

way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Remember also David's secret of success as stated in Psalm 23:5: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me – Your rod and Your staff comfort me.*

In each individual case, however, the way the Holy One has provided through the *danger zone* in question initially tends to look like an almost impossibly *narrow way*, with the only path of access being a potentially very uncomfortable *strait gate of self-denial*. The Holy One's 'way through' always requires from us intentionality, understanding, humility, meekness, communication, cooperation, patience, focus, dedication, discipline to follow Divine Guidance and Direction, and perseverance to follow the way of that Divine Guidance and Direction, no matter what the cost or obstacle - until either we die or the breakthrough comes. Though the '*way through*' that is offered by the Holy One has been paved and cleared for us, and though He promises to lead us in it every step of the way, it is understood that we will always have other options – options that, to our natural eyes may look better or at least less challenging. We have to choose who we trust – and what we want. He will not force either deliverance or blessing upon us; but He wants us to know and understand the options – and the ramifications that will flow if we make counterproductive choices.

The Holy One is Awakening Us to Life's Greatest 'Wholeness-in-Danger' Zones

The Holy One designed human beings for *sh'lemut* – *i.e.* wholeness³, completeness, calmness, practical wisdom, and ever-increasing fruitfulness. Alas, because of four factors we all start at a place of significantly 'less-than-wholeness'. These four factors are:

[1] the ingestion of the soul-corrupting fruit of the tree of the knowledge of 'good' and 'evil',

³ As used in these studies *sh'lemut* means the state of being the Holy One originally designed for man [Genesis 1:26 [functioning as the Holy One's shadow creature on earth; being fruitful, constantly expanding in influence, and bringing fruitfulness and harmonious interaction to all the rest of Created order]. *Sh'lemut* – the state of Adam before the Fall – thus is an uninterrupted state of *peacefulness, fruitfulness, and purpose fulfillment* that flows from the undistracted harmonization of a person's will with the will of the Holy One, of the thoughts of a person's mind with the thoughts of the Holy One; of the emotions of a person with the Holy One's passions, personality characteristics, and long-term perspective; of a person's bodily organs, tissues, structural components, and systems with the original design of the Holy One; of a person's spirit with the neshamah; of a person's relationships with the redemptive purpose and restorative plan of the Holy One. In other words, it is a state of being that comes from constant, intimate communion with the Holy One – in Hebrew, *devakut* – which renders a person *without restriction, limitation, fault, corruption by outside influence, or disqualification and enables him/her to overcome the yetzer ha-ra, the destructive urges of the flesh, the false wisdom of one's own and others' pseudo-intellect, and every kind of distraction and corruption one encounters in the age and culture in which one lives.*

[2] the sabotage wrought in our lives by our lifelong nemesis the *yetzer ha-ra*⁴,

[3] toxicity absorbed through our bloodline, tribe, culture, and childhood experiences, and

[4] the residual effect of our own mis-steps and failures.

Because of these four factors, we all have a long way to go to ‘build back up’ to the glorious state of fruitful well-being in which the Holy One designed us to abide. Restoring, and then reseeded, *sh’lemut*/wholeness is, therefore, one of the primary goals of every person’s Covenant walk. It is, indeed, one of the main reasons each human being is given the breath of life. The Holy One wants for each of us to not only achieve a point of relative wholeness ourselves - through walking, communing, and co-laboring with Him on the Torah Pathway; He also wants to enable us to inspire, encourage, bless, and empower others in their journey toward *sh’lemut*/wholeness in the process.

Alas, the road to *sh’lemut*/wholeness is an uphill climb. Along the way, each of us confronts a daunting obstacle course of serpent-traps, brother-scorn pits, identity issues, vision-through-a-glass-darkly disorientation, and interpersonal relationship challenges - not to mention fleshly distractions and pseudo-intellectual detours – that must be navigated along the way. Ah, but the journey is well worth the trouble! So, as we embark, just remember Solomon’s keystone of wisdom: ***Trust in*** [*i.e. put all your confidence in and follow the counsel and leadership of*] ***the Holy One with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways ‘acknowledge’ Him*** [*intimately commune, converse, follow in the steps of, and cooperate with*], **and he will make straight your paths.** Proverbs 3:5-6.

The Four Basic Danger Zones of the Current Age

Any thing, any person or group, any idea, or any situation, occurrence, or circumstance in this world that causes one’s ‘*spiritual blood pressure*’ to spike – and any stimulus that causes one to ‘*spiritually hyperventilate*’ - constitutes what I call a *DZI* – *i.e. a Danger Zone Indicator*. The problem is never the stimulus or its source; the problem is always our reaction to it. It is only our *distraction/knee-jerk over-reaction response* to a stimulus that makes it enough of a threat to our identity, our mission, our destiny, to derail our Divinely Guided journey toward *sh’lemut*/wholeness. Remember and meditate on these words from the Psalmist: ***Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear; and though war may rise against me, even in this I will be confident.*** Psalm 27:3. And remember

⁴ The Hebrew term ‘*yetzer ha-ra*’ is often translated into English as ‘evil inclination’. It really just refers to our fleshly ‘nature’, or inclination toward the serpentine, the sensual, the sensational, the scintillating, the sexual, the sentimental, and the sinister pull/draw of this world’s ‘dark energy’.

and meditate as well on these words of Shaul of Tarsus: *I have learned in whatever state I am in, therein to be content.* Philippians 4:11.

That said – and hopefully *understood* - here is a list, followed by a brief discussion, of the four basic danger zones of this age:

1. Distractions that flow from the operation of our un-surrendered and thus unsanctified post-Fall human urges, appetites, drives, and desires;
2. Distractions that flow from the operation of our vast, horribly-polluted reservoir of toxic *pseudo-intellect*;
3. Distractions that flow from the operation of un-surrendered, unsanctified emotions;
4. Distractions that flow from life experiences, crises, and/or challenges which catch us off guard.

Let's consider these 'danger zones' one by one.

Understanding TBW – The Beast Within

i.e. Distractions Birtthed of Fleshly Appetites, Drives and Urges

Every human being has certain proclivities that create danger zones. First of all, each of us has an animalistic side that I call *the beast within*. This cantankerous fellow has some pretty powerful fleshly appetites, urges, drives – primal instincts. He is narcissistic – *i.e.* toxically selfish and self-absorbed. He sees what his brain suggest might serve as food, starts to salivate, and rushes to wolf it down. A thousand danger zones surround this narcissistic tendency. He will probably not handle it well – will have a hormone hurricane - if you ever get between him and what he perceives as either his self-worth or his self-interest. You and he will enter a danger zone together if you ever get between him and his food – or even his idea of what 'food' is or should be; or if you get between him and either his 'shelter/castle', his 'playthings/toys', or any of his material possessions - or anything he aspires to have for his own. And of course, you enter into a danger zone if you dare, even unintentionally, get between him and his present or potential romantic or sexual interest – or even his idea of who a potential romantic or sexual interest might be. He sees something – or someone – that he considers pretty, or exotic, or that he knows is valued by someone else, and he desires it. He claims and marks territory. He is possessive, demanding, controlling.

Anything that agitates, enrages, worries, frustrates, or stimulates him – *i.e.* causes his the spiritual blood pressure to rise – gets him off course, off task, off schedule, and off assignment.

Understanding TFW - The Fool Within –

i.e. Distractions Birthed of our Vast Reservoir of Pseudo-Intellect

The ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ has horribly corrupted the natural human mind. Now, even though we can theoretically see ‘good’ as the Holy One does, unlike Him we choose to pay no attention to the ‘good’ He sees. Instead, we focus on whatever aspect of what we are looking at we can assign, in the moment, and in the throes of our mortal myopia, as being ‘evil’. Oy veh – we are eaten up with it! All we have to do is let our eyes light on a single ‘spot’, ‘wrinkle’, ‘blemish’ – much less a character flaw or a ‘sin’ – and . . . well, we just can’t un-see it. We can’t get it out of our head. We fixate. We obsess. We go O.C.D. all over it – and the person in whom we see it. We criticize. We gossip. We fume. We pontificate. We judge. And so, in our mind if not in our behavior, we ‘lock on’ - like the crew of a Top Gun Fighter Jet. We fire our mass arsenal of self-righteous judgmentalism – and Heaven have mercy on the poor, creepy, crawly, caterpillar-people in our sights, that will, because of us, at least partially because of us, now probably never become the monarch butterfly-people the Holy One created them to be.

What is our pseudo-intellect? It is our *pseudo-intellect* is our self-proclaimed reality and *frame of reference*. It consists of all our opinions, all our favorite clichés, all our memorized creeds, our entire matrix of religious doctrines, all our pet philosophies, all the political theories and bullet-points to which we subscribe, all our ideological positions – anything and everything that stimulates our mind to think it knows – in the ‘knowledge of good and evil, occult knowledge sense – anything. Pseudo-intelligence includes whatever we like to *label ourselves as* – whether it be pro anything or con anything. It includes any and every group, position, institution, or movement we support. The pseudo-intellectual TFW [the Fool Within] danger zone extends to any and every area of human experience relative to which mere conversations and interactions can trigger us to feel strong emotions – which, after all, is pretty much always unequivocal evidence of the existence of a dangerous, acutely active dark energy stronghold in our life. Every time our pseudo-intellectual distract discussions and disputations cause our fight/flight instinct to kick in, or generate strong emotions in us, we enter a pseudo-intellectual danger zone – and unfortunately, we drag everyone around us into one with us.

The pseudo-intellect is every vain imagination or belief that we develop from the serpentine urge to know things/learn things about stuff other than the things the Holy One has assigned to us, and made part of our Covenantal course curriculum.

The pseudo-intellect is so deceptive because, since the Fall, we human beings

really like to have our ears and minds tickled by ‘information’ – the more useless the better! Our pseudo-intellect likes to draw fine lines, to split hairs, and to strain at gnats . . . even while swallowing camels! Information about ideas, especially about human-designed abstract concepts like ‘morality’, ‘justice’, ‘fairness’, and ‘perversion’ feeds our ego, our sense of relevance, and our sense of relative superiority. But does any of this advance the King’s agenda? Is it even real? Is it important? Is it why we are here? Is it relevant to a Covenant assignment? Or is it just jousting at windmills – a lot of sound and fury, signifying nothing?

Ah, Beloved, the good news is that you don’t have to be triggered – or cause anyone else to be. You can access the King’s Presence, and use the tools –i.e. meditation on the Torah portion of the week and/or the Psalms, prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and humble service of others. There is never any need – much less excuse – for ranting, shouting profanities, hurling insults or accusations, indulging feelings of hate or fantasies of malice; getting bitter or being angry. All of these things are just distractions. They are tools of the adversary designed to get you off mission, to cause you to lose your SHALOM, your JOY, your PATIENCE, your HOPE, your GENTLENESS, your MEEKNESS and HUMILITY, your FAITHFULNESS to the Holy One and your assigned mission, and your SELF-CONTROL.

Introducing ETWW - The Emotional Train Wreck Within

i.e. Distractions Birthed of Un-surrendered, Unsanctified Fleshly Emotions

The third danger zone for human beings in the post-Fall era is in the realm of out-of-control emotions. We are given the capacity for emotion as a processing toolkit – to help us make choices and decide what actions are most likely to be productive, and to empower us for empathy. They were not given to us to indulge, coddle, or worship. Emotions at high levels bring out the beast within – the ‘dog’ and ‘swine’ of Yeshua’s teaching in Matthew 7. With the Fall, however, old *ETWW* – *i.e. the Emotional Train Wreck Within* - became part of the common experience of humanity. We now tend, if and to the extent we live and walk *in the flesh*, to value our emotions for themselves – and for the euphoric ‘high’ or occult ‘low’ they offer - rather than understanding and relating to them as the ‘*warning lights*’ telling us to ‘*check engine, and perform scheduled maintenance soon*’ that the Holy One designed them to be.

It really does not matter if an emotion is ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ – if it is allowed to operate unchecked/ungoverned by wisdom from Heaven [*i.e. wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy*⁵] it will inevitably lead us into a spiritual danger zone. Let’s talk first about enjoyable and/or seemingly laudable emotions – things

⁵ See James 3:17.

like sentimentality/nostalgia, delight, pity, compassion, maternal and paternal instincts, etc. These seem harmless. But nostalgia and sentimentality can numb us to both what is going on in the ‘now’ and is coming down the pike. Things and people in this world in which we delight – children, spouses, romantic interests, education, political, religious or ideological leaders, teachings, and/or movements, causes, sports, music, art, literature, entertainment, food, fashion for interest – can dilute our passion for and delight in the Eternal God. Pity and compassion can blind us to the ‘big picture’, and what the Holy One is trying to accomplish. Maternal and paternal instincts can cause us to micromanage, manipulate, mollycoddle, and enable the bad behavior of our children, rather than train and equip them.

And what, then, of the clearly negative and counterproductive emotions like anger, fear, intimidation, jealousy, rage, offense, woundedness, guilt, shame, self-pity, worry, anxiety, etc.? If a person or situation stimulates/triggers high levels of these emotions, you have not only a danger zone but a full-bore crisis to manage.

What can be done? These danger zones can be navigated. The dangers can be overcome. But it does not ‘just happen’. We must allow the Presence of God, the empowering breath of the Holy Spirit, and the Words of God that are alive in us to keep us moving forward. We must view emotions as warning signs from Heaven to be heeded, not rewards to be sought, ‘natural’ things to be indulged, or nirvana-transmitters to be worshipped. Our job, as we pass through the mine-field of emotions, is to stay task oriented, mission-focused, assignment engaged, and moving forward on schedule toward *sh’lemut* wholeness.

Introducing SOL - The Storms of Life We Experience in this Age

i.e. Distractions Birthed of Life Experience

Even if we get control of all the urges and appetites of our flesh, keep our pseudo-intellect in check, and learn to use emotions for the purposes our Creator intended, life can still surprise us into a danger zone. Trauma, betrayal, failure, interpersonal drama, storms, ‘natural’ disasters, catastrophic events, and external attacks can put us in crisis mode and bring out the worst in us. Such experiences can kick in our most intense levels of adrenalin - and with that chemical tends to come our most reckless, un-surrendered, ‘*fight, flight, and we-may-just have-tonight!*’ approaches to the situations we encounter. Even life experiences we think of as positive – like moments or seasons of intense pleasure, can lull us to sleep. Times of idleness/leisure can take the edge right off of our passion. Personal triumphs can make us drunk with pride. These ‘positive’ life experiences will, if we are not careful, lull us into a dangerous state of complacency – if not to sleep - and make us irritable and defensive in approach to life. ‘*Don’t disturb the bear!*’, or ‘*Let sleeping dogs lie*’, the message on our T-shirt should read.

Doctor – MY EYES!!!!

The Holy One knows – and wants us to understand - the toxicity-generating extent to which our curiosity inclines toward the ‘evil’ side of the *knowledge of the ‘good and evil’ continuum*. He knows that *the visual senses are the quickest and most effective portals into the mind of man* – for ‘good’... or for ‘evil’. David got a hint of this early in life, and declared: ***I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set nothing wicked before my eyes!*** Psalm 101:2b-3a. Shaul of Tarsus expounded upon that wise approach, counseling us to: ***Be anxious for/about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the shalom of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds through Messiah Yeshua. And whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of a good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be anything praiseworthy, think/meditate on these things.*** Philippians 4:6-8. *Selah!* If more human beings would only follow this counsel! But even David, who wrote the psalm quoted above did not always follow his own counsel. His let what he saw with his eyes lead him astray - remember? He fixed his eyes on the nakedness of *Bat-Sheva* as she was bathing on her rooftop? You see, there is another counsel at work in the world – the counsel of the ungodly! And as it did in the Garden, the counsel of the ungodly always plays powerfully to – and does its most effective damage through - the eyes. ***Chava ‘saw’ that the tree was ... everything the Holy One had said it wasn’t.*** Genesis 3:6.

Be Careful Little Eyes What You See!

The Holy One knows that every single time a fallen human being focuses his or her attention on what he/she perceive as ‘evil’, rather than staying focused upon what He says is ‘good’, that person’s soul short-circuits and starts to melt down. He knows that even though *Divinely created beauty and potential*, on the one hand, and *human-created folly and/or perversion*, on the other hand, are always both before us simultaneously - and for that matter, present in the same people and situations - what our natural eyes are now always drawn to, and what our fleshly thoughts now always tend to focus upon, is the human-created folly and/or perversion side of the scenario. Due to our ingestion of the fruit of the tree of ‘knowledge’, ‘evil’ now sticks out like a sore thumb. It screams ***‘Focus on me! Focus on me!’***. Once we see what we think of as ‘evil’, it consumes us. ***We just can’t quit looking at it.*** We can’t stop fuming about it. We can’t stop railing at it. Shalom, GONE! Joy, FORGOTTEN! Patience, ABANDONED BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD LIKE AN EMPTY BOTTLE! Love, CANCELLED FOR THE SEASON IN FAVOR OF THE ADRENALIN RUSH OF OFFENSE AND OUTRAGE! We quickly become so obsessed with the dark energy of the human-

generated folly and/or perversion before our eyes that we do not even notice that, side-by-side with that folly/perversion, there is a vast reservoir of Divinely created beauty and potential for redemption waiting for us to access and activate. Because we focus on the ‘evil’, not the ‘good’, however, we feel intimidated. And so, we get offended. And so, we get disgusted. And so, we get outraged instead of inspired. And so, we complain instead of give thanks. And so, we rant instead of restore. And so, we condemn instead of counsel. And so, we get snippy and cynical instead of gentle and kind. And so, we fill the air around us with curses instead of blessings.

Brethren, these things ought not be so! Alas for such a state! But that, Beloved, is exactly what the poison juices of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ does to human beings every day. Those juices make us – and our fellow humans - neurotically obsessive-compulsive about/over ‘evil’. This does many things to distract us from our mission, but one of the worst things it does is to limit our capacity of vision to seeing only a fraction of what is really before our eyes. Remember when the serpent told us we would be able to see both ‘good’ and ‘evil – and we bought it hook, line, and sinker? Well, *surprise - he told a half-truth*. That’s what he does, you know! So now, even though there might be a vast universe of ‘good’ right in front of us, what our eyes and freewheeling pseudo-intellect⁶ are drawn to are the specks of what we perceive, or even suspect, might be ‘evil’ in the midst of the ocean of ‘good’.

This is now the human dilemma – constantly being shown ‘good’, but being perversely fixated on ‘evil’. This is why we set aside patience and mercy and start to judge. This is why we set aside shalom and embrace outrage. This is why we set aside thanksgiving and blessing and start to complain. This is why we set aside meditation on the Torah and fly off into a rant. This is why we go AWOL from our assigned role in this age as *shalom-asah-ers* [i.e. ‘peace makers’], and start to argue, fuss, and fight. This is why we do not play well with others. This is why we cannot get along. This is why we get separated from our Creator and Loving Mentor – Who always sees ‘good’ – or at least the potential for ‘good’ - in everything. See Genesis 1:4,10, 12, 18, 21, and 25; see also Romans 8:28: *God works all things together for ‘good’ for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.*’

But What is ‘Nakedness’ – and Why Does The Holy One Warn us Against Looking Upon It?

⁶ The *pseudo-intellect* is easily recognized as that part of our fallen minds and reasoning that is affected by the kind of ‘wisdom’ that is *earthly, sensual, devilish, and results in bitter envying and self-seeking*, rather than the kind of true, Divine wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruit, and which results in good conduct, and mitzvot performed in humility and meekness. See James 3:13-18.

Note the operative verbs the Holy One uses in introducing the latest revelation stream relative to what the holiness that leads to wholeness consists of. The first verb He uses is to *approach/draw near* [Hebrew *karav*]. The strategy of maintaining kedusha [holiness] begins *being where we are supposed to be* – and knowing, and doing all we can to avoid, being where we are not supposed to be. The second verb the Holy One uses in this context is *uncover/expose/lay bare* [Hebrew *galah*]. The reason we are careful to be where we are supposed to be [at our post and work station], and avoid getting into places/situations to which we are not assigned, is because of what we might see – and therefore think, say, and do – when in those unauthorized locations. What might we see – and how might that distract us, or lead us astray? Well, we might see ‘nakedness’. And, as stated previously in this study, ever since the Garden, that has been a big, big problem for men. Let’s discuss why that might be.

The Hebrew word that our English Bibles translate as ‘nakedness’ is *ervah* – *ayin, resh, vav, hey*. It is derived from the verb root *arah - ayin, resh, hey*. This verb literally means *to make bare* by plucking hair, feathers, or garments. The idea is to unmask or expose something that was hidden, and to thereby render the object vulnerable, susceptible, weak, and thereby subject him/her to embarrassment, indignity, abuse, dishonor, humiliation, ridicule, scorn, and/or shame. Consider, in this regard, the first usage of *ervah* in Torah – i.e. Genesis 9:11-12. Noach had just completed his first harvest of grapes after the Flood. He drank some of the wine – indeed, far too much as it turned out. He passed out in his tent – and he was *ervah*. His son Cham came into the tent and subjected him to indignity, abuse, dishonor, humiliation, ridicule, scorn, and shame. This is the exact kind of ‘toxic exposure’ the Holy One is talking about in today’s aliyah. We are never to do anyone – or even put ourselves in a position where we could do to anyone – what Cham did to his father Noach.

In today’s aliyah the Holy One tells the men of the Covenant not to draw close to any of the following in such a way that we could ‘uncover’ his or her *ervah*:

1. anyone ‘close of flesh’ [KJV, near of kin];
2. one’s own father [cf. Cham; Lot’s daughters];
3. one’s mother;
4. a granddaughter;
5. a full or half sister;
6. an aunt;
7. an uncle [or an uncle’s wife];
8. a daughter-in-law;
9. a sister-in-law;

10. a woman and her daughter, daughter-in-law, or granddaughter;
11. a woman and her sister [cf. Ya'akov, Rachel and Leah];
12. a *niddah* [i.e. a menstruating woman];
13. another man's wife;
14. a man; or
15. an animal.

Why does the Holy One focus His ***'Warning! You Have Entered a 'Wholeness-in-Danger' Zone!'*** admonitions on these 'classifications' of people? Probably because these are the kinds of people and creatures we see and interact with most frequently. They are people and creatures we know better than anyone else – and who we are therefore in the best position to be a *blessing* and *inspiration* to. The people involved are the relatives and/or neighbors we laugh and joke with. They are the ones who let down their guard – and perhaps even let down their hair, kick off their shoes, and laugh and play - around us. They are the ones who are present and smiling beautifully at family and/or community events and gatherings – at precisely the times and situations when *our minds and hands are idle* and we are most susceptible to the screaming fleshly appetites of – you guessed it: old TBW – *i.e. the beast within*.

Be careful, indeed, little eyes, what you see! And always remember - how a person of the Covenant allows himself/herself to think about, talk to, act around, interact with, and treat the people nearest to him or her – whether that nearness is a matter of consanguinity or physical proximity – is the litmus test of whether that person is or is not 'on task', 'on assignment', and 'on schedule' enough to serve the Holy One

We Are Called to Be the World's Most Responsible Respecters of Modesty and Privacy

Today's aliyah is all about our eyesight management - i.e. keeping a close guard on what we are in a position to look at, focus on, and see – and what we choose to avoid looking at and/or direct our eyes away from. Our Creator/Mentor is going to make some very specific prophetic and creative announcements regarding the limits we need to place on our curiosity to 'look on nakedness', and thereafter to exercise the urge/appetite to express our romanticism, passion, and sexuality. The ***lo tikreivu l'galot ervah*** instructions of Leviticus 18 are not just – or even primarily - a warning against physical acts of interfamily incest or sexual assault. That is one intended result, of course. But the focus of the Holy One's instructions will be upon *eye-choices*. His instructions constitute pure revelation from the Wisest Being on the planet about 1. *how and with what motive we are to approach the other human beings He brings into or allows in our sphere of influence* and 2. *what aspects of those people we are to take care never to allow our gaze to either look for, think*

about, or focus upon.

The Holy One wants to impress upon us the critical importance for representatives of His Kingdom to be extremely respectful of both the privacy and the *ervah* – i.e. exposed, vulnerable, shame-inducing ‘nakedness’ - of others. This does not only relate to their genitalia; it applies to any part of them – or their behavior - that might bring them ‘shame’ if publicly exposed. Think of Adam and Chava after the fall, and about everything about both their physical bodies and their behavior that they tried to cover after they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. They did not just cover their genitalia with fig leaves. Using the ‘cover’ of the trees of the Garden, they sought to hide every aspect of themselves, their dalliance with the Serpent, and their ingestion of the fruit - from the Holy One. Now you understand what ‘nakedness’ means Biblically – and why we are never to uncover it.

We are not to expose anyone’s flesh, their idleness, their drunkenness, or their ‘sin’ [breaches of Covenant]. Nor are we to pry into or invade any one’s privacy. We are to do our best to not even let our eyes light upon either another’s nakedness or his or her perverse behaviors - no matter how the opportunity or information presents itself. If we are where we are supposed to be – at our assigned post, doing what we are called to do – we will not even see, much less be distracted by such things.

We are not to indulge in voyeurism – or judgmentalism - at any level. When we approach people we are to announce ourselves, lest we see them uncovered - as Cham [Ham] saw Noach. We are to be very, very careful not to think about, uncover, look upon, or make sport of any aspect of any family or clan member’s naked bodies – or for that matter any private or embarrassing fact about them. We are to aggressively look away, and put it out of our mind, if any of such thing is exposed. Why? What is the big deal? Isn’t nakedness ‘natural’? Isn’t the human body beautiful? Oh, Beloved – the Holy One knows a little something about both the human form and the human libido. Let’s try for a few minutes to look at both through *His eyes!* The Holy One created us with organs of gender and with urges and appetites and drives corresponding to those organs. He knows what we were made for – and He knows what will derail us from wholeness, wellness, joy, fruitfulness, and shalom. He intentionally made us with both the *capability* and the *subconscious drive* to reproduce after our own kind. He created us to do this through the exercise, according to proper protocol which He taught to Adam and Chava [Genesis 2:23-25], of the physical and emotional masculinity and femininity He graciously bestowed upon us. He wants the sexuality with which He created us to be a blessing to us – and the world. The adversary of our souls wants it to be a curse – and is very good and making that happen.

If we are to serve as the Holy One's Ambassadors to this world – and not as secret subversive agents of our adversary - we therefore must learn to harness and surrender to the Holy One all our bodily appetites and urges. We are betrothed to Him. We are called – and enabled by His Empowering Breath – to love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls [i.e. with all the operations of our minds, our wills, and our emotions], and with all our strength. We should be so totally occupied with loving and enjoying Him, and co-laboring with Him in His Divine Plan of Redemption for the World, that we have neither need nor desire to seek any level of pleasure, satisfaction, or excitement in or from any other source but Him. We do not live to indulge, explore, and seek to satisfy our fleshly appetites. We live to take delight in Him, and to let Him take delight in us. We live for Him. We are given the breath of life on earth at such a time as this not in order to do our will but to do HIS Will. He does not disappoint. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is available to us through communing with Him, learning from Him, and walking alongside Him every waking hour of every day. This is, indeed, the kind of abundant, fruitfulness He created us for. He programmed us so that there is absolutely nothing more pleasurable in the world than His Intimate Companionship⁷.

Of course, the Holy One also created us with organs of gender, and with urges and appetites and drives corresponding to those organs. He intentionally made us with both the *capability* and the *subconscious drive* to reproduce after our own kind. He created us to do this through the exercise, according to proper protocol which He taught to Adam and Chava [Genesis 2:23-25], of the physical and emotional masculinity and femininity He graciously bestowed upon us. He wants the sexuality with which He created us to be a blessing to us – and the world. The adversary of our souls wants it to be a curse – and is very good and making that happen.

In its proper place a fire is a wonderful thing; but if the fire escapes the proper place and gets in your living room floor, or into your curtains or walls, that wonderful thing can turn into a disaster. Human romance and sexuality are a lot like fire. And the holy fire of human romance and sexuality has only one proper place – well grounded in the covenant bond entered into between one man and one woman. Indulging any physical/sexual curiosity outside the bounds of a God-ordained marriage relationship is like lighting a fire in your living room floor or on your curtains or walls. It will quickly turn what the Holy One designed to be a

⁷ Moreover, when the Messiah came into our lives our flesh, with all its desires and urges contrary to the Will of our God were placed on the execution stake with Him and died. We no longer live, but the Messiah lives in us. And the life we live – and the urges we are to cultivate – are HIS urges, not the urges of our 'old man'.

wonderful thing – i.e. partnership in His work of Creation – into an imploding disaster waiting to happen.

What's The Harm in 'Just Looking'?

But, some reply . . . what's the harm in 'just looking'? Sometimes they way they dress these days . . . you just can't help seeing things, can you? Well, let's talk about that. Since our 'soul' includes our *mind*, our *will*, and our *emotions*, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that what we allow ourselves to gaze upon will inevitably have an effect on our *what kind of thoughts we think*, on *what we want and/or desire*, and *what sensations and emotions we feel*.

Our calling from the Holy One is not only to refrain from acting out our fantasies – but is to so love and occupy ourselves with delighting in Him that we leave no room in our minds, wills, or emotions for the fantasy to even form, much less take root and grow to maturity. If we can keep our eyes focused upon what our Creator has instructed us they should be focused upon, we can keep our thoughts on Kingdom matters and advancement of the strategic Kingdom objectives of Tikkun and Redemption. [See **Psalm 1:3, Matthew 6:33, and Philipians 4:8**]. If we can keep our eyes from straying away from what He has lovingly ordained to be delightful and fulfilling to us, we can keep our physical and spiritual desires, appetites, and urges actively engaged in the Great Adventure of walking and communing with our Bridegroom-King, learning and doing His Will. **Matthew 6:10**.

The Holy One knows that *whatever we allow ourselves to look at curiously the adversary of our souls will eventually succeed in getting us to lust after sensually*. And He knows that does not ever turn out well – either for *us* or for *the people we care most about*. **Matthew 5:27-30; see also Genesis 3:4-6**. So, as Yeshua taught, the ***lo tinaf*** instruction⁸ does not refer only to physical acts of intimacy – it goes straight to the heart of what we allow ourselves to look at. See **Matthew 5:27-30**, wherein the Master expounded upon the inseparable relationship between the ***lo tinaf*** empowerment and the ***lo tachmod*** [do not covet/lust after] empowerment.

But what about our flesh's longing for *worldly romance*? What about what the world around us thinks of as *natural sexual curiosity*? Does He not know about these? Does He not care? Of course He does. He cares enough to inspire and empower us to *harness and curb the drive and energy, and apply the capacity, that He has given us so as to be able to 'be fruitful and multiply' in ways that will*

⁸ See **Exodus 20:14**. What we read in English translations of the Bible simply as 'do not commit adultery' is actually much broader, including not only what we know as adultery but also what we know as fornication or indeed any other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as described in Genesis 2:23-25.

establish a foundation for pure households and functional families - both of which will bring honor and glory to Him as the Creator of life.

Remember! We Are Called to Walk by Emunah

*[i.e. Enthusiastic Covenant faithfulness born out of the Empowering Presence and Activity of the Divine Seed we are carrying]; **Not By Sight!***

The Holy One knows that our eyes regularly see, and *zoom in* on, things from the ‘non-Covenant’ realms – especially things ‘unclean’ and ‘common/profane’⁹. He knows that these ‘eye insults’ from the *tamei* and *chol* realms are every bit as dangerous to our *nafshot* [souls/psyches – i.e. our minds, our wills, and our emotions] as the ingestion of the flesh of swine, flesh-eaters, blood-sucking insects, or bottom-feeding creatures from the seas is to our physical body. He knows that what we let our organs of vision focus upon tends to affect us in ways that we don’t even begin to understand. He knows that what we see can whip our fleshly urges and appetites into a feeding frenzy. He knows that what our eyes choose to light upon can stimulate fleshly sentiments and trigger negative emotions. He knows it can over-stimulate our folly-prone pseudo-intellect. It can make us afraid. It can get us angry. It can move us to disgust. It can seduce us into becoming judgmental, cynical – even depressed.

The Holy One knows that what we look at can, therefore, interrupt the constant communion with Him we desperately need and distract us from the glorious redemptive, restorative healing mission to which we are called. The Holy One knows that we desperately need Him to touch – and heal – and dramatically redirect the focus of – our eyes. He knows we need Him to breathe on the Divine Seed within us, and stir it back to life the way a breeze brings a smoldering ember back to flame. And so, the Holy One looks at us – sees the ‘good’ though men can see only the ‘evil’ – and smiles. He stretches forth a welcoming Hand. He breathes upon the Words of Torah that we already have inside us, bringing them to their energy to our minds. He causes fresh revelation to leap off the scroll as we read and study. He invites us to step into the revelation flow, follow in His footsteps, and return to the intimate communion with Him our *nafshot* desperately need. He absolutely delights in walking the ancient pathways of Torah with us. If, as, when, and to the extent we train our eyes to focus on Him, instead of gawking at the ‘evil’ that lies in our physical field of vision, He leads us to a well-lived life – a life characterized by *shalom that transcends understanding*; by irrepressible joy; by unshakeable hope, by inexhaustible inspiration; by obstacle-overcoming love;

⁹ The *tumah* ‘insults’ wrought upon our souls/psyches by things from the *tamei* and *chol* realms can, of course, enter through other human stimulation-gates – especially the ears, the nose, the mouth, the sensory receptors of the skin, and the brain’s centers of mood, attitude, opinion, and emotion. But the eyes are the main and most vulnerable receptors; hence, they are what the Holy One addresses in this *parsha*.

by meaningful interactions with texts and traditions; and by vibrant, purposeful relationships that have redemptive, restorative effects - and stunning levels of cross-generational impact - on people, places, and bloodlines.

Messiah's Way – which starts, of course, with the Way of Torah - is the exceedingly narrow. It is admittedly sometimes difficult. But it leads to, and offers the precious reward of, *life, health, and peace*. As participants in the Avrahamic Covenant, we are called to take up the Master's easy yoke and walk this great road with Him. Very, very few, however, actually do so. Congratulations and *shalom*, Brother or Sister - you are being offered every opportunity to become one of those few. Through interaction with the Holy One's wonderful, powerful, creative, and prophetic Words we are given the opportunity to ascend to yet another level of spiritual consciousness – *and responsibility*.

There are several areas that the Holy One instructs us to avoid looking at or looking into. The first area the Holy One addresses is aimed right at our fallen human leaning toward *romantic and sexual curiosity*. The first of the many arenas He addresses in which yielding to such curiosity is particularly toxic is in the sensitive arena of family life.

***Our Responsibility to Keep Our Eyes on the Pathway
and our Minds on the Beauty of the King –
and Off of Our Neighbor's Things and Body***

Our Divine Bridegroom is teaching us what it means and looks like in real time for us to '*be holy as [He] is holy*.' We are learning that this calling goes a lot deeper than providing a nice, tidy list of 'do's and don'ts' of outward behavior. This calling to '*be holy*' goes to the very core of our personalities and identities – piercing the veil of our conduct to the hidden places of secret thought, of secret passion, and of private obsession. The calling extends into our very minds, where it challenges us regarding what we allow ourselves to think about. It extends into our most private physical appetites – i.e. what we allow ourselves to want, desire, and lust after. And we are about to discover it extends as well into our organs of vision, challenging us regarding what we allow ourselves to *look into* and *look upon*. The Holy One knows very well how easy it is for us to have our hearts stolen with just one glance of the eye. He therefor wants our uninterrupted gaze. But people keep insisting: '*there is 'no harm in looking, is there?'*' Surely I can *look – as long as I don't touch*', they keep believing.

This is, for some, the most challenging part of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Protocol. Ah, but for us, it is joyful, freeing, and even exhilarating. Our hearts are still aflutter with passionate love for our King. We are more amazed than ever at the great privilege He has extended to us – actually inviting us to approach

His Throne Room to walk and talk with Him. So we are learning to take all our Bridegroom-King's covenantal life instructions – however mundane and unnecessary or even intrusive they seem to us on first glance - to heart. After all, it was not that long ago that the Holy One uttered in the hearing of every man, woman and child in the Camp of the Redeemed ten *prophetic empowerments* that the Western world has come to call 'the Ten Commandments'. We are still empowered by those words. And we want very much to stay that way.

One of the prophetic utterances the Holy One spoke forth into our souls on that very special day when we met Him under the Chuppah of covenant was ***Lo tinaf***. **Exodus 20:14**. English-language translations of the Bible usually render this empowering Hebrew phrase in a very stern, sterile way, as '*Thou shalt not commit adultery*'. But we know better. We know ***Lo tinaf*** is actually much broader in scope – and that it speaks not only to the specific behavior our culture thinks of as *adultery*, but also to every form of fornication, voyeurism, and admixture/dilution. We know it involves every thought, desire, conversation, and daydream of either romantic or sexual intertwining that can arise outside the context of a strong, healthy, fully-committed marriage relationship between one man of the Covenant and one woman of the Covenant. We will speak more about this later in this shiur.

Meanwhile, let us consider another of the amazing DNA-reconfiguring pronouncements our Divine Bridegroom proclaimed over us at Sinai: ***lo tachmod***. **Exodus 20:17**. While in English translations of the Bible we have been taught to read this Divine Pronouncement as a command that '*you shall not covet*', *lo tachmod* is far more all encompassing and practical than that. It is a Divine Empowerment of the God-breathed *neshama* within us –enabling us to stay on task, and refrain from looking upon, thinking about, desiring, lusting after, or seeking pleasure any person or thing in this world that He has not ordained for us.

Are you ready to learn how to make these empowerments work together in real life, in real time, to help us become – and remain – all He has created us to be, individually and collectively? The Holy One's Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol is not going to disappoint. Our Divine Bridegroom is neither embarrassed nor ashamed to get down to the nitty-gritty with us. He knows if He does not address these subjects with us, and empower us, our adversary most definitely will.

Understanding that the Eyes and the Mind – Not the Other Body Parts – Are the Key Organs of Sexuality

Our eyes are not merely organs of sight; they *open the doors of our soul to whatever they gaze upon*. Hence the Holy One addresses the sexuality issue not from the standpoint of what we do with our various reproductive organs, but from

the standpoint of what we do with our *eyes*. Our eyes, you see, are the most important organs of human sexuality. What we allow ourselves to look at, we ultimately wind up either longing for or treating with disrespect. When the nakedness of another human is what is involved, the danger of someone getting hurt is far too high to chance it. *Look but do not touch* is simply not the Holy One's way. He says ***do not even look*** – and turn your head if you accidentally catch a glimpse. Why? What's the harm in 'just looking'? Well, let's talk about that. Since our 'soul' includes our *mind*, our *will*, and our *emotions*, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that what we allow ourselves to gaze upon will have an effect on our *what kind of thoughts we think*, on *what we want and/or desire*, and *what sensations and emotions we feel*. If we can keep our eyes on what they should be focused on, we can keep our thoughts on what they were created to focus upon. [See Psalm 1:3, Matthew 6:33, and Philippians 4:8]. If we can keep our eyes from straying away from what He has lovingly ordained to be delightful and fulfilling to us, we can keep our physical and spiritual desires, appetites, and urges actively engaged in the Great Adventure of walking and communing with our Bridegroom-King, learning and doing His Will. **Matthew 6:10.**

One of the prophetic utterances the Holy One spoke forth into our souls on that very special day was ***Lo tinaf***. This atmosphere-changing empowerment is recorded in Exodus 20:14. English-language translations of the Bible usually render this powerful Hebrew phrase in a very stern, sterile way, as something like '***Thou shalt not commit adultery***'. ***Lo tinaf*** is actually much broader in scope however, including within its coverage not only the specific anti-social behavior we know in modern times as *adultery*, but also every form of fornication, voyeurism, and every other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining that can arise outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as that institution is described in Genesis 2:23-25.

Another of the amazing DNA-reconfiguring pronouncements our Divine Bridegroom proclaimed over us that day was ***lo tachmod***. This is found in Exodus 20:17. While we read this in English translations of the Bible as '***do not covet***' it is much more all encompassing and practical than that. It is a Divine Empowerment to keep ourselves from allowing ourselves to desire, lust after, or seek pleasure inappropriately in or from people or things in this world that He has not ordained for us. Are you ready to learn how to make these empowerments work together in real life, in real time, to help us become – and remain – all He has created us to be, individually and collectively? The Holy One's Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol is not going to disappoint. Our Divine Bridegroom is neither embarrassed nor ashamed to get down to the nitty-gritty with us. He knows if He does not address these subjects with us, and empower us, our adversary most definitely will.

As Yeshua taught, the Holy One's *lo tinaf* instruction¹⁰ does not refer only to physical acts of intimacy – it goes straight to the heart of what we allow ourselves to look at. See Matthew 5:27-30, wherein the Master expounded upon the inseparable relationship between the *lo tinaf* empowerment and the *lo tachmod* [do not covet/lust after] empowerment. Our calling from the Holy One is not only to refrain from acting out our fantasies –but is to so love and occupy ourselves with delighting in Him that we leave no room in our minds, wills, or emotions for the fantasy to even form, much less take root and grow to maturity. The Holy One knows that *whatever we allow ourselves to look at curiously the adversary of our souls will eventually succeed in getting us to lust after sensually*. And He knows that does not ever turn out well – either for *us* or for *the people we care most about*. Matthew 5:27-30; see also Genesis 3:4-6.

***The Devout Calling – And the Special Responsibility of Everyone
Walking in the Covenant To Exercise Self-Control
Over What They Look At, Think About, Say, and Do***

Through interaction with the Holy One's wonderful, powerful, creative, and prophetic Words we are given the opportunity to ascend to an amazing level of spiritual consciousness – *and responsibility*. He knows that the harmful impact our exercise of the power of sexuality without a strong sense of responsibility can have on our relationship with the Holy One – and for that matter, every single person our lives touch. What our *nafshot* [i.e. souls; psyches] crave most in this world is *devout* – i.e. spiritual, intellectual, and emotional oneness, union, and unity - with the Holy One. That is how we were created. In the beautiful adventure of *devout*, therefore, is our satisfaction and our fulfillment. But it does not come naturally. The societies around us – because they are driven by the basest of fleshly urges, appetites, and drives – regularly choose to accept a very cheap, and very dangerous, counterfeit – the misuse of human sexuality as a substitute for *devakut*. By having – or at least fantasizing about having - a stimulating and potentially pleasurable sexual interaction [ranging from 'innocent' flirtation to ogling to dating to intimate physical contact at various levels], the deceived cultures of the world tell us, we can find 'love'. Well, if not love, then at least a reasonable facsimile thereof. Okay, so it's really just lust, pure and simple. Okay, so it's just a way of using people for our own pleasure. Okay, so it's blatant narcissism. Okay, so it's patent fraud. Okay, so it is fraught with all kinds of dangers - ranging the wasting of time and energy and passion meant for the Holy One, to guilt, to jealousy, to humiliation, to emotional manipulation, to relational disasters, to destructive soul-ties, to sexual addictions, to

¹⁰ See **Exodus 20:14**. What we read in English translations of the Bible simply as 'do not commit adultery' is actually much broader, including not only what we know as adultery but also what we know as fornication or indeed any other admixture/dilution involving romantic or sexual intertwining outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman as described in Genesis 2:23-25.

venereal diseases, to HIV positivity, to children born out-of-wedlock, etc. etc. etc.

The Holy One knows that the world very badly needs an example of a better, more fulfilling, way to deal with both our sexuality and our curiosity. That is why He calls – and promises to empower us – to be different. He knows that the world needs an example of *joyful, vibrant holiness* that extends to the most basic of human urges and appetites – i.e. food, drink, shelter, companionship, sensory stimulation, thrill, excitement, pleasure, and sexual expression. We must quit turning up our noses and pointing our bony religious fingers the way others have done. In love, with dove’s eyes and Torah-thoughts, we must actually *show the world a more excellent way*. This is our time to shine the Light of our King’s Countenance into the deep darkness of the world. And to do that, we cannot be like that world – we must be thriving in His Love and flowing in His Wisdom. The world needs a breath of life. The world needs a *witness of hope, wholeness, and shalom*. And we cannot pretend that this involves every area of life except the one area the world keeps telling everybody is the most important one in life – i.e. sexuality.

The Special Responsibility of Persons of the Covenant To Exercise Self-Control Over Their Thoughts, Words and Actions

The first instruction the Holy One gave man was to ‘be fruitful, and multiply’. The Holy One equipped males and females in such a way that His instruction could be carried out. The mechanics of the process are well known. But in the eyes of the Holy One, not every man and woman are potential mates. The filling of the earth with human beings is to be done according to ‘family planning’. The details of this ‘family planning’ are spelled out in today’s aliyah. Torah says a Redeemed person is not only not to engage in physical acts with a number of persons [fathers, mothers, stepfathers and stepmothers, aunts, uncles, sisters, in-laws, grandchildren, and any woman, including one’s wife, who is menstruating], we are also to be extremely careful not even to “*approach*” them in such a way that we might ‘*uncover*’ *their nakedness*¹¹. That means we are to take precautions not to put ourselves into a position to see underneath that person’s clothing, or to invade that person’s privacy while bathing, dressing/undressing, or using the bathroom. Now that we understand this, it is easy to understand Yeshua of Natzret’s teaching that ‘*any man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*’ **Matthew 5:26**. Yeshua was not changing the Torah. He was not announcing a new teaching. He was not even expanding the scope of Torah. He was merely going back to what the Holy One actually said in Torah as opposed to how men had watered down Torah’s instructions by translation into different languages. It is thus not just the

¹¹ The Hebrew words our English Bibles translate as ‘approach’ in this context are two. One is a form of the verb root *qarav*, Strong’s #7126 - the same word from which the word *korban* (approach to the Holy One through a surrogate) is derived. The second is a form of the verb root *laqach*, Strong’s word #3947, meaning to take unto oneself, as a possession (or obsession).

physical act of sexual intercourse that the Holy One considers too dangerous and destructive for mankind to negotiate without Divine help – it is every curious or lustful thought that might lead to it. And it is every instance when we choose to *look upon* any person the Holy One has said is not a potential mate in a sensual, self-interested manner.

Please do not however think that the Holy One is just giving us a list of “*thou shalt nots*” in this part of today’s aliyah Our Beloved is speaking to us as a wise and loving Bridegroom to His immature but fully committed bride-to-be. These words of the Holy One – like all His Words - are *words of love*, straight from His beautiful heart. He knows what you have to deal with. He knows the images that are presented to you daily on the television, on billboard and magazine covers, on the Internet, and at the movie theater. He knows the immodest ways people proudly – albeit foolishly - present themselves in public at shopping malls, at beaches, and just about everywhere. He wants you to be ready to navigate all of these potential danger zones – as well as your own household and family gatherings – without the slightest bit of distraction.

Are you ready to take responsibility for what your eyes look at? Will you resolve to quickly turn away your eyes from every immodest image or scarcely clad person not your spouse that might excite either romantic notions or biological urges in you? Are you ready to take captive your thoughts – before they lead you down a path that could be destructive for you and everyone important to you? Are you ready to subordinate your natural urges to the Holy One’s higher purpose? The Holy One wants *the absolute best* for His bride-to-be. He wants her relationship with HIM to be *fully nurturing* and *100% satisfying* for her. He is dealing with *potential threats* to the relationship He desires to have with His Bride. He knows, you see, that not only is sexual expression outside marriage inconsistent with our nature as redeemed individuals, it is in addition:

- a. Spiritually dangerous, as it fragments the soul and creates soul ties and entry portals for *tamei* spirits; and
- b. a colossal waste of precious time and energy that could – should - be spent in fellowship with and service of Him Whom our soul longs for most.

And so the Holy One starts the sexuality section of the ‘**Holiness is . . .**’ discourse with a re-affirmation of His betrothal language from Exodus 20: “***I am the Holy One your God.***” The emphasis, for today’s aliyah at least, is clearly on the word “your”. He wants us to know He is not just ‘God’ in theory – He is OUR God. He is personally involved with us. He is personally interested in us. He is personally invested in us. We are not independent agents – our lives are wrapped up in Him – and He in us. He made covenant promises to us at Sinai. And we accepted Him

not just as a supreme deity but as Betrothed Husband. In the Song of Songs it therefore correctly says: *I am my Beloveds, and He is mine.* Song 6:3. Also in the Song of Songs He says: *You are a garden enclosed for Me, My sister, My Bride; You are a spring flowing just for Me, a fountain sealed to all others.* Song 4:12 [Rabbi's son paraphrase]. The Holy One is reminding us that all our passion now belongs to Him, even as all His passion belongs to us.

The holy fire of human sexuality has only one proper place – the marriage of one man and one woman. Indulging a physical/sexual attraction outside the bounds of a God-ordained marriage relationship is like lighting a fire in your living room floor or on your curtains or walls. It makes something the Holy One designed to be a wonderful thing – a partnership in His work of Creation – into a potential disaster.

Since all *our passion belongs to Him*, the Holy One does not stop this part of the discourse on Holiness with a general discussion of the human tendency to get all strung out on romance and sexually charged thought, speech, and conduct. He goes on to cover some very 'hot topics' in the 21st Century – topics of sexual appetite and curiosity run amuck. There are several areas that the Holy One instructs us to avoid.

The first area the Holy One addresses is everything connected with – or even the thought of – any adulteration, including *incest*, which the Holy One wants us to understand comes in many unhealthy forms. **Leviticus 18:6-18.** Another area He addresses involves respecting the re-creative process that is going on with the *niddah* – *i.e.* a menstruating woman. **Leviticus 18:19.** In tomorrow's concluding aliyah of *Acharei Mot*, the Holy One will also address *common adultery* – meaning engaging in intimate, romantic, and/or sexual encounters with a person who is intended for or married to someone else. **Leviticus 18:20.** Another area that will be addressed by the Holy One in this Discourse is what today is commonly called homosexuality. **Leviticus 18:22.** The Bridegroom-King – Who designed and created human sexuality - wants to give us HIS PERSPECTIVE on all these very timely topics, at least as they may try to rear their ugly head among His covenant people.

Before we listen to the modern media, the all-up-in-the-flesh entertainment industry, or filthy street talk, don't we owe it to our Creator to at least hear Him – the One Who actually invented human sexuality in the first place – out about why He created it and how He designed it to work? I think so – so let's meet in the Scroll again tomorrow and talk about it!

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah the Holy One gives a description of uses of our gift of vision that

lead to the potential for activities outside our purpose and destiny. He starts by warning against looking at the nakedness of other people with whom we are likely to come into contact. Here are some questions upon which to meditate as you study the Holy One's instructions in this regard.

[A] Why did the Holy One create sexuality? Why did He make us enjoy the sensation of romance?

[B] In the context of what relationship did the Holy One bless romantic and sexual thoughts, conversations, and activities? Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and Hebrews 13:4.

[C] What responsibility(ies) did the Holy One intend for a man to undertake toward a woman before any level of sexual curiosity could be explored without injury/damage [physical, emotional, and spiritual] to both partners?

[D] Make a list of the different family relationships in the context of which looking upon the nakedness of another is not ever to occur (example: nephew/aunt; uncle/niece ...).

[E] Note the different Hebrew verbs/verb phrases used by the Holy One to describe the various sexually-oriented behaviors which He wants us to know are destructive, so we can avoid situations which might tend to bring them about. Torah says a Redeemed person is not to "**approach**" [Hebrew *qarab*, Strong's #7126, the same word from which the word *korban* (approach to the Holy One through a surrogate) is derived] or "**take**" [Hebrew *laqach*, Strong's word #3947, meaning to take unto oneself, as a possession (or obsession)] certain people to '**uncover that person's nakedness** (that is, to put ourselves into a position to see underneath that person's clothing, or to invade that person's privacy while bathing, dressing/undressing, or using the bathroom, much less to engage in sexual behavior).

What all do you think Torah is trying to tell us to avoid by using this variety of verbs/verb phrases, and why do you think the Holy One wants us to avoid such things?

2. In today's Haftarah reading we are told that Yechezkiel had a vision. The Holy One appeared to Him and said: *Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver.* Ezekiel 22:18.

[A] What is 'dross'?

[B] How is dross separated from silver?

3. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today, we read:

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body?

For, "The two," says he, "will become one flesh".

[I Corinthians 6:15-17]

[A] What is the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'prostitute'? What is the verb root of that Hebrew word? Research that Hebrew word in Strong's

Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon and describe what action it is talking about.

[B] What does Shaul suggest happens when two people join their bodies together?

[C] Do you think this happens, to any degree, when people hold hands?

[D] Do you think this happens, to any degree, when people kiss?

[E] If you become one with someone, does that just mean physically, or are there abiding and potentially dangerous mind, will, emotional and spiritual issues that flow from this unification?

[F] How do you think the bonding together of people over romantic or sexual encounters like holding hands, kissing, etc. works its way out in the future when the two physical bodies go their separate ways?

[G] What spiritual reasons does Shaul give for not engaging in sexual activity – or romantic involvement - outside God's plan?

[H] In what ways does engaging in sexually-oriented conduct outside the bounds set by the Holy One cause injury or damage, and to whom does it cause this damage?

*May passion for the Holy One override all our other passions and appetites;
And may we model a lifestyle of both passion and holiness to all the world.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:161- 164

*Princes pursue/chase after me without a cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.
I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.*