

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Acharei Mot:*** Leviticus 18:1-5
 Haftarah: Ezekiel 22:13-16
 B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 6:15

By asah-ing [My mishpatim and My chukot] You will live
[Leviticus 18:5]

Today's *Acharei Mot* Meditation is Psalm 119:153-160;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* [Kinsman-Redemption]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – i.e. *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying . . .*
Daber el-B'nei Yisra'el v'amarta aleihem ani Adonai Eloheichem – *Speak to B'nei Yisrael, and tell them "I am the Holy One, Your [collective] God"!* Leviticus 18:1-2.

Today's aliyah begins with a landing between flights of stairs – a place to stop, catch our breath, and regain some perspective before beginning a whole new division of Torah. Today is a good time, therefore, to step back from the details and make sure we have not lost sight of the *big picture*, and the ultimate purpose of it all. Studying Torah, you see, is sort of like climbing a series of long flights of stairs. From time to time the Holy One strategically places between the flights of stairs a landing on which we can pause, catch our collective breath, be reminded how precious and valuable the Holy One's gift of Torah truly is, and refocus on Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its originally intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*.

When the Holy One gave the Torah to us at Mount Sinai He bestowed upon us – and indirectly upon the world - a very precious gift. He taught us how we were created and programmed to live our lives. Tenderly, lovingly, He gave us a navigation manual for every important aspect of our journey of life on planet earth. As wonderful a gift as that aspect of Torah is, however, there is much, much more.

While we were camped at Sinai the Holy One did not just instruct us how to live; He dynamically empowered us to follow all the instructions He gave. How? He plugged us in to the power source that can make that happen. The power to follow the instructions was not in us, our will, our belief matrix, or any of our institutions – that power was, is, will always be, *in the Words themselves*. They are bursting with *inspiration* and *energy*. Just as the Holy One's declaration '*Light Be!*'

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contained all the power needed to bring forth Light from the primeval darkness, so His pronouncement of the Torah contained all the power needed to bring forth from our hearts, souls, minds, mouths, hands, and feet all that the Holy One spoke. The Words themselves are *alive*, and *active*, and *more powerful than any two-edged sword*. They are pulsing with energy. They are a perfect blend of *sound wave*, *light waves*, and *substantive particles of nourishment*. They introduce to our lives a *Divine perfect storm* of *heat*, *oxygen*, and *fuel*. All we have to do is let them in, and let them do what they do. Once they are firmly planted in us, and brought to germination by the light of the Holy One's Presence and the warmth of the Holy One's Breath, the Words take hold, take over, and do it all – if we will let them! All we have to do is *sh'ma* as Avraham did – and start to conduct their energy and rebroadcast their frequency in the earth.

Time For a Theme Change

Heretofore the 'calling' of *Sefer Vayikra* has focused upon the essential starting points of *tahorah* – i.e. wholeness - and of *kedusha*. The Holy One has been teaching us how to 'host Royalty' – i.e. what it means – and how it is supposed to affect us - to have the manifest Presence of the Holy One dwelling in our midst. What comes next? It is, at last, time for a *theme change*. Beginning with today's aliyah the focus changes to the essential issue of what it is going to mean, from a social and cultural standpoint, for us to function as the Holy One's people - and for Him to be our God – in the midst of a mostly *tamei*, definitely *chol*, and often hostile, world. We have been isolated from other people at Sinai; but all that is soon going to dramatically change. We are free from Egyptian bondage, it is true; but He is about to throw us right back into the crucible of interaction with the world's troublemakers – from tyrants, to haters, to demagogues, to sorcerers, to fools. These bad actors are not to be considered our enemies; they are, instead, to be considered our mission field. But the Holy One wants us to understand that, when we come face to face with the nations, we had better be wise as serpents, even as we try to be harmless as doves.

Before we get to all that, however, there are a few very interesting literary aspects of this passage that deserve our attention.

1. The Return of the Divine Formula of Punctuation

Notice if you will that in conveying this round of instructions to us the Holy One begins this section of Torah with an interesting Hebrew phrase - ***Ani Adonai Eloheichem***. Our English Bibles translate that Hebrew phrase "***I am the Holy One your God***". Then, throughout the aliyah the Holy One repeats this phrase, or a similar, shorter phrase - ***Ani Adonai*** [which our English Bibles translate "***I am the Holy One***"], after virtually every instruction. In fact, one of these two phrases will recur a

whopping 42 times between Leviticus 18:1 and Leviticus 26:45.

The Holy One is driving the point of Divine Authorship home BIG TIME! Why? Why does the Holy One constantly remind His People, during this particular series of instructions, that He Who is speaking these instructions is HE HIMSELF – not Moshe or any other man? The answer may lie in the relationship between these specific instructions and another set of instructions the Holy One has given. Do you remember the third day at Mount Sinai when the Holy One called to come near to Him, under the Chuppah of His Sh'kinah Cloud, all the people, Hebrew and “mixed multitude”, which He had redeemed from Egypt? Remember when the shofar of Heaven blew, and beckoned all Redeemed people to ascend the mountain like a Bride in a wedding procession. And do you remember the Voice that spoke from Heaven, and declared the Aseret HaDibrot [known by most English speakers as the “Ten Commandments”] in the hearing of all the Holy One’s Redeemed peoples? Now, do you remember the first words the Holy One spoke at that time? Ah, it all comes back to us now, doesn’t it? His first words – the first words we heard directly from Him rather than through Moshe – were these: ***I am the Holy One your God.*** Exodus 20:2.

Remember, however, that after we heard the *Aseret HaDibrot* from the Holy One’s own Mouth we cried out to Moshe: ***You speak to us, and we will sh’ma; but let not the Holy One speak to us, or we will die.*** Exodus 20:19. Is it possible that as He begins a new series of instructions the Holy One is saying to us, that the instructions He is about to give are a continuation of what He was saying when we so rudely interrupted Him? Is it possible that the next few chapters we will read contain the essence of what the so-called [and mislabeled] “Ten Commandments” are all about? Is it possible that now that we have the intermediary we asked for and have all the instructions we need as to how to interact with the Holy One and not “die” [unlike Nadav and Avihu], the Holy One wants us to know He is resuming the “speech” He had prepared for us at Har Sineh – the speech with which we became betrothed to Him as His *am segulah* [peculiar treasure people], His *mamlaket kohanim* [functioning kingdom of priests], and His *goy kadosh* [holy nation]? Exodus 19:5-6. Are the words we are about to hear a part of our *shitre eyrusin* – our betrothal covenant - by studying and practicing which we are to become the Bride He redeemed us to be?

For weeks now we have been focusing our attention upon the *Mish'kan* and the Aharonic priesthood – because the Divine Bridegroom graciously granted our request for an intermediary, a mediator. We have been setting up the *Mish'kan* – a scale-model of the Holy One’s bridal chamber in Heaven -- as a parlor for chaperoned interaction with the Holy One, our Bridegroom-to-be, during the period of betrothal. We have been preparing Aharon and his sons as the perennial “friends of the Bride” who would chaperone our interactions and conversations with the

Holy One. And we have been talking in great detail about the Protocol the Holy One has designed for the Ultimate Bridal Make-Over we all so desperately need if we are going to somehow become the glorious Bride without spot or wrinkle which He deserves and has chosen us to be. Now finally all that is in place. Now we are “back in business”. Now at last the Holy One can continue the prophetic and creative declarations over us which He began on 6 Sivan in the year of our exodus from Egypt. The words the Holy One speaks from this point forward - like the *Aseret HaDibrot* – will have the force of His words at creation²: from “*Yehi ohr*” [Light, Be!] to *p’ru ur’vu* [Be fruitful and multiply!], to the eternal blessing He spoke over the Seventh day, by which He infused it with essential holiness and shalom.

2. The Divine Order of Speech

Secondly, notice the structure of the three main points made by the Holy One in the above-quoted passage – the passage which begins our new section of the Holy One’s creative, prophetic pronouncements over us. The first main point consists of a negative directive:

*Do not follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived,
nor of Kana’an where I will be bringing you.
Do not follow [any] of their customs. . . .*

The second main point consists of a positive directive:

Et-mishpatai ta’asu
Asah [build your lives upon] *My mish’patim*
[i.e. My judgments about what is right and wrong, good and bad],

v’et-chukotai tish’meru
and *sh’mar* [treasure, cherish, keep watch to preserve inviolate] *My chukot*
[i.e., My instructions as to what you are to do and not do]

lalechet b’hem
and walk in them:

Ani Adonai Eloheichem
I am the Holy One your God.
[Leviticus 18:3]

The third main point consists of a reiteration of the positive directive, to which is

² We know from creation and from Isaiah 55 as well as other sources that the Holy One’s Words have *creative power*. What He decrees becomes as He decreed it. If that is true, then we must understand that as He speaks these words concerning His Betrothed, along with the words He is releasing over her all the creative power she will ever need for her to be able to *sh’ma*, *sh’mar*, and *asah* [that is, to *hear and understand*, to *guard and treasure*, and to *make and do*) the words He has spoken. She [we] will conform to His words as the inanimate goo of the primordial deep conformed to His decree “*Let there be Light*”, and as the dust of the earth conformed to His decree “*Bring forth plants bearing seed . . .*” She [we] will, Beloved. It is just a matter of time.

added an explanation of its purpose:

Ush'martem et-chukotai

Therefore keep [sh'mar, cherish, guard] my chukot [instructions as to what to do and not do]

v'et-mishpatai

and my mish'patim [decisions/counsel about what words and actions would be productive];

asher ya'aseh otam ha-adam

which a man is to asah [build his life upon and make visible, beautiful, and functional]

v'chai b'hem

and is to live, move, and have his being in them:

Ani Adonai.

I am the Holy One.

[Leviticus 18:4-5]

If you will recall in Eden the Holy One used the opposite formula. First He gave a positive directive: ***Of every tree of the garden, freely eat*** Genesis 2:17(a). He followed this with a negative directive: ***but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - do not eat of it.*** Genesis 2:17(b). He concluded with an explanation of the purpose of the negative directive: . . . ***for in the day that you eat of it you will surely wither-and-die.***" Genesis 2:17(c). Why the reversal of the first two elements of the Divine formula? Perhaps it is because the first instructions were prior to the Fall and the instructions we read today are after the Fall. Before the Fall nothing negative or destructive had occurred, so beginning with the positive directive was the appropriate way for the Holy One to communicate with man. After the Fall however something had to be corrected – fixed as it were. A reversal of man's action in the garden [lo sh'ma-ing the Holy One's negative directive] required that now the negative directive be pronounced and heeded first – before the positive directive.

Note also that in the first series of instructions [i.e. Genesis 2:17], the explanation given was about how one *dies*; in the series of instructions we begin today, however, the explanation that is given is about how one *lives*.

Is This Important?

All this may sound technical; but the point is very substantive. The instructions we are about to receive over the next few chapters [chapters 18 through 26, especially] are going to constitute *critical components of the Holy One's Plan for the Redemption* of mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to its original intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*. By prophetically and creatively speaking these words over ordinary people – people who were pulled out of slavery with absolutely no merit of their own – the Holy One was setting in motion the process of fixing what happened in the Garden of Eden and restoring man to the level of

fellowship for which he was created. But as great as all that sounds, there is one little ‘catch’. We are going to be put on display, in a glass house, as it were – and . . . well, let me put it this way: Do you know why miners used to always take a canary in a cage into an active coal mine? Chirp, chirp, chirp, Beloved. Get used to that sound.

The Mission-Critical Uniqueness of our Torah-Based Worldview, Mindset, and Lifestyle

The Holy One wants us to take a good look around us at the other peoples who inhabit the planet. They are not like us; we are not to be like them. We are not supposed to hate them, of course - *Heaven forbid!* That would not only be foolish, it would defeat the whole redemptive purpose. Neither are we supposed to fear or be in the least intimidated by them. We are not supposed to presume for a moment that we are morally superior to them, or that we are loved by God one whit more than them. But we are not to be fascinated – much less fooled - by them. We are never to be, or have any desire to become, anything like them. We are never to emulate them. We are not to like what they like, or hate what they hate. We are not to fear what they fear, or eat what they eat, or be amused by what amuses them. We are not to think like them, talk like them, behave like them, or react like them. We are neither to celebrate what they celebrate or fret over what they fret over. We are not to live by their calendar, or acknowledge, much less try to appropriate and celebrate, any of their pagan days of feasting or commemoration. We are not to allow ourselves to be dependent upon – nor try to manipulate or take advantage of - their economic systems. We are not to flock to their entertainment venues, get caught up in their trends, or join their populist socio-political movements. We are not to rant like they rant, whine like they whine, be outraged like they are outraged, or be offended by what offends them. We are not to be the slightest bit impressed by their silly pseudo-sciences, their pious pretensions of moral superiority, or their illusions of intelligence. We are not to indulge in their indiscretions, succumb to their sentimentalities, delight in their debaucheries, participate in their perversions, or fall victim to their follies. We are not to look for spouses from among them – nor even go about finding mates the way they go about finding them. Under no circumstances are we to raise, educate, or marry off our children or children’s children like they do. Heaven forbid that we do any of those things. We are *the chosen, glorious redeemed, Divinely taught Bride-People of the Creator of the Universe*. We have a covenant of *shalom* with the Bridegroom-King. We have the oracles – and the ear - of the Creator of the Universe. We hold the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. In us resides the hope of redemption for mankind as a species and the restoration of all Creation to Edenic-level fruitfulness. We are light – they are the darkness we are called to illumine. Culturally, they have absolutely nothing of value to offer us – or anyone else in the world.

In today's aliyah the Holy One makes these things very clear, saying in no uncertain terms:

Kema'aseh eretz-Mitzrayim asher yeshavtem-bah lo ta'asu

The ways of Egypt, where you recently lived, you are not to reconstruct/replicate

uchema'aseh eretz-Kena'an asher ani mevi etchem shamah lo ta'asu

nor are you to reconstruct/replicate the ways of Kana'an, where I will be bringing you.

Uv'chukoteihem lo teleichu

Do not walk in/follow what their cultures consider normative behaviors.

[Leviticus 18:2-3]

As we have discussed previously, the Hebrew language is a language of action, not abstract concepts. Hebrew is built upon verbs, not nouns. Every Hebrew noun is derived from a verb root. And in the verses with which the Holy One resumes the prophetic and creative declarations He started over us in Exodus 20, once again it is the Hebrew verbs that 'tell the story'.

a. What We are to Follow/Do

The first verb we encounter in the opening instruction of this section of the Discourse is often translated into English as "follow". Our English translations report the Holy One as saying: ***Do not follow the ways of Egypt . . . nor of Kana'an . . . do not follow any of their customs.*** Leviticus 18:3. The verb I translate as 'reconstruct/replicate' above, which our English Bibles translate as "follow/do", is the Hebrew verb *asah*. The Holy One prophetically and creatively speaks over us that we are not to *asah* the "ways" or "customs" of Egypt or of Kana'an. What, we may therefore ask, is the Hebraic word picture the Holy One is drawing for us by employing the word *asah*? The Hebrew verb paints the picture of a potter fashioning something recognizable from a lump of clay. The potter starts with an idea – a blueprint of what he is *asah*-ing – then works with the clay in a very 'hands-on', practical manner, until the clay begins to look like - and through a gradual process, actually becomes - the item pictured in the blueprint. It takes on its image, but also its functionality, and begins to fulfill its intended purpose in the Master's Plan. That – i.e. fulfilling intended purpose – is what *asah*-ing is all about.

What ARE We Called To Asah? What is the Asah Element of our Mission?

We are sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant. As such, we are the duly appointed, commissioned, and empowered ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven to all peoples and nations of the earth. These are our primary identities – and these identities are supposed to define for us what it is that we are to and not to *asah*. Concerning our father Avraham the Holy One said: ***I have made Myself known to***

him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they sh'mar the way of YHVH, to asah tzedakah u'mishpat Genesis 18:19.

So, in general, the first thing we are to *asah* – i.e. cause to take shape in real time for the world to see – in every situation is *tzedakah*. The second thing we are to *asah* in every situation is *mishpat*. *Tzedakah* is a covenant term drawn from the construction trade, meaning basically ‘true to design and purpose’, or ‘within or according to specifications’. It is not an abstract concept like Western ideas of ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; it is a practical application of the Holy One’s plan. In every situation, it is what YHVH would do or wants done to bring about a solution/resolution that advances His Grand Blueprint/Plan. The second thing we are to *asah* in every situation we face is *mishpat*. *Mishpat* is a covenant term that means assigning proper restitution, restoration, and repositioning protocols in order that there can be an effectual resetting and a meaningful fresh start.

At Sinai, after the Torah was given, our ancestors declared: ***All the words which YHVH has said we will asah.*** Exodus 24:7. This clarifies that what we are to *asah* in every situation we ever face is EVERYTHING the Holy One has said in Torah pertaining to that situation, and ONLY what the Holy One has said in Torah that pertains to that situation. That will always have both a *tzedakah element* – which will involve envisioning the restorative plan of the Holy One for the situation - and a *mishpat element* – which will involve repositioning parties and focuses and reallocating assets in such a way as to give the parties involved a chance at a fresh start in the Kingdom Endeavor.

Specifically, our calling is to *asah* the *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* of Torah. For the Holy One describes our function on earth as being to: “***asah My mish’patim . . .*** [Leviticus 18:4(a)]. What does it mean to *asah* our Divine Bridegroom’s *mish’patim*? What does that look like in *real time*? It means we will regard the life instructions of the Holy One’s Torah as the potter regards the image on the blueprint in his mind. We will have them in mind as we interact with the “clay” of life – the mundane, common stuff and circumstances that make up our existence on earth. It means we will apply creative energy toward circumstances and mundane matters of life with the blueprint of the Holy One’s Torah as the focus of all our activities, and will thereby, as an act of co-creation with the Holy One, form something visible, tangible and useful from them. It means we will take the Holy One’s *dibrot*, *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* out of the realm of the *theoretical* and into the world of the *practical*. It means we will *progressively* conform our thoughts, priorities, values, words, and conduct to the shape of the Torah, the way a potter conforms the clay with which he works to the blueprint he has in his mind or on his drafting table. The *dibrot*, *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* of Torah are thus not just things to “do”, or ways to “follow”; they are the righteousness of the Holy One, to which we are - with the

inspiration and empowering of the Holy One - to conform every aspect of our lives. That is how we will *asah tzedakah* and *mishpat*. We have the technology!

What We Are Not to Asah? What is the Antithesis of our Mission?

What the Holy One tells us we are NOT to *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners and their cultures. If we do not remain radically different than both the unregenerate and the religious world we will become like *salt that has lost its savor*. We will have nothing substantive to offer. We will be like fashion models who walk the runway bereft of the beautiful designer clothes we have been employed to show off to the world. So the Holy One says prophetically and creatively over us that we are to ***lo asah*** the ways/customs of foreign people and their cultures. What does this mean in real life? Well, to *asah* the ways and customs any foreign people or foreign culture would be to *apply/expend our creative energies in the way, and according to the priorities, mindsets, and values, of people whose focuses in life are on something else than the outworking of the Avrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants*. To *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners would mean *to waste our precious allotted time on earth doing what the people in the pagan society around us do*. It would mean *dressing, and eating, and wearing our hair, and seeking and treating mates like the people in the pagan society around us do*. It would mean *valuing what the people in our pagan society around us value*. It would mean *making music and dancing after the pattern of the way the pagans around us make music and dance*. It would mean *arranging our calendars like the pagans arrange theirs*. It would mean *celebrating our holidays on the days they set aside for their celebrations and observances*. To ***asah*** the ways and customs of foreigners and their cultures would mean *to pattern our activities of “worshipping” our deity after the template set by the people in either the secular or the religious societies around us*. It would mean *expending our energy and our passion on “vain things”, the way the foreigners around us – of whatever stripe or label - do*. And to *asah* the ways and customs of foreigners and their cultures would mean that, whatever we might tell ourselves or the world that we ‘believe’, *the lives we actually lead in real time would become virtually undistinguishable from the lives of people who reject and live outside the Covenant*.

We are, of course, always *to love and be kind to foreigners*. See **Exodus 22:21 and 23:9;** **Leviticus 19:34;** and **Deuteronomy 10:19**. We are to acknowledge them as *fellow human beings* – and we are to bless, not curse, them. We are to see – and treat - them and their children as both *objects of the Holy One’s amazing love* and as *targets of His Grand Redemptive Plan*. But we are NEVER to adopt their mindsets, their values, their priorities, or any of their ways. Never. We are here to model a ‘better way’ for them – i.e. the Torah Way established for mankind by our King. We are to bring the ways and thoughts and speech and deeds of Heaven to earth in real

ways, in real time. We are therefore never to embrace any foreigner's or foreign culture's worldview as our own – whether in part or as a whole. We are never to honor, serve, or call upon any their 'gods' – whether those gods present themselves as *idols*, as *ideas*, as *ideologies*, or even as *ideals*. We are never to adopt their definitions of 'morality', of 'success', of 'normalcy', or of 'food' or 'pleasure' – much less their warped view of what is 'good and 'evil', what is 'fair' and 'unfair', or what is 'true' and 'untrue'. We are never to allow ourselves to get caught up in their cultural wars, their interpersonal drama episodes, their inter-family squabbles, their political intrigues, their societal movements, their religious controversies, their intellectual arguments, the outlandish theories they falsely label 'science', or their civil wars. We are not to allow ourselves to be conscripted into the service of their political, economic, ideological, or religious systems. We are not to pattern our – or our children's – education after their hopelessly-flawed educational models. We are not to allow ourselves – or our children – to be seduced by their perverse ideas of entertainment, or humor, or artistry, or 'romance', or sexual identity. We are not to succumb to any of their brainwashing, soul-numbing propaganda. We are not to accept their relabeling of opinions and political/ideological talking points as 'news'. We are not to observe – much less celebrate or get sentimental about - their holidays. We are not to ridicule, mock, or condemn those things – we are just to remain *unstained by them, uncorrupted by them*, and most of all *above them*. We are to follow – and model for them – a better, more joyous, more meaningful, more impactful, and much more fulfilling lifestyle.

We have been given much better – and far more exciting, important and beneficial – things to do. We have a glorious, holy King to commune with and represent at all times. Flesh-obsessed entertainment and sexually-themed conversations should not – cannot – be the norm for the Holy One's *mamleket kohanim* [i.e. kingdom ambassadors]. Angry political, ideological, racial, class-focused, and/or religious rhetoric should not – cannot – be what the members of Holy One's *goy kadosh* are known for. We have been gloriously redeemed. The Creator of the Universe has *recombined our DNA*. We have a beautiful new identity. Our King has given us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. We should be of all men most humble, most thankful, most understanding, and most kind. We have a glorious life Partner, and an incredible calling. We have no time – or need – to be either pouty or petty. We have no reason – nor right – to be arrogant. Our mission requires us to increasingly disentangle from the ways and customs of the secular society in which we live. We are commissioned and empowered to *look, think, act, and live differently* from the secular society around us. We are to *eat differently*, relate to time differently, choose and relate to our mates differently, worship differently, relate to music differently, dance differently, talk differently, look at things differently, speak

differently, treat people differently and relate to the Holy One's Creation differently. If we do not, we simply cannot *fulfill our purpose* on earth, and will, quickly forget both *who we are* and *why we are here*.

b. What We Are to 'Keep' [Hebrew, *sh'mar*]

The second verb used by the Holy One in the opening announcement of this section of the Discourse to describe our mission is translated as “keep”. Our Beloved King said specifically: “***Keep my statutes . . . Therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances . . .*** [Leviticus 18:4(b) – 5]. The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “keep” is the Hebrew verb *sh'mar*. To *sh'mar* is not to legalistically or ritualistically perform deeds, as our English words “keep” and “observe” have come to imply. To *sh'mar* anything is to *prize it, treasure it, cling to it, stand watch over it, and safeguard it as a sacred trust*. To *sh'mar* a Word spoken by the Holy One therefore means to *prize, treasure, cling to, stand watch over and safeguard as a sacred trust* the Holy One's words and instructions for life above everything else – and in defiance of all voices which call us to do something different. To *sh'mar* means to prioritize the Holy One's words above all else, and to spend time, energy and passion focusing on them, and making sure not a word is wasted or “returns to Him void”.

c. What We are To Follow/Walk [Hebrew, *halak*]

The third verb contained within the prophetic announcement under study is translated “follow” in our English Bibles: “. . . ***follow/walk in them*** [i.e. the Holy One's *mishpatim* and *chukot*]. **Leviticus 18:4**. The Hebrew verb translated as “follow/walk in” in this instance is *halak*³. One of the earliest usages of this verb found in Torah is informative. *Halak* is what the Ark built by Noach according to the Holy One's instructions is said to have done on the waters, after it was lifted from the earth. It involves transitioning, from a place of potential [the Ark, sitting on the ground, full of potential, but without the medium (water) necessary to bring that potential into reality] to a place of fulfillment of potential – of the Holy One's will. So when the Holy One prophesies over us that we will *halak* His Torah He is saying we will through His Torah *rise up above the secular society around us like the ark rose up above the ground on which it was constructed*. Ours will not be life characterized by great effort; nor will it consist of a self-determined, self-controlled journey undertaken in our own strength. We will ride His Torah like a surfer rides a great wave. We will be buoyed up by His Empowering Words the way the ark was lifted and carried by the waters of the great flood. The journey of *halak* the Holy One prophesies that we are to take with Him is not controlled by us, or determined by our own efforts, but by the Holy One –and we are propelled through it by the sheer prophetic force of His voice.

³ Halak is *hey, lamed, kaf sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word # 3212, it is pronounced *haw-lak'*.

d. What Kind of Life We Are to ‘Live’ [Hebrew, chayei]

The final verb contained within the prophetic announcement we are studying is translated into English, in our English Bibles, as “live”. Our English Bibles tell us the Holy One concluded the prophetic announcement we have been studying by saying: “. . . **by asah-ing** [My *mishpatim* and My *chukot*] **You will live.** Leviticus 18:5. The Hebrew phraseology – and meaning - is vastly different. Transliterated the original text reads: “. . . **ya'aseh otam ha-Adam vachai b'hem.**” Literally interpreted it says that in the course of **asah-ing** the Holy One’s words we **bring life to ha-Adam** [the man into whom the Holy One breathed life in Genesis 2]. *Life*, in Hebrew, is **chai**⁴. This is much more than mere physical existence won by survival of the fittest. **Chai** is *the kind of life our Creator envisioned for us*. It is *joyful, meaningful, abundant, and atmosphere-shifting* life.

The implications of connecting to our intended level of **chai** are astounding. By **asah-ing**, **sh'mar-ing**, and **halak-ing** the Holy One’s Torah the effects of Adam’s failure to **asah**, **sh'mar** and **halak** the Holy One’s instructions in the Garden are reversed. The name Adam – man - Hebraically pictures a doorway of living water, leading to the Tree of Life [**dam**] emanating *from God* [represented by the *alef* with which the name Adam begins].⁵ It is by **asah-ing**, **sh'mar-ing**, and **halak-ing** the Holy One’s instructions in Torah – His instructions on how to be a Bride to Him – that we again begin to tap into and release the flow of the Holy One’s living water upon the earth, thereby leading mankind to reconnect with the Tree of Life.⁶

The Holy One is our God. His Ways and His Will are our delight. His beautiful **Torah** is our *wisdom*, our compass, our anchor, our *passion*, our *lifestyle*, our *Constitution*, our *entertainment*, our *recreation*, and our *reason to live*. Torah’s words of life – not our fleshly urges, appetites, desires, and drives - are what is to define what we spend our time and energy and passion thinking about, talking about, eating, wearing, and drinking. Our Bridegroom-King’s wise instructions, not our cultural norms, are to determine how we choose – and treat – companions and mates, how we educate our children, how we make a living, how we define our identity, mission, purpose, and destiny, how we interact with our families and communities, when and why we get together with persons outside our families and

⁴ *Chai* is Strong’s Hebrew word #2425 **chai**. It is pronounced *khaw-yah'-ee*.

⁵ Please refer back to Tuesday’s Study of parsha **Acharei Mot**, in the section of commentary labeled “**The Nature and Essence of Blood**”.

⁶ That is why in going before us as a forerunner in living the Torah lifestyle Yeshua said: “**I have come that they might have life** [Hebrew, **chai**] **and that they might have it abundantly.**” [John 10:10] It is Messiah’s absolute, unshakeable commitment to Torah, His building of a human life upon and with the substance of Torah, and His walking out the Words of Torah on earth, that releases the living waters upon the earth and re-opens the watery pathway to the Tree of Life.

communities, and even where we live. We are not to behave like “*wanna-bees*” or emulators of any other culture. We are to be *noticeably different* from all other people-groups. We are from and of and about *another kingdom* altogether. We are not to think, speak, dress, or spend time or money or energy like the Egyptians or the Kena’ani – or *any other culture we encounter*. We are to be consistently pure vessels pouring out life, health, hope, gentle wisdom, and our King’s wonderful shalom in the midst of their mindless, self-destructive debauchery. We are to remain calm and on mission in the midst of their outrage. We are to stay joyful even when they make us the butt of their jokes or the victims of their anger. We are to remain gracious in the face of their ingratitude. We are to be content and satisfied in the midst of their binges of materialism. We are to be kind in the midst of their cruelty. We are to be loving in the face of their hatred. We are to be gentle and hopeful in the face of their barbarism. We are to remain Kingdom-focused in the midst of all their ideological, political, racial, class-envious, rants.

By *asah*-ing, *sh’mar*-ing, and *halak*-ing the Holy One’s instructions in Torah – His instructions on how to be a Bride to Him – we again can release the flow of the Holy One’s living water upon the earth, leading mankind to the Tree of Life.⁷

The Covenant’s Mandate Of Non-Conformity

The Holy One thereby introduces this phase of the ‘*Holiness is/Consists of . . . Discourse*’ of Torah by reminding His Beloved that she is [we are] *redeemed* from Egypt. We are free from the shackles not only of Egyptian bondage but of Egyptian *perversions*, Egyptian *mindsets*, and Egyptian *behavior patterns*.

Behaving like Egyptians is therefore now inconsistent with our Redeemed natures. We are called to be *different*, to leave the self-centered, materialistic, Egyptian way of approaching life behind. But it is not just the ways and mindsets of Egypt we are to eschew. For the Holy One also tells us:

***“and you must not live like they do in the land of Kena’an,
where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices [either].”***
[Leviticus 18:3(b)]

The Holy One thus makes it clear *He does not want His Beloved Bride to conform to the baseness of any society on earth*. We are to be *noticeably different* from all other people-groups in the world. We are from *another kingdom* altogether. We are not to think, speak, dress, or spend time or money or energy like the Egyptians or the

³ That is why in going before us as a forerunner in living the Torah lifestyle Yeshua said: ***“I have come that they might have life [Hebrew, *chai*] and that they might have it abundantly.”*** [John 10:10] It is Messiah’s absolute, unshakeable commitment to Torah, His building of a human life upon and with the substance of Torah, and His walking out the Words of Torah on earth, that releases the living waters upon the earth and re-opens the watery pathway to the Tree of Life.

Kena'ani – or *any other culture we encounter*.

Torah is to be our *passion, our lifestyle, our Constitution, our entertainment, our recreation, and our reason to live*. It is to define what we think about, what we talk about, what we eat, what we wear, what we drink, how we educate our children, how we make a living, how we develop our self-esteem, how we interact with our families, when and why we get together with persons outside our families, and even where we live. We are therefore not to imitate – act and talk like – the people we see on television, in movies, or in music videos, in fashion shows.

We are not to be “*wanna-bees*” of any other culture. We should not envy any group, any “clique”, however “cool” they appear on their respective silver screens.

This is a Test

By what cultural influences are *your* attitude and approach to life molded and shaped? Through what set of lenses do you look at **Your Creator**? Do you look at Him *through the eyes of some religious organization or theology*? Or do you see and relate to Him *through the eyes of Torah, on the basis of covenant*?

Similarly, through what set of lenses do you look at **Creation**? Do you succumb to the pagan vocabulary and mindset of the cultures around you, and call the Holy One's beautiful Creation by the insulting term ‘*nature*’? Do you look at His Brilliant Masterpiece of Creation through the eyes of the pseudo-intelligent evolutionists, humanists, climate-change fanatics, and environmentalists that control our teachers' unions and collegiate curriculums? Or do you see and relate to Creation through the eyes of Torah?

On a related note, through what set of lenses do you choose to look at, think about, and relate to **the Jewish People**? Do you look at the ‘Jews’ as money-grubbing ‘Christ-Killers’ under a Divine curse? Do you think of them as diabolical ‘Elders of Zion’ bent on taking over the world? Or do you see them through the eyes of Torah as blessed descendants of Avraham, through whom all nations of the world are blessed. Through what set of lenses do you look at *the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel*? Do you look at Jerusalem as part of ‘occupied Palestine’? Do you view the nation of Israel as a ‘Zionist Entity’ that is causing all the world's problems because it insists on illegally occupying what the clueless secular news media loves to falsely label ‘Arab land’? Or do you see and relate to Jerusalem through the eyes of the prophets, as the City of David and Messiah, and see and relate to the nation of Israel as the homeland of a Covenant people descended from Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov?

Going just a little further, through what set of lenses do you look at each of the

following [just for example]:

- Educational Choices
- Vocation/Profession Choices
- Food choices
- Clothing choices
- Entertainment choices
- Male-female relationships
- ‘Alternate lifestyles’ such as homosexuality and transgendering
- Abortion
- Euthanasia/’Mercy’ killing
- The Nations
- Man’s purpose in life
- The end of days
- The World to Come

We who are betrothed to the Holy One should be very, very careful not to adopt the attitudes, mindsets, or value-systems of the world around us. As the Holy One’s precious possession – his special-treasure people - we are called to *rise above whatever society in which we find ourselves living and walk as if we have something more valuable, and wonderful, that the people around us should desire.* Because we do. Or don’t we? If we know who and Whose we are, we do not have to – should not want to - pretend to be something we are not. We are His, and we are to be a light to the nations, not let the nations be a light to us. Nor are we to emulate the manners of dress, or incorporate the figures of speech, or to pattern our or our children’s educational, vocational, societal and religious entertainment of our neighbors.

If we have something better than the rest of the world, *why on earth would we want to emulate the way they dress, eat, talk, and live?* Why would we make *their* sports and entertainment celebrities *our* role models? Think about it. If you dress, talk, and act like the society around you, what does that say about you? It says to them that your mindset is “*I wish I was like you!*” It says to them “*My relationship with My God is of secondary importance – what I want most is to “fit in” in this culture.*” Is that what you think? Is that the message you want to convey? I didn’t think so.

Taking a Hard Look At What’s ‘Going Down’ Around Us

So, as we begin a series of studies the essence of which is “being different”, and as to which the maturation of our relationship with the Holy One is the point, I urge you to examine the society around you critically (not judgmentally), and ask yourself these questions:

What does it *stand for*? What are its *ideals*?
What does it *esteem as valuable*?
Where is it *going*?
What aspects of it are *poison* – whatever the dosage?

And let me make one point before moving on. Some may read the above, and think to themselves – this guy wants me to discriminate against other ethnic groups. He wants me to be an “elitist”. But it is one thing to acknowledge and respect other cultures, and to genuinely like and care for individual people within them; it is a wholly other thing to *adopt their ways* and *try to fit in among them*. To do the latter is:

[a] **a form of self-hatred** (because you thereby declare the other culture more valuable than your own), and,

[b] **a rejection of the plan and purpose the Holy One has ordained for you**, because you thereby declare “fitting in” more important than living by the Holy One’s directions.

You can like and admire an oak tree. That’s fine – the Holy One created oak trees, and they have the capacity to be magnificent (in their own way). But if you decide to spend all your time standing in the forest, and cover yourself with oak leaves and acorns so you will fit in with the oak trees, you will not fulfill your Divine Purpose or become who you were created to be. And you are not doing the oak trees any favors either!

So look at oak trees - and other cultures - wisely, Beloved. Look at them through the Holy One’s eyes. Do not allow your attitudes toward other cultures to be dictated to or inculcated into your psyche by the talking heads secular media, entertainment, and government.

Be watchful – and take care not to stand too close to the diseased oak trees of this world. At the first wind from Heaven the tree under whose shade you stand might just fall down on your head !

Take a Look at What Sells in Your Culture - and Why!

The societies of Egypt and Kena’an were intensely self-centered and self-indulgent societies, not at all unlike America, and Europe, and places like Australia and South Africa, today. All cultures of the world which are not based upon and flowing in rhythm with Torah inevitably begin to *obsess over sexuality*. People in such cultures inevitably come to define their identities by what sexual fantasies and desires they allow to run amuck in their minds. In such societies, as the adage goes, ‘sex sells’. Such societies take sexuality – which was given by the Holy One [remember, the first man, Adam, was created as combined male/female, and the feminine aspect was removed from Him when the Holy One made woman from his rib] – and declare “the more the better”.

In absence of regular meditation upon Torah and our responsibility as human beings to love our Creator and Sustainer with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, even natural inhibitions such as conscience and ideas of basic morality get stripped away. Sexuality then becomes accepted as the ultimate pleasure-source for man – hence sexual thoughts and talk and conduct begins to infiltrate every relationship – just as people on sitcom television shows in the Western World now introduce sexuality into virtually every conversation.

The root of the problem in collapsing cultures [like modern America, among others] is not the sexually oriented **actions** in which people engage – i.e. acts of adultery, fornication, pornography, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.; **the root of the problem is the culture's underlying obsession with sexuality.** Why do cultures based upon anything besides Torah inevitably obsess over sexuality? Because they do not know or recognize *a superior pleasure*. They do not set their eyes or their hearts upon anything more than immediate sensual gratification – or at least the fantasy thereof. They have not gazed upon the Breathtaking Beauty of the Holy One. They have not encountered His glory. And the lifestyles and conversations and worldviews they have seen among people who claim to know the Holy One and His Ways are not significantly different from the lifestyles, conversations, and worldviews they have seen among themselves. They have never been shown His Beauty or His Glory. They have no concept – or frame of reference for – the JOY and PLEASURE of His Presence. And they are *searching for something*. And the first places they look – since we have given them no transformative witness of His Glory, but only lifeless doctrine, hypocrisy, arrogance and escapism – is to sexuality. They think sexuality – in or outside of marriage – will make them feel more alive, fulfilled, and ‘happy’. But, of course, it won't. It will do the exact opposite. It will leave them feeling more vulnerable, more used, more unfulfilled, more needy of true purpose in life, more angry, more self-loathing, and increasingly miserable.

Our sexuality is intended to direct us to the Holy One, our ultimate partner. It is union with Him, spiritually, which our souls desire. In that union is our *satisfaction* and our *fulfillment*. But the societies around us would rather accept a cheap counterfeit. And they are, in the process, left with nothing of value.

We *must* be different. This is our time to shine a light into this darkness. 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*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In Leviticus 18:3 the Holy One, like a loving bridegroom who is trying to prevent his bride-to-be from messing up her life, warns us about something.

[A] What is it He warns us about?

[B] What does that mean for us today?

[C] The last word in Vayikra 18:3 is translated “ordinances”. Look up that word in Strong’s and Gesenius, and write the Hebrew word and its definition(s).

[D] What do you think are the “ordinances” of the Egyptians and the Canaanites that we deal with today?

2. In Leviticus 18:5 the Holy One says that through *asah*-ing the Holy One’s “statutes” [NIV “decrees”] and “judgments” [NIV “laws”] ha-Adam [the man created in the Garden, in the image of the Holy One] shall “live”. The word “statutes/decrees” is the same word used in 18:3 to describe the “ways”, or “customs” or “lifestyle” or “value-system”- in that case, of the Canaanites and Egyptians. This means the Holy One has “ways”, “customs”, a “lifestyle” and a “value-system” that He wants us to walk in that is different than that of “Canaanites” and “Egyptians”. Moshe asked the Holy One to “... *Teach me Your ways*”

[A] Look up the word in verse 5 that is translated “judgments” [NIV “laws”]. Write that word and its definitions.

[B] The word translated “live” has as its root the word *chaya*, which is Hebrew word no. 2421 in Strong’s. Using what you find in Gesenius, describe Hebrew concept underlying the word *chaya*.

[C] Considering the concept about which you just wrote, what does the Holy One say will happen to a person who heeds [*sh’mar*’s] His ways and His written instructions for life?

[D] What is the significance of the reference to ha-Adam [the man created in the Garden in the Holy One’s image] in this passage?

3. In today’s Haftarah reading we are told:

*I have struck my hand at your dishonest gain which you have made,
and at your blood which has been in the midst of you.
Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong,
in the days that I shall deal with you?*

*I will scatter you among the nations, and disperse you through the countries;
and I will consume your filthiness out of you.
You shall be profaned in yourself, in the sight of the nations;
and you shall know that I am the Holy One.*

*The word of the Holy One came to me, saying,
Son of man, the house of Yisra'el is become dross to me:
all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead,*

*in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver.
Therefore the Holy One GOD says this: Because you are all become dross,
therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Yerushalayim.*

[Ezekiel 22:13-16]

[A] What does the Holy One say He will do to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Ezekiel's time?

[B] What did the Holy One give as His reason for doing this?

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

*Don't you know that your bodies are members of Messiah?
Shall I then take the members of Messiah,
and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!*

[I Corinthians 6:15]

[A] In Strong's, look up the word our English Bibles translate as 'members' in this verse. Write the Greek word and its Strong's definition. What Hebrew word would correspond to this Greek concept?

[B] In what sense is participating in secular culture [meaning in this context the part of modern culture that is not centered on Torah as a lifestyle] comparable to joining ourselves to a prostitute?

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

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:153-160 [RESH]

*Consider my affliction, and deliver me, for I don't forget your law.
Plead my cause, and redeem me! Revive me according to your promise.
Salvation is far from the wicked, for they don't seek your statutes.*

*Great are your tender mercies, O Holy One. Revive me according to your ordinances.
Many are my persecutors and my adversaries.
I haven't swerved from your testimonies.
I look at the faithless with loathing because they don't observe your word.*

*Consider how I love your precepts.
Revive me, O Holy One, according to your lovingkindness.
All of your words are truth. Every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.*