the house is to be collected and taken to a place outside the community and disposed of in a *tamei* place.

The House-Redeeming Process – Step Three

After the house is cleansed of that which polluted the atmosphere and called the stones to cry out, the stones that have been removed are to be replaced with new stones, and mortared and plastered in place. From this point, the ultimate fate of a house which has borne the mark of *nega tzara'at* in its stones hangs in the balance. There will, you see, be a THIRD INSPECTION.

If after the affected stones are replaced signs of *nega tzara'at* do not re-appear in the house, the *kohen* will pronounce the house *tahor*. He will then conduct on the site of the house a ceremony much like the one performed when a *metzora* is healed. Again, two live birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop will be utilized. The *kohen* is to *kill* one of the birds over an earthen vessel. He is then to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet, and the living bird, dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. Then he is to let the living bird loose outside the city in an open field, and the house, will be considered *t'hor* from thence forward.

But if after the stones affected by *nega tzara'at* are replaced, signs of *nega tzara'at* break out again, that house must be torn down - stones, timbers, and plaster, and all - and the debris must be carried outside the city and disposed of. Great will be the fall of that house. But if that be the case, that is the result of choices made by man. If that be the case, men refused the precious gift of *bayit shalom* [peace and wholeness of the home] which is freely offered by the Holy One to all.

The Holy One's will is always to redeem. Hence He delights to end His discussion of the atmosphere and testimony of our houses with these encouraging words:

Vechiper al-ha-bayit

... he will make atonement for the house,

vetaher

and it will be tahor – i.e. clean, whole, pure, worthy.

[Leviticus 14:53(b)]

What do you think the Holy One is calling you do, dear ones –or quit doing – in order to make your house a ‘house of the holy’ – i.e. a place of shalom, and a refuge for the broken and hurting?

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Questions For Today’s Study

1. Today’s aliyah represents the first time in the *Kedusha Discourse* – or for that matter the first time in the entire Book of Leviticus – that the Holy One has made any mention of the Land of the Patriarchs.

[A] What were *i. the setting* and *ii. the specific nature* of the last two promises that the Holy One had made concerning the land of the Patriarchs? [See Exodus 6:3-8 and Exodus 33:1-3(a)]

[B] What kind of attitudes, speech, and behavior patterns do you think would have to exist in a home in the Land of the Patriarchs before the Holy One would deem it necessary to strike the house with *nega tzara’at*?

[C] What purpose[s] do you think shutting a house where the stones show evidence of *tzara’at* up for seven days [see Leviticus 14:38-39] might be designed to accomplish?

[D] What was the priest was told by the Holy One to look for when he came back to inspect the house a second time after a house had been shut up for seven days?

2. The haftarah reading corresponding to today’s aliyah of Torah is II Kings 7:10-16. This reading picks up and continues the story of the four *metzorim* who went out to surrender to the Syrian armies that were beseiging the Israeli city of Samaria. This part of the story takes place after the *metzorim* find the Syrian armies have fled in panic, and left behind a wealth of food and supplies. Initially the *metzorim* selfishly took whatever they wanted. Soon however, as they completed the miracle the Holy One had wrought on behalf of His Covenant People, they had a change of heart, mind, and focus. They decided to go back to the beseiged city and tell the good news of what the Holy One had done. Here is how the narrative describes the events which happened next:

.. and they [the metzorim] went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, “We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one was there, not a human sound—

only horses and donkeys tied, and the tents intact.”

And the gatekeepers called out, and they told it to the king’s household inside.

So the king arose in the night and said to his servants,

“Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us.

They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp

to hide themselves in the field, saying, ‘When they come out of the city,

we will catch them alive, and get into the city.’ ”

And one of his servants answered and said,

“Please, let several men take five of the remaining horses which are left in the city.

Look, they may either become like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it;

or indeed, I say, they may become like all the multitude of Israel

left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see.”

Therefore they took two chariots with horses;

and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, “Go and see.”

And they went after them to the Jordan;

and indeed all the road was full of garments and weapons

which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste.

So the messengers returned and told the king.

Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians.

So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel,

and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Holy One.

[A] Which of the persons who were quoted in the verses above spoke *lashon ha ra* [negative speech]?

[B] Why did the price of fine flour and barley go down so much after the Syrians were found to have fled?

3. The reading from the apostles of Y’shua which I have suggested to correspond to today’s aliyah of Torah comes from Romans 6:20-21. In these verses Shaul of Tarsus reminds those in Rome:

When you were slaves of sin you were free in regard to righteousness.

What fruit did you have then

in the things of which you are now ashamed?

For the end of those things is death.

[A] In what ways have you personally seen or heard of human beings – perhaps yourself included, or someone in your family or peer group – be *in bondage to* and/or a slave of sin?

[B] Being a slave of something means that your will is subjugated and your life and dreams put on hold in order that the will, goals, and designs of that to which you are enslaved can be done. What is the ‘will’ of sin? What is the ‘goal’ of sin? What is the design of sin upon a person’s life? And how does surrendering to sin affect a person’s ability to choose what they will do, become, and accomplish?

[C] What do you think Shaul means when he says that someone who is a slave to sin is ‘free’ in regard to righteousness? In other words, what does that kind of freedom look like in real time?

[C] Think of five specific ‘sins’. What is the natural ‘fruit’ one can expect to reap from each one of those five various kinds of sin? Each sin is correctly said to end in ‘death’, but each offers a slightly different way of getting there.

May your house –and mine – be inspected and declared tahor!

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Iyov [Job] 3:16-19

***Or why was I not hidden like a stillborn child,
like infants who never saw light?
There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
There the prisoners rest together;
they do not hear the voice of the oppressor.
The small and great are there,
and the servant is free from his master.***