

*Shiur L'Yom Chamishi*¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Kedoshim:*** Leviticus 19:1-37
 Haftarah: Ezekiel 20:2-20
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13-14

Sh'mar all my decrees and all my instructions for living, and asah them.

[Leviticus 19:37]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:161-168;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 2, *Teshuvah* [Turn Back to the Torah]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor - And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...
Daber el-kol-adat B'nei Yisra'el – Speak to the entire witness throng of B'nei Yisrael ...
v'amarta aleihem and say to them ... ***kedoshim tiheyu ki kadosh ani*** – you are to become/be holy ones, for I am holy. Leviticus 19:2.

The focus of our studies now turns to Torah's 30th parsha, *Kedoshim*. This is the parsha of *holy ones arising*. The season for Covenant sons and daughters to learn – and model to the world – our Glorious King's love language secrets is upon us. Hold on tightly to your hats. Open wide the innermost chambers of your hearts. This is the parsha we have been waiting for – the part of the Kedusha Discourse in which the Holy One finally teaches us *the weightier matters of Torah*. This is where we learn critical lessons like what *being holy as He is holy and loving humanity as He loves humanity look like in real time*. He is about to teach us the extent to which these things require us to *honor our father, mother, and elders, and daughters; behave responsibly in relation to our brothers; love our neighbors; care for the poor and 'the stranger', eschew occult & esoteric knowledge and information in favor of Divine wisdom and revelation; develop patience and emunah; be faithful, trustworthy stewards of everything He places in our care; and serve as calm, humble, joyful, gentle, self-denying ambassadors of His Kingdom in every context*.

Our Bridegroom-King knows we come to the relationship with an unsightly collection of blemishes, imperfections, spots, and wrinkles, and flesh-triggers. He knows we have been slimed by the talking heads of the raging nations, played like pawns by their manipulative power brokers, and wounded deep in body and soul by the constant attacks of their angry minions. He is fully advised and aware. He has no illusion that any act of righteousness – or even of kindness - we can conjure up of our own free will is as useless as a pile of blood-soaked rags. He knows our works are all just a load of wood, hay and stubble - and that – at least

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in comparison to the Messianic ideal - we are nothing more than soot, dust, and ashes. And yet, He looks at us, and all His compassions are aroused within Him. And instead of *ashes* He prophesies over us '*BEAUTY*'. And He actually believes His Words have within them the inherent power to bring to pass exactly what He prophesies. From our ashes, he calls forth *BEAUTY*. I therefore call the theme of *Kedoshim* '*Beautiful People, Arise!*' Our Bridegroom-King deserves a BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. He deserves a people who think BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS. He deserves a people whose mouths pour forth BEAUTIFUL WORDS. He deserves a people whose days on earth are filled with BEAUTIFUL DEEDS, reflecting a lifestyle of BEAUTIFUL LOVE. And so He looks at you and me today, and He speaks to something deep within your soul and mine, saying: "Beauty ... *Arise!!!*"

Arise ... and SHINE!

The subject matter of *Kedoshim* - and indeed the central revelation of the Torah - is that our Bridegroom-King's Grand Plan of Redemption involves getting ordinary people like us to *arise, shine, and reflect His Glorious Light upon the earth for all to see*. This is not primarily a matter of *verbal testimony* - it is primarily a matter of *lifestyle*. See **Matthew 5:16**. Our Great King has not just called us *out of darkness* - He has called us *into His Glorious Light*. **Isaiah 42:6-7; I Peter 2:9**. We are to be as the patch of ground at Horeb that was awash in the flames of the burning bush. Just as that little piece of ordinary earth became holy *ground* when it was bathed in Divine Light, so we ordinary folk are by His Light transformed into holy *people*. We are to be ever awash in the reflected light of our Bridegroom-King's joyful countenance. But the kind of shining and glowing to which we are called is not just an aesthetically appealing phosphorescence that brightens our countenances a little bit. Neither is it merely a whimsical occasional physical phenomena of glowing like the Aurora Borealis. The kind of shining and glowing to which we are called is intensely *practical, functional, and permanent*. It is a pregnancy glow - we are carrying, and preparing to birth into the world, a fresh manifestation of the Divine life-force!

A Process of Discovery

The kind of holiness the Holy One has in mind for us is not something that is *achieved*; it is instead something that is *discovered* and *nurtured*. The Covenant Call of Torah is a call to a journey of great discovery. All along the Torah journey, holiness is *found in plain view*. As those who elect to participate in His Glorious Redemptive Plan find these *kedusha treasures*, they *pick them up, put them on, and wear them like garments*. With a little practice, holiness can be encountered in the course of the simplest of actions - actions such as *honoring one's father and mother, and learning - the hard way - to love one's neighbor as oneself despite*

his/her faults. Holiness is found in *respecting and in doing whatever small thing one can to help the widows the Holy One brings into our acquaintance, the foreigners He causes to cross our path, the poor men and women or children we come to know, and the fatherless children the Holy One gathers around us.* Holiness is found in refusing to even allow oneself to desire, much less try to take possession of, anything that does not belong to you. Holiness is found in rejecting hate and condemnation, no matter what the provocation. Holiness is found in forsaking all falsehood and all deception. Holiness is *the lifestyle of a bondservant* – one who has, for love of a worthy Master, voluntarily dedicated his mind, his mouth, and his members to faithfully observing all the Master's statutes and judgments and making them come alive in every arena of life.

The Holy One sees holiness in terms of very, very practical life issues. And He considers our quest for holiness in these very practical areas of mundane life far more important to the accomplishment of our purpose on earth than how well we may sing, preach, teach, dance, write or play music, pray, prophesy, or evangelize.

1. Insights From the Hebrew Adjective and Its Verb Root

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'holy' is *kodesh*. This Hebrew adjective is first used in Exodus 3:5, where the Holy One Himself employed it to describe the ground surrounding the burning bush. The Holy One told Moshe to take off his sandals, because the place where he was standing was *adamah kodesh* – *i.e. holy ground*. The Hebrew adjective *kodesh* is derived from the Hebrew verb root *kadash*. That verb is first used in Genesis 2:3, to describe what the Creator did to the Seventh Day. He not only blessed the day – He also *kadash*-ed it. Our English Bibles translate this to mean He '*made it [i.e. the Seventh Day] holy*'. The verse goes on to explain that the process by which He accomplished this *kadash*-ing of the Seventh Day was to make it a day of resting from all His creative endeavors. We can see, therefore, that at a minimum to be holy means not to be like other people – but indeed to be *so clearly different from other people that a more respectful way of approaching and regarding and behaving toward you is appropriate*. He wants you to be different like the ground touched by the flame of the burning bush. He wants you to be different like the special day of His Delight, when He put aside all ordinary endeavors just to marvel at and meditate upon and enjoy His Creation.

Are you ready for the kind of Holiness He has in mind for you? I warn you, it will change your life forever if you get ahold of it. And you will never be the same again if you let His Vision for your life in real time get ahold of you.

2. Insights from the Hebrew Pictograph

The first letter of the Hebrew word *kodesh*, which our English Bibles translate as

‘holy’, is the *qof*. This Hebrew *consonant* pictures either a marked-off enclosure or the back of a man’s head. Let’s see what we find if we work with the latter – *the back of a man’s head*. Picture in your mind a man looking at and intently focused upon something in front of him. In the pictograph of the letter *qof* we see such a man’s profile. At what is this man looking so intently? That is shown by the next two letters. The second Hebrew letter in the word *kodesh* is the *dalet*. The shape of that letter is a picture/hieroglyphic for a *doorway, entry-point, or passageway*. So we see our man looking intently through a doorway, or passageway – into what? That is shown by the third letter in the Hebrew word *kodesh* – i.e. the *shin*. This letter represents *flames of fire* ascending to heaven².

The picture created by the combination of these hieroglyphic letters is that of a man (us) staring intently through a doorway (the Torah, and its embodiment, Yeshua the Living Torah), into the flames of the Holy One’s consuming fire. It is a picture one would see if approaching the door/opening of the *Mish'kan*; others, ahead of us in approach, but not yet inside the opening, would be staring through the doorway at the holy fire on the brazen altar. Their faces would glow with the reflection of the billowing flames of the Holy One’s eternal fire. Think of Moshe’s face glowing when he returned to camp from spending 40 days and nights with the Holy One on the mountain. This effect is what is sometimes called the ‘*contagion of holiness*’.

Captured and enraptured by the flame, a people such as is described in the pictographic mural above would now have *one priority and one passion*, and would as a consequence *not be distracted or disturbed by the things that distract and disturb ordinary people who have not had the encounter with Holiness*. They would look different, transformed – *holy*. Now we are getting somewhere.

The Essential Beginning Point of Kingdom Holiness

The Holy One is about to get very, very specific about where we can find – and ‘catch’ - holiness. The first words the Holy One utters after He commissions His People to arise and be/become holy are:

Ish imo v'aviv tira'u

Every person must respect his mother and father,

v'et-Shabtotai tish'moru

and cherish/treasure/guard My Sabbaths.

² Other sources envision the *shin* as an *open mouth [perhaps human, perhaps a beast or predator] with teeth showing*. The essence of an open mouth with teeth showing and of flames of fire is the same, however – both represent agents that *consume*. The Holy One is said to be a ‘consuming fire’. Deuteronomy 4:24 and 9:3. The prophet Joel, however, pictures locusts as being agents of consumption. **Joel 1:24, 2:25**. In Hebrew, the identity of the agent is not the most important thing – it is the process that is important. In other words, action and effect are more important than the identity of the actor.

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

The Holy One knows that the ‘holiness’ that can shift the atmosphere on earth must begin with [1] an attitude of respect for, and behavior of honor toward, father and mother [Leviticus 19:3(a)] and [2] an unshakable commitment to carefully treasure and draw Divine energy from the Holy One’s Sabbaths [Leviticus 19:3(b)]. Why does the Holy One attach such significance to these two foundational, definitional aspects of practical *kedusha*? What does one’s attitude toward, speech about, and conduct involving, one’s parents, or what one chooses to do on a day the Holy One has set aside for us as a Sabbath have to do with being *a light to the world*? Just as the reverential fear of the Holy One is *the beginning of wisdom*, the according of honor to one’s mother and father and the treasuring and keeping of the Holy One’s designated Sabbaths are *the beginning-points of holiness*. The Holy One knows that from these two things – reverencing father and mother and treasuring His Sabbaths - the *contagion of holiness* will burst forth and infect all areas of human life. But He wants us to know that without these two foundations in place holiness has no root structure - and is always going to be *superficial at best and artificial at worst*.

Honoring Father and Mother Is Absolutely Essential to the Grand Plan of Bloodline Redemption and Shalom Restoration

The Holy One’s perspective is that beautiful people must first overcome ugliness and pettiness and become beautiful *in the home* - in the most vulnerable of circumstances. The first relationships we have – and the most meaningful ones from the standpoint of building a foundation of holiness – are the relationships we have with the two people who were responsible for bringing us into the world – i.e. our father and with our mother. Our relationships with these two people are often the most emotionally charged relationships in life. We love them – then we hate them. We clamor for their attention and affection – then we are embarrassed by their embrace. We cringe at their disapproval; then we chaff at their discipline, and rebel against their authority.

Eventually every fiber of our being, as well as the talking heads of our society, tell us to *resent* our parents – indeed their whole generation and its values. Our egos, urges and appetites challenge us to consider them “prudes” and “old fuddy-duddies”, and to congratulate ourselves and our chosen group of peers on being so much “more enlightened” and “in tune with reality”³ than they are. The Holy One

³ A word of loving caution to all who *encourage* this attitude in our children by speaking negative things about one or both of a child’s parents, either in conversing with the child, or in conversations with others which the child may overhear. This kind of speech is destructive of the most basic relationship the Holy One established – and is therefore potentially destructive for *all* the child’s relationships.

says “be careful now - this is a test, and how well or how badly you handle it will determine how well or badly you will steward the holiness I am trying to bring forth from you”. Unless we learn to respect and honor our parents – the first authority figures He puts in our lives – the Holy One knows that we will never really be able to respect and honor anyone else, *including Him*, either. Unless and until we come to grips with, accept and embrace the fact that HE is the one who chose who our parents would be, that HE intentionally placed us in their lives, their households, and under their “authority”, that HE thinks our relationship with them is the first and primary ‘crucible’ of our decision to submit to HIS Lordship over our lives, we simply need not apply for the job of “*light to the nations*”. “Blowing off” our parents, and failing to respect them, will negatively *affect every relationship we ever have*. If we allow ourselves to “blow off” our parents, or either of them, we will eventually do the same with our spouses, with our friendships, and with the Holy One Himself.

How We Respond to the King’s Call to Sabbath Reveals How We Really Feel About His Leadership and His Plan

Then there is the second foundational issue of *kedusha* [Covenant-based holiness] - *sh’mar*-ing His *Shabbatot* [Sabbaths]. Which sabbaths? All of them, including: [a] the weekly *Shabbat*, [b] the work stoppages spelled out in Leviticus 23 in connection with the *Moed’im* [festivals] and *Yom Kippur*, [c] the *Shemittah* [7th year ‘sabbatical’ of the land], and [d] the *Yovel* [the 50th year “Jubilee”, where a cessation from labor is prescribed as an incident of reclaiming one’s inheritance]. But why? Wouldn’t we be more “holy” if we demonstrated our zeal for God by ignoring His call to come away with Him? Wouldn’t we get more accomplished for Him and His Kingdom if we just hit the accelerator and never stopped? *No*, the Holy One says. The Shabbat concept is *foundational*. How we relate to the Sabbaths established by our King provides an essential litmus test as to how we really feel about the quality and wisdom of His leadership. Consider the psalmist, who speaks of the Great Shepherd who *makes his sheep lie down in green pastures*. **Psalm 23:2(a)**. To lie down when the urge of the flesh, occasioned by the lust of the eyes for the green pastures that surround us, is to graze requires a great inner peace and sense of higher priority. The preceding line of the Psalm says, ‘*The Holy One is my Shepherd; I shall not want*’. The question is this: “Do we trust His leadership enough to rest when He says it is time to rest- even when there are things that our eyes tell us need to be done? If we do trust His leadership, we will know He has it all in control, and just enjoy His company while we rest. If we do not trust His leadership however we will rationalize, resist, and find a reason to believe it is more important that we just keep on grazing when He is calling us apart from ordinary activities to spend special time with Him

To *sh’mar* the Sabbaths of our King does not mean to hold ‘religious services’ on

them. Sabbaths are supposed to be about being with the Holy One, not about participating in meetings of men. Sabbaths are organic, not organizational. They are inspirational, not institutional. They are covenantal, not congregational. That does not mean one should not gather with others and observe the Sabbath together, of course; but it does mean to keep the Sabbath the focus rather than the assembly. Some people, you see, have come to value the meetings they hold on Sabbath above the Sabbath itself. This is idolatry. This is conduct unbecoming a Bride-People. To *sh'mar* merely means to *cherish* something; to *prize* it, to *treasure* it, to *cling to it*, to *stand watch over it*, and to *safeguard it as one would a sacred trust*. To *sh'mar* the Sabbaths of the Holy One therefore means to *cherish, prize, treasure, cling to, stand watch over and safeguard as a sacred trust* our Bridegroom-King's appointed Sabbaths. That means to esteem the special holiness and blessing that the Holy One has infused in those days as being more important than every other possible activity – and hence to put our creative endeavors on pause. It means to stop, breathe, remember and acknowledge the holiness of, and join Him in resting on, His Sabbaths. In other words, to *sh'mar* the Sabbaths of the Kingdom means to make them a major focus of our lives and reckoning of time. It means that we look forward to them, structure and plan our life around them, and spend time meditating upon and delighting in their holiness. To *sh'mar* His Sabbaths means to fully enjoy them – such that not one ounce of the blessing He has spoken over them gets wasted or returns to Him without accomplishing its objective.

Two Other Preliminary Matters that Are Totally Inconsistent With the Lifestyle of Covenantal Holiness to Which He Calls Us

The Holy One goes on to address two more very practical areas that endanger the growth of holiness in us. The first of these areas is the area of *what forces or powers in the world we will allow ourselves to attribute value and influence to*. The second area of these areas is *what we will allow ourselves to expend physical energy and the innate creativity He has given us to produce*. The exact words the Bridegroom-King employs in this regard are: ***Al-tifnu el-ha-elilim*** – i.e. *do not turn to idols*, ***v'elohei masechah lo ta'asu lachem*** – *nor make for yourselves molded gods*: ***Ani Adonai Eloheichem*** - *I am the Holy One your God*. Leviticus 19:4.

1. What Are Elilim [Idols] and Molded Gods [Elohei Masechah]

English Bibles translate the first noun that we encounter in this prophetic empowerment of the Holy One as 'idols'. The Hebrew word is *elilim*. The second noun is translated into English as 'molded gods'. In Hebrew the phrase is *elohei maseichah*. The literal translation of the Hebrew noun *elilim* is 'nothings'. The literal meaning of the Hebrew noun phrase *elohei maseichah* is *molded figurines representing the embodiment of mythical powers or authorities*.

The Hebrew mind distinguishes between *elilim* and their graven images [*i.e. elohei mesachah*]. *Elilim* are the revealing fantasies that underlie the tangible idols/*elohei mesachah*. Picture statues of mythological figures like Zeus or Aphrodite on a shelf. The idols/*elohei mesachah* are the lifeless statues themselves; the *elilim* are the real or imagined beings/life forces after the image of which the statues were molded or engraved. *Elilim* are larger-than-life people, mythical creatures, impersonal ‘forces’, dreams, or ideals. They are always the product of an over-stimulated imagination, flowing from an un-surrendered self-will. They are mirages of the pseudo-intellect - delusions created by the human psyche *to excite, to explain away things that can’t be explained away, to bring a sense of control, to justify attitudes or behavior, or to channel and manage, if not ally, fear*. Once they are created and articulated by one person, they spread like wildfire. They infect entire cultures. They color worldviews. They poison bloodlines. They siphon off the passion and energy we are supposed to be directing toward the One Who Created us. The Holy One is supposed to be the One – and the Only One - to whom we look to calm us, inspire us, to give us hope and confidence to face every situation, to give us all the understanding we need, and to curb our fears. The Bridegroom-King knows we cannot serve two masters. And that segues us to a discussion of the verbs the Holy One employs to tell us what we are not to do with regard to *elilim* in the first instance and to *elohei masechah* in the second instance.

What We Are Not to Do To/In Regard To Elilim

Our English Bibles quote the Holy One as telling us we are not to ‘turn to’ *elilim*. The Hebrew verb is *panah*. It is first used in Genesis 18:22 to describe the action of the angels who visited Avram and Sarai as they left his encampment and headed off toward Sodom. It involves the turning of the face, the gaze, and the attention from one person, object or place to another. It involves a voluntary departure and separation from the object of one’s prior focus, in order to focus one’s attention and aspirations on some other object, person or place. In other words, to ‘turn to’ *elilim* means we have to intentionally turn our faces, gaze, and attention away from the Holy One and start to think about, meditate upon, and look forward to imaginary supernatural beings or personified forces.

What We Are Not to Do To/In Regard to Any Elohei Mesachah

Our English Bibles tell us what the Holy One instructed us not to do in regard to any *elohei mesachah*, or graven image, is to ‘make’ such a thing. The Hebrew verb describing the forbidden action is *asah*. That verb means to apply creative energy to raw materials so as to fashion or shape something that gives substance, shape and dimension to an intangible idea. To *asah* an *elohei mesachah* would be to take the creativity, energy, and passion He has endowed us with in order to glorify Him and represent His Majesty to the world and use it for the exact opposite.

The Beautiful People our Bridegroom-King is calling forth the fix the world will accept the easy yoke He places on both their *thoughts* [which pagans ‘turn’ to *elilim*] and on their *creative energies* [which pagans use to *asah elohei mesochah*]. Only as, when, and to the extent our thoughts and our creative energies are surrendered to His Leadership, His Plan, and His Agenda will His Kingdom be revealed on earth and the *tikkun* [repair] process begin to bear tangible fruit. Give this important instruction of the Holy One some consideration. Ask yourself what you allow yourself to think about when you do not have to focus intently on an activity. What is your ‘default’ subject of thought? Is it worry? Is it complaint? Is it planning and strategizing your next move, your next acquisition, your next manipulation? Is it longing for something you do not have? Is it self-centered in orientation? Such default subjects of thought are not only unworthy for Beautiful People of the Holy One, they are actually unhealthy. Such uncontrolled defaults lead to ‘turning’ to *elilim*. Take control of your thought life. Actively displace your normal default subjects of thought with *thanksgiving to the Holy One*, with *meditating on the Torah*, and with *seeking wisdom, understanding and counsel from Him about the challenges, the people and the circumstances in your life*. Then give some thought to how and for what purpose – and for whose glory- you have been using the creative talents, abilities, and energies He has given you. Have you surrendered your talents, abilities, and energies to His ‘easy yoke’? Or are you using them for selfish or frivolous purposes like ‘self-expression’, self-actualization, or even making more money than you really need.

***Next Assignment – the Culmination of All the Others:
Loving our Neighbor As We Ourselves Are Loved by our King!***

The first essential element of the Heavenly Kingdom’s Kind of Love is *absolute integrity in interpersonal relations*. The best way I know how to express this in modern language is *honesty and reverence on steroids*. The world has more than enough liars, equivocators, deceivers, prevaricators, exaggerators, manipulators, players, and charlatans. Our Covenant Partner calls us to provide the world a clear and meaningful alternative. He calls us to model to the nations *another, more excellent way*. The Holy One therefore begins His ‘Weightier Things’ download with the following words:

Lo tignovu v’lo-techachashu

You will not steal, nor deal falsely,

v’lo-teshakru ish ba’amito

nor lie to one another.

v’lo-tishav’u vishmi l’shaker

And you will not swear by My name falsely,

v'chilalta et-shem Eloheicha Ani Adonai
nor profane the name of your God: I am the Holy One.
[Leviticus 19:11-12]

Since our Bridegroom-King never says one thing when He means another, neither should we. Since He never equivocates, neither are we to do so. Since He has no need or shortage of material possessions, and He is a Giver, not a Taker, so it is to be with us. Since He fulfills all His promises – and goes far beyond His actual commitment, so are we called to do. Since He does everything He says He will do, so should we. And since He *brings only honor to His Name*, that should be the focus of everything we do as well. For us to do anything else would be totally inappropriate. Shaul of Tarsus would later express these Divine Imperatives of Kingdom Love as *'love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.'* I **Corinthians 13:6**. But let's get specific. The level of honesty and integrity in interpersonal relations to which we are called has seven separate elements.

1. Lo tignovu – Following the King Means Stealing No More

First, *since the Bridegroom-King we serve does not steal, we who represent Him on earth are not to steal either*. If we are to represent our King honorably, we simply must learn how to respect other people's property interests. We are sons and daughters of the Creator of the Universe. He is our Shepherd; so we lack nothing. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside still waters. He restores our soul. We should, as a result, be so *'over' coveting*. We should be so *'over' any interest in laying up for ourselves treasures on earth*. If so, why on earth would we ever want to steal – or take by subterfuge or deception – anything physical and tangible anybody else on this earth has?

Please note, however, that this does not only apply to physical possessions. The Hebrew verb the Holy One uses to describe the first kind of conduct which is inconsistent with His love and His Nature is **ganav** [gimel, nun, veit]. Our English Bibles translate this Hebrew verb as *'steal'*. It means *to take away something from another person and deprive that person of the taken object or right's possession, enjoyment, and/or use*.

We are also to respect – and therefore not to *'steal'* - any person's *'space'*. For instance, we should not invade anyone else's turf or home – or touch anyone or even their clothing - unless they invite us.

Similarly, we must always respect – and therefore be careful not to *'steal'* - any man's *time*. For instance, we should never demand another person's attention, or his respect, or an explanation, or a debate, or an apology.

Thirdly, we must also respect – and therefore not *'steal'* - any person's *dignity*. For

instance we should not go around to people whining, complaining, or gossiping about how badly a person is behaving or treating us - or anyone else for that matter. Unless someone's life or health is in imminent danger, we should not in any way publicly expose what we may perceive as misdeeds or improper motives or priorities on the part of any other person. The public almost never has a 'need to know' of our neighbor's personal failings, weaknesses, or misdeeds.

Fourthly, we should not steal any person's *personal, household, workplace, neighborhood, community, or national peace* - for instance by going to any person's friends, associates, or family members to try to pressure them to change.

We are called to give consideration to what every man, woman and child within your sphere of influence has been given by Heaven a right to possess, trust that the Holy One got it right - and *let it be*.

There is, of course, one who *ganavs*. Yeshua taught that 'the thief' comes to steal. **John 10:10**. The point is that all who *ganav* show that their true father is not the Holy One, but is instead 'the thief'. Understand therefore that the *lo tignovu* [*i.e.* you will not exercise dominion or control over what does not belong to you] aspect of Covenantal holiness is not a matter of legislation; it is a matter of *identity, mission, and destiny*. It is one of the weightier things of Torah. As Shaul of Tarsus put it: ***"Give no place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."*** Ephesians 4:27-28. We are put on earth to reflect the Light of Our Bridegroom-King's Face and model the goodness and generosity that characterizes the Kingdom of Heaven. For us to instead *take or try to exercise dominion or control over something* – indeed absolutely anything – that the Holy One has given to someone else would be to prove we are not His People at all, but are instead subversive agents of the dominion of that other kingdom – the kingdom of *the Thief*. A little later in the aliyah the Holy One will expand upon this instruction, saying:

***You will do no injustice in judgment.
You will not be partial to the poor
nor honor the person of the mighty.
In righteousness you will judge your neighbor.***
[Leviticus 19:15]

There is to be no 'robbing from the rich to give to the poor' in the Kingdom of Heaven. No co-regent of the Bridegroom-King is to either take from the rich to give to the poor or take from the poor - or vice versa. Nor is it and appropriate for any son or daughter of the King to take anything from either the rich or the poor to use for his or her own enjoyment.

2. Lo techachashu v'Lo-Teishakru - Kingdom Love Is Real, Practical, and Honest

Secondly, since the One we represent *does not disappoint or frustrate people by making promises He does not keep, nor make representations that have no substance, neither are we to do such things.* We are emissaries, not independent actors. We are only to speak the words and convey the messages that the Holy One has instructed us to speak. We are not to act out of raw emotion or fleshly impulse. We are not to make rash vows. We are never to make promises – or threats – that we have not passed through the Bridegroom-King for pre-approval, counsel, and appropriate modification.

The Hebrew verb the Holy One uses to describe the kind of conduct that is inconsistent with His love and His Nature is *kachash* [kaf, chet, shin]. English Bibles translate it as '*dealing falsely*'. What does that mean? It means that we are not to imitate Ya'akov in his dealings with Yitzchak over the fatherly blessing. It means that we are not to behave like Lavan in his dealings with Ya'akov over his daughters and his flocks [see especially **Genesis 29:21-23 and 30:28-36**]. We are instead to be forthright, honest, honorable, respectful, and up front. That is not just a matter of personal integrity, or even morality – it is a matter of *Covenantal responsibility*. We are not in this for ourselves – we are ambassadors of the Great King of Heaven. The way we relate to people and possessions does not just reflect upon our character – it reflects upon HIS.

In the course of dealing with our dealings with others it is essential that we consciously strive to stay on the high road of unassailable truth. That is our safety zone. That is the basis for overcoming. Of course the truth can sometimes hurt, like a medical treatment - but honesty is the only script that will lead to either personal healing or relational health. Anyone who wants to successfully navigate through the human interactions of life has to learn from the Holy One how to aggressively resist the fleshly temptation to try to gain advantage [or avoid vulnerability] in such conflicts by engaging in any of the following:

- overstatement/exaggeration;
- unfounded accusation based upon negative emotion;
- misdirection;
- moralizing;
- double-standards;
- playing the victim to gain sympathy;
- employing guilt trips;
- resorting to half-truths or lies to cover-up his own mistakes/misdeeds,
- subterfuge,
- bluffing,

- projection of one's motives onto another;
- insincere repentance;
- false humility, and
- every any other form of deceptive thought process, speech, or behavior one may be tempted to employ.

Since our Covenant Partner does not use trickery or deception or subterfuge to get His Way, neither are we as His representatives to do so. We are not believers in a cause or a moral position; we are followers of a King. It is not about us. It is not about 'truth' or 'justice' in some empirical sense. It is all about Him, and what He is doing. The only safe path is to keep following our King wherever He leads, and *sh'ma*-ing His Voice and His heart as we go. This may mean we have to take a few lumps and endure a few bruises in the ego and pride areas. But as representatives of the King the goal in our dealings with other human beings is never to win - or even merely survive – a skirmish or contest. The goal is to bring Heaven to earth in real time. We are here to introduce health and healing, joy and blessing, goodness and faithfulness, and kindness and *shalom*, into the world. Such a goal can never be achieved through deception.

3. Lo-Tishav'u - Kingdom Love Means No False Swearing in His Name

Fourthly, since the King we have been redeemed to serve and represent to the people of earth does not swear falsely, but is always faithful and trustworthy to fulfill all of His Covenant commitments, we are not to swear falsely at all. Everything we say in His Name reflects on His character and reputation. So it is especially egregious if we invoke His Name while making a boastful, hyped, or false declaration, promise, suggestion, or commitment. The Bridegroom-King's Holy Name is not a magic talisman. It is His Presence, His Attributes, and His Character - not our pronunciation of the syllables that make up His Name - that brings His Kingdom to bear in a given situation. Invoking our King's Name in conversation should never be used as a way to get leverage, impress people with spirituality, or to get something we want. Our King's Name is holy beyond human imagination, and anyone who would represent Him simply must learn to regard it as such. He is therefore very, very jealous over His Name; and we He has redeemed should be jealous over it as well.

When in the midst of ordinary dealings with other human beings we need to ***leave the Creator's Name out of all our complaints, justifications, accusations, arguments, and explanations.*** We must not get haughty and self-righteous in the course of our conversations. We must never imply, suggest, or declare that the Creator is on our side, or against someone else. See e.g. **Joshua 5:13-15**. We should never declare that our Bridegroom-King is angry at or is going to judge, punish, humble, or oppose any person. That is not why we are here. That is not the

message we have been given to carry to the nations. The Creator alone has the perspective and wisdom to make those kinds of decisions. He decides who He will forgive and whose sin or whose name He will blot out. He's much, much better at that kind of thing than we are. And He is constantly at work in the lives of people, calling them to repentance, such that He does not need 'help' from us in the form of condemning them for their sin. If we let Him deal with the spiritual issues involved in interpersonal dealings - instead of trying to bulldoze other people into submission - He will always bring about a better result than we ever could.

4. Kingdom Love Means Never Profaning Our King's Beautiful Name

Since our King does nothing but bring honor and glory/weight to His Beautiful Name, we are not to do anything to diminish its honor or glory. The Hebrew verb the Holy One uses to describe the kind of conduct that is inconsistent with His love and the way His Name should be honored is *chalal* [chet, lamed, lamed]. Our English Bibles translate it as 'profane'. *Chalal* literally means to *perforate, pierce; i.e. to cause damage to something by making holes in it that let corruptive influences in*. Hence, to *chalal* the Holy One's Name would be to downgrade or diminish its holiness, reputation, and integrity. That is, of course, one of the things fallen mankind did consistently in the generations that culminated in the Great Flood. See **Genesis 4:26 in the Hebrew text**. Keep in mind, therefore, that every single utterance of our Bridegroom-King's Name by human beings has the potential either to *increase* the esteem in which that Name is held or to *decrease* that esteem. Any use of the Holy One's Name that is flippant, casual, or careless – or which arises from an attempt to manipulate another person or a situation – decreases the honor of His Name. Love for the Holy One and for our fellow man combine to constrain us to use our King's Name only in a reverent, proper, careful and selfless manner that will increase the esteem in which both He and His Name are held.

Reflecting the Bridegroom's Magnanimity in Interpersonal Relations: Doing Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do To You

The next level of *kedusha* [Covenant-based holiness] that the Holy One calls forth from His Bride-People is *magnanimity*. That means reflecting both His *complete understanding of human frailty and need* and His *compassionate response to same* – and doing so in *real, noticeable, atmosphere-shifting ways*. The words with which the Bridegroom-King chooses to address this important Kingdom issue are:

Lo-ta'ashok et-rei'acha

You are not to oppress your neighbor

v'lo tizol

nor are you to strip/plunder (anyone's goods)

lo-talin pe'ulat sachir itcha ad-boker

The wages of him who is hired are not to remain with you all night until morning.

Lo-tekalet cheresh v'lifnei iver lo titen michshol

Do not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind,

v'yareta me'Eloheicha Ani Adonai

but fear your God: I am the Holy One.

[Leviticus 19:13-14]

Lo ta'ashok. One essential aspect of what *loving our neighbor* means is that we do not *oppress* him. The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'oppress' in this passage is *ashak* [ayin, shin, kuf]. It means to *take a position against, to strive against, and/or to seek or take advantage in relation to someone*. Our Bridegroom-King's ***lo ta'ashok*** empowerment means that we are to have a 'handle with care' / 'do no harm' / 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' approach to all people. It means to view all interactions or relationships with any human being as *a precious opportunity to release life, health, peace, and blessing into another person's life* – not as a game, contest, or personal challenge we want to 'win'. We are not to approach interactions or relationships militarily; we are to approach them covenantally. The reason the Holy One has us interact with or be in relationship with people is not so that we can get anyone to give us anything [be it wealth, respect, or anything else], nor is it to make them to do what we want, or behave as we think right or believe what we say we believe. The reason we in the Redeemed Community of the Holy One interact with other human beings is solely about spreading the love, mercy and wisdom of our King.

Lo tizol. A second aspect of this particular 'weightier matters' download is that we are to learn to never dishonor the Holy One by *plundering* or *robbing from* our neighbor. The Hebrew word translated as 'plunder' or 'rob' in this passage is *gazel* [gimel, zayin, lamed]. *Gazel* means to strike a person so as to *strip the flesh off of him*. This can be done physically or verbally. It can even be done with disapproving looks. The Holy One's ***lo tizol*** empowerment reminds us that flesh-killing and flesh-shredding are not our business. Our Bridegroom-King knows how to kill the flesh in the most agreeable and healing way. We tend to slash; He gently debrides. We tend to flay; He tenderly binds up. The Holy One has called us to bring health and well-being, restoration and healing, to mankind. It is therefore never going to be our job to point out or try to beat down or kill any other man or woman's flesh.

Lo talin ... Lo tekalet ... Lo titen mischol. Another aspect of loving our neighbor involves *recognizing his limitations* – what he/she is good at ... and not so much; what he can and cannot afford ... and can't; what he can and cannot see ... and is blind to or too deceived or brainwashed to understand; and what he can and cannot

hear – and neither judging him for that blindness/deafness nor taking advantage of it to the person's hurt. The One we represent knows the weaknesses and inadequacies of every human being we will ever see or meet far better than we do; and He is all about healing and restoring. It is only confused and broken human beings who are into judging, mocking, and making life harder for people.

The world is broken. Is that news? All the people around you are broken. Why do you expect so much from them? All the world's institutions, organizations and political systems are broken. Are you really so foolish as to trust in any of those anyway? The good news is that there is still a way to fix the world. But it starts with getting fixed ourselves. For starters, we are not to even try to fix the world until we can appreciate it as it is, for what it is. And we are not to try to fix another person until we can love them as they are, where they are, for what they are.

Our King plans on empowering us to bring health and healing into our little corner of the world. But we have to start looking at the corner of the world in which we are assigned influence by our King with 'fresh eyes'. We cannot allow ourselves to feel, much less express, revulsion at any component or facet of our corner of the world, or anyone in it. We are not here to point out blind spots, to judge evil, to condemn folly, or to criticize vanity. We are not here to find or obsess about faults. We are here search the rubble and the carnage around us for any and every gram of potential for goodness that yet remains. Much such potential is there, dear ones, just waiting for someone who will look past the debris, find the sparks of Divine Creativity, and care enough to pick them the smoldering embers out of the ashes, dust them off, breathe life into them, and lovingly set them free.

The people of your world are waiting. And all creation groans in eager expectation. Are you coming?

Releasing a Fountain of Blessing, Not a Toxic Flood of Criticism

The Bridegroom-King's call to be holy as He is holy extends to many issues which the Holy One considers far more important to our purpose in life than how well we sing, preach, teach, dance, write or play music, pray, prophesy, or evangelize. There are a number of areas that define what 'Beautiful People' do and do not do – and it all seems to start with how they do and do not use the precious gift of speech. The Holy One makes it clear that holiness is inconsistent with *lashon ha ra*. One cannot be holy as He is holy and be an accuser, a gossip, a critic, or a judge. As the Holy One Himself puts it:

Lo telech rachil be'ameicha

Do not go about as a talebearer among your people;

lo ta'amod al-dam re'eicha Ani Adonai

nor stand in front of the blood of your neighbor. I am the Holy One.

[Leviticus 19:16]

Lo telech rachil. What is a ‘talebearer’? Are you one? Proverbs 11:13 explains: ***A talebearer reveals secrets; but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.*** Compare Proverbs 18:8, which states: ***The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles; and they go down into the inmost body.*** Proverbs 26:20 clarifies: ***Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.***

The Hebrew word that our English Bibles translates as ‘talebearer’ is *rachil*. This incorporates a lot of things involving the misuse of the human capacities of speech. A *rachil* is a sin-exposer⁴. A *rachil* is a *secret-teller*⁵. A *rachil* is an *accuser*. A *rachil* is a *blame-placer*. A *rachil* is a *drama-promoter*. A *rachil* is a *scandalmonger*⁶. The common element in all the above - what makes one a *rachil*/talebearer – is the spreading of negativity with one’s mouth. It involves *speaking in a negative or disrespectful way* about any person, group, movement, place, or thing. It involves *voicing accusations of blame and/or wrongdoing* – either as the original complainant or as a repeater. It involves making *derogatory assessments*. It involves *assigning guilt by association*. It involves *the calling of names and labels*. It involves *expressing negative opinions* about anyone or anything. Those kinds of usage of the organs of speech are all decidedly *counter-Kingdom*. The kind of holiness to which our Bridegroom-King has called us means that absolutely no *negative speech* should come from our mouths.

Lo ta'amod al-dam rei'icha. We are to see atonement available and made accessible at all times. We should never write anyone or any situation off as irredeemable. We are never to attribute to the Holy One negative thoughts or concepts which emanate from our own fallen minds. We are never to start a discussion or a sentence with a negative phrasing such as *‘It is sad [or pathetic, or terrible, or unfair, etc.] that’* or *‘I think it is so disgusting when people’* or *‘I am [or get] outraged [or disappointed, or hurt, or frustrated, etc.] that’* We are never to tell anyone *‘It makes God so angry when you’*

Do you catch yourself doing any of these things? Have your organs of speech – the precious vessels with which you have been empowered to bring *shalom* and blessing into the world - been used instead to bring discord, dissatisfaction, and drama into it? Has your tongue been used to fan the flames of dissatisfaction,

⁴ See Proverbs 18:8 and 26:22.

⁵ See Proverbs 11:13 and 20:19.

⁶ Scripture applies the descriptive identifier *rachil* to *one who slanders and corrupts* [Jeremiah 6:28], and to *one who causes bloodshed* [Ezekiel 22:9].

conflict, discord, rebellion, and drama instead of bringing healing and resolution? Make *teshuvah*, dear one! Return your vessels and organs of speech to their rightful, intended, ambassadorial use! Remember what David said:

*O Holy One, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?
He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.
He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend.*

[Psalm 15:1-3]

Reacting Calmly and Graciously To Other People's Misconduct

Another area the Holy One's call to ***Be holy as [He] is holy*** is designed to radically transform our interactions involves *how we react or respond when someone else breaks covenant, misbehaves, falls, or fails*. We are not to facilitate or excuse bad behavior, but we are also not to judge or condemn the people associated with such conduct. Our focus is always to be on the individual in question's potential for glorious redemption instead of his/her sin, and upon the future the Holy One can build if given a chance, not on the mess we see plainly in front of our eyes at the moment.

What are we to do when confronted with sin, weakness, or rebellion in others? We are to stay calm. We are to remain King and Kingdom-focused. **Psalm 37:3-7**. We are to act like we have been here before. **Psalm 37:30**. We are not to over-react. We are never to pout or fret. **Psalm 37:1**. We are not to allow ourselves to be repulsed. We are not to allow our flesh to indulge the least sensation of self-righteousness or condescension. We are not to reject the person because of the sin. We are not to go on a crusade to stamp out the sin or expose and embarrass – much less condemn - the sinner. We must also never let the sun go down on any anger we may start to feel. **Psalm 37:8**. We cannot ever assign a person who is presently sinning or going astray from the Will of the Holy One to contempt. If we are going to be holy as our Bridegroom-King is holy, we are to always remember the great mercy and kindness that was shown to us by the Holy One at the time the shoe was on the other foot, and we were the mess. **I Corinthians 6:9-11**. The love and mercy He showed us when we least deserved it, that is what we are to show to people who sin - even when they hurt us or those close to us. As the Holy One puts it: ***Lo-tisna et-achicha bilvaveicha*** - *i.e. you are not to hate (harbor negative feelings or attitudes toward) your brother in your heart.* **Leviticus 19:17a**.

Lo tisna. What does it mean to 'hate' your brother in your heart? It means to have any negative emotion or attitude toward him or to take up any position or stance that is adverse to him. It means to place yourself above or against him instead of alongside of him. It means to think, speak, act, or react like you are his better, his superior, his judge, or his enemy. It means to leave the position the Holy One has assigned you as his friend, his helper/co-laborer, his encourager,

and his counselor, and take on yourself instead the serpentine role of accuser, critic, judge, and persecutor. So, if we are being holy as the Bridegroom-King is holy, what are we supposed to do when we see a fellow man over whom we have been given a measure of influence engaged in sin? Our English Bibles interpret what the Holy One instructed us to do in such situations as:

Hoche'ach tochiach et-amitecha

Go to the front/be a forerunner for/set an example for your neighbor

V'lo-tisa alav chet

and do not bear sin because of him.

[Leviticus 19:17b]

Hoche'ach tochiach. What does it mean to 'admonish' [KJV 'rebuke'] one's neighbor? If you approach it Hebraically you will find that it nowhere near what the English verb 'admonish' or 'rebuke' in current usages seems to suggest. It most definitely does not mean to judge, accuse, attack, or berate. It does not mean to take on a superior, self-righteous air and show disapproval and disgust. So if not those things, what does *admonish/rebuke* mean? The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as *admonish/rebuke* in this passage is *yakach*⁷. This Hebrew verb means to quietly take step up and go the forefront; i.e. to humbly and discreetly go in front of another, take the pressure and attention off of them, and assume a temporary leadership role for their benefit. Picture a flock of geese. When one falters under the pressure of the wind and the exertion, another steps up and takes the faltering one's place. The second goose goes in front of the faltering one, endures the brunt of the wind currents in the faltering one's place, and lets the faltering one 'draft' off his movements until his strength can be restored and he can resume his place. *Yakach* does not mean to angrily reprove – or necessarily to say anything at all. It means to set an example, and take practical, effective steps to introduce healing and restoration to the faltering one in your sphere of influence. Accusation and condemnation have no place. What is needed is leadership – and respect for the worth and potential of the individual even when his behavior and attitude is nowhere near the holiness level where it needs to be.

Lo-tisa alav chet. We are here at such a time as this to *cover* sins, not to *cry* or *gasp*, *scream* or *gossip*, *fret* or *fume* about them. We are here to model and laud to the world the process of *t'shuvah* and the precious Divine give of atonement - not to wound people with condemnation. Every detour we take from the narrow path of Torah the Holy One has cleared for us into the off-course swamp of negative thought and speech will only complicate and prolong the effect of whatever sin we see in other people. Whenever we indulge negative thoughts, emotions, speech, and/or behaviors in response to other people's sins, we actually join them in

⁷ *Yakach* is *yod, kaf, chet*. Strong's Hebrew word #3198, it is pronounced *yaw-kawkh*'.

sinning. We do the work of the accuser instead of co-laboring in the work of the Healer. The Holy One then clarifies our responsibility even further: ***Lo-tikom*** - *you are not to take vengeance.* **Leviticus 19:18a.** The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as ‘take vengeance’ in this Divine instruction is *naqam*⁸. It means to *feel or express anger*, and/or to inflict any form of verbal condemnation or either emotional or physical punishment. Under no circumstance is either anger or condemnation to enter into our reaction or response to the sin, failings, or other breaches of covenant of others. At no point are we ever to usurp the role of either the accuser of the brethren or the Righteous Judge. Taking on either role is totally inconsistent with being holy as our Bridegroom-King is holy. There is a day for judgment coming; but this is *not that day*. And there is a seat of judgment prepared against the day of judgment; but *it is not ours to sit on*. Every time we reject this instruction of the Holy One and try to sit on the seat of judgment in our Bridegroom-King’s place, our counsel becomes the counsel of the ungodly, our way becomes the way of sinners, and our seat becomes the seat of the scornful. Everyone else will be able to see it, but we will not. That is why Yeshua taught ‘Judge not, that you be not judged. For by the same standards of judgment you use, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you dish it out, it will be dished out back to you. **Matthew 7:1-2.**

The Holy One is not done with this issue yet, however. Next He says: ***v’lo-titor et-b’nei ameicha*** - *and you are not to bear any grudge/offense/anger against the children of your people.* **Leviticus 19:18b.**

We are called to become more and more unoffendable each day. As we walk with the Holy One we are to take on His mercy, His compassion, His characteristic of slowness to anger, and His delight in forgiveness and redemption. Like our Bridegroom-King, we are to reject any negative feelings and disregard all accusatory statements about or toward a fellow man – and to keep doing so no matter how badly the person in question may behave toward us or anyone else. We are to indulge no bias, no prejudice, no predisposition, and absolutely no animosity whatever - under any circumstances ... *ever*.

The Weightiest Matter of All

The Holy One concludes this part of the ‘weightier matters’ download by saying:

V’ahavta lere’i’acha kamocha

But you are to love your neighbor as you yourself are loved:

Ani Adonai

I am the Holy One.

[Leviticus 19:18c]

⁸ Naqam is *nun, qof, mem sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word #5358, it is pronounced *naw-kahm*’.

This injunction is what has come to be known in religious circles today as the ‘second commandment’. But it is not something that makes any sense independent of the other aspects and definitions of love for neighbor that the Holy One has set forth in the rest of Leviticus 19. Radically loving our neighbor is part and parcel of, and presupposes the existence of, the other aspects and definitions of holy, covenantal love. It means nothing if not done in connection with a lifestyle of [a] refusing to get and stay angry, [b] refusing to entertain negative thoughts; [c] rejecting the temptation to accuse or even listen to accusations; [d] rejecting the temptation to criticize; [e] refusing to speak or behave in a condescending or judgmental manner; [f] refusing to sit as any man’s judge; [g] refusing to uncover or expose private sin or failure; [g] being there to help people in their time of faltering; [h] showing a willingness to step up to lead and protect others they are down; and [i] refusing to indulge, hold, nurse, or spread any offense, grudge, or sense of revulsion.

What does the Holy One’s “*You will love your neighbor kamocha*” empowerment really mean? Contrary to popular, simplistic theology it does not depend for an instant on whether or to what extent we think we ‘love ourself’. The issue is not whether, in our current state of brokenness, we do or do not love ourselves. The issue is whether we are willing to let the Holy One love other people His Way – just like and to the extent He loves us – only using our bodies and unique personalities and testimonies to do it?

We are not called to love our neighbor as best we can. It has to go much, much deeper than that to have any redemptive effect. We have to love beyond our capability to love. We have to forgive beyond our capability to forgive. We have to inspire beyond our capacity to inspire. What we are called to do is to surrender all our capacities and instrumentalities of love to the Holy One, get out of the way, and let Him love others the way only He can love them. He alone knows how to use our voices, faces, words, actions, and reactions effectively to express His great love.

Are you ready to become a humble vessel through which He pours out life-changing measures of Divine Love? That, dear one, is the weightiest of all the weighty matters of Torah. And that is what *being holy as He is holy* entails in real situations, in real time.

But What About Times of Real and Painful Interpersonal Conflict?

Some level of interpersonal conflict is, of course, unavoidable in this world. That does not mean we should seek it. And it certainly does not mean we should fixate on it. The wise learn how to navigate each conflict as only one temporary obstacle on a greater course. The foolish fixate on conflict, personally invest themselves in

it, and lose their sense of direction. When an interpersonal conflict cannot be avoided by common sense, do you at least know Heaven's rules of engagement? The first such rule is very simple: Keep three things in mind at all times:

1. this conflict will pass – if I can just resist the temptation to over-react to it;
2. how well - or how badly - you handle this moment of conflict could significantly affect not only your future but the future of the other person or persons involved, and all affected families, for generations;
3. all other persons involved in the conflict are deeply loved by the Creator, are designed in His image, and are called to greatness despite their obvious flaws – just as you are, despite yours.

So ... considering the ‘bigger picture’, is getting your way, having your say, expressing your displeasure, defending yourself, or proving your point ever really that important? Not in the Kingdom of Heaven, it isn't.

Are you in the midst of an Interpersonal Conflict? If so, and you want to navigate a provocation successfully, it pays to remember that interpersonal conflicts are not sporting events. At sporting events, some wind up winners and some wind up losers - and at the end everybody just shakes hands and walks away. Interpersonal conflicts are very different. If not managed, interpersonal conflicts can become bloody battlefields upon which some part of each participant in the conflict is guaranteed to die. The goal in interpersonal conflicts should never be to win - that would just lead to a rematch - then another, and another, until you eventually lose - with escalating consequences all the while. The goal in interpersonal conflicts should always instead be for all parties involved to survive, to heal, to move beyond the conflict, and to go forward from it stronger and wiser in every good way than they were before the conflict.

Everyone - including yourself as well as every person with whom you will ever have an interpersonal conflict - suffers from vast areas of blindness and deafness. What we each cannot see, what we are each unable to grasp, what we each do not know - would fill oceans if not galaxies. So how do we recognize and deal honorably and respectfully with the other person's legitimate blind spots and deaf zones? How do we avoid become blind men leading the blind and deaf men lecturing the deaf? Look not for what you can take from the other person, or what you can accuse them of, or at what bad things they have done. Instead acknowledge his worth and recognize and thank him for all the good that he or she has ever done. If you cannot do that, you will never work through the conflict successfully - even if the other person confesses to everything you believe he has done, apologizes, begs forgiveness, and repays you five-fold for everything you lost at his hands.

Do not expect people to see things as you see things, hear things as you hear them, or believe them as you believe them. Relationship is about communication and give and take, not 'right and wrong', 'good and evil', 'fair and unfair', or 'moral and immoral'. Do not think yourself superior to, belittle with your words or facial expressions, or in any way disrespect any person because of their legitimate blind spots, deaf zones, or areas of ignorance.

This is a time for real people like you to stay calm, walk in wisdom, stir up the smoldering embers of hope, and speak in pure words of faith pulsing with life, health and peace. This is a time for ordinary Joes and Janes of all ages and stations in life to engage as often as possible in actions that, if done in sufficient quantity with sufficient passion and frequency by a significant number of people across the globe, would fix the world. You have a distinct personality, purpose, and potential. Do not allow yourself to be so easily discouraged. You have a great calling, mission, and destiny. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Your Creator has designed you with the ability to stay calm, on course, and true to task even in the midst of provocations and aggravations. Do not allow yourself to be so easily aggravated or offended. You have seeds of greatness in your heart waiting to germinate, fountains of wisdom in your soul ready to burst forth, and reservoirs of strength in your body and its members just waiting for a reason to engage. Do not allow yourself to be so easily defeated - or to substitute good entertainment, good causes, or even good works for the awe-inspiring creative miracle you were created to release upon the earth.

Of course interpersonal conflicts come in every person's life. When they come, we must choose how we will respond, and where we want to go from here. Depending on how we respond, the conflict can either become a springboard into a powerful season of growth and maturity or a trapdoor into a season of regression in which offense, feelings of victimization, woundedness, self-pity, wreak havoc on our hearts, minds and destinies. It is not our opinions, criticisms, philosophies, or doctrines the broken world in which we live desperately needs; what will fix the world is a consistent outflow of acts of kindness birthed out of a joyful heart, providing an irrefutable demonstration of Heavenly Wisdom perfectly blended with Earthly love. And remember - whatever you sow you in this regard you will also reap.

***Respecting the Creator, His Priorities, His Will,
His Covenant Protocols, His Creation, and The Distinctions He Has
Made Between Species***

Another aspect of becoming holy as our Bridegroom-King is holy involves how we interact with and relate to our King's Laws/Instructions for Living, His

Priorities, and His Ways. As the Holy One Himself puts it:

Et-chukotai tishmoru

Keep My statutes.

behemtecha lo-tarbia kil'ayim sadecha

Do no let your livestock breed with another kind.

lo-tizra kil'ayim

Do not sow your field with mixed seed.

uveged kil'ayim sha'atnez lo ya'aleh aleycha

Nor is a garment of mixed linen and wool to come upon you.

[Leviticus 19:19]

One cannot be holy if he or she does not treat the Holy One's instructions for life on earth with honor, respect, and reverence. Everything the Holy One has said, and caused to be recorded, in the *Kedusha* Discourse, in Torah, in TaNaKh, or in the apostolic writings, He spoke and caused to be recorded for an important purpose. We must, if we are to become holy and our Bridegroom-King is holy, and fulfill our mandate to be His Kingdom of priest, learn to resist the serpent's temptation to re-write, re-interpret, and re-prioritize everything the Holy One has said. We do not get to substitute our pitiful imitation of logic, our ridiculously short-sighted frame of reference, or our blatantly self-interest clouded and flesh-obsessed set of values for our Creator's boundless wisdom and understanding. We do not get to just do whatever feels right or pleasing to us in the moment, or appeals to our fallen minds, and throw a spiritual-sounding label on it.

Behemtecha lo-tarbia. We are not to make up our own genetic formulas. For us, as mere mortals, to genetically re-engineer livestock species, fields, or orchards in hopes that we can make more money or get a little more production or volume out of a species is the ultimate expression of disdain for our Creator and His Wisdom. Every time we do so, we invariably wind up messing up the ecological system the Holy One established.

Sha'atnez lo ya'aleh aleicha. We who have been called to represent the Bridegroom-King on earth also do not get to disregard the order the Holy One followed in Creation and make up our own fabric blends in hopes of increasing sales or comfort. Everything the Holy One made He made unique – and that uniqueness serves a greater purpose than we can imagine. It is the utmost of disrespect for the Creator to re-design and re-combine His Creation in direct contravention of His instructions.

Honoring Betrothal Commitments Above Romantic/Sexual Attraction

The secular cultures around us deify romantic and sexual attraction. Romance has become an idol for both old and young, male and female. And sexual attraction

has displaced covenant commitment as the reason for and the substance of interaction, courtship, betrothal and marriage. But the Holy One has ordained that, for His People, sexual attraction is to be a mere biproduct of life and relationship, not the reason for or the focus of it. To be holy as our Bridegroom-King is holy means that we must keep our vessels and organs and appetites for sexuality under submission to a greater purpose, a greater plan, and a greater destiny. Just because sparks of romance – or lust, as the case may be – fly when two people come into proximity of each other does not mean that we are just to ‘let nature take its course’. That is sheer folly. It is toxicity and self-destruction, identity confusion, and mission sabotage all circling the participants like buzzards coming in for a feast. Hence, the Holy One says:

V'ish ki-yishkav et-ishah shichvat-zera v'hi shifchah necherefet l'ish

Whoever lies carnally with a woman that is betrothed to a man as a bondmaid

vehofdeh lo nifdatah o chufshah

and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom,

nitan-lah bikoret

for him there is to be scourging;

[Leviticus 19:20]

In our community no human being is to ever be regarded as an object of conquest or an instrument of personal, selfish pleasure. Sexual attraction and stimulation are to be avoided and resisted except when indulging same will fulfill covenant purposes – which means any time the urge for same arises in any context other than a marriage between a man and a woman who have entered into a lifetime covenant commitment to cleave only to the other so long as both shall live, and to become one with each other and no other person ever. If someone in the Covenant community selfishly chooses to violate this critical instruction of the Holy One, he is subject to scourging by the judges of the city. But neither party is to be killed if what was involved was just passion run amuck. That is not necessary, as an official scourging is expected to teach the participants, and any bystanders, the lesson that in the Covenant community, charged with representing the wisdom, ways, and superior pleasures of the Bridegroom-King to the world, base sexual impulses and urges can and must be mastered and controlled.

The Torah of Holiness-Infused Love

In the Kingdom of Heaven, loving other human beings unselfishly, expecting nothing in return – and doing so whether or not we want to, or feel like it, and whether or not the other person(s) deserve it or even desire it – is something we *just do*. Love is *the ultimate sign of the Covenant*. It, above all else, is what is supposed to mark us off from other cultures – yes, even more than Sabbath observance, or living by the Divine calendar, or circumcising our sons, or wearing/wrapping ourselves in *tzit-tzit*, or knowing, reading, speaking, or

teaching Hebrew. Love – radical, Divinely empowered love - is the ultimate essential component of our covenant identity. It, above all things, is what tells the world in no uncertain terms that we belong to Heaven’s Bridegroom-King. It is the *sine qua non* evidence of our New Creation identity.

We need to understand up front, however, that loving human beings is not something we are ever to do reluctantly or grudgingly, in supposed obedience to a Divine command. Loving people – even the undeserving, even without recompense - is supposed to be our chief joy. It is supposed to be our absolute delight. Why do we do that? Why don’t we judge, and hate, and criticize, and condemn? Because love – not hate - is who our Bridegroom-King is – so it is also who we are. Because mercy – not judgment – has been our portion, and has delivered us from bondage and from folly, so we trust mercy- not judgment – to deliver our fellow man from whatever has him bound up or deceived.

We also need to understand that neither is loving others to be done in hopes of reward – either the reward that comes from feeling good about ourselves or from some kind of eternal crown laid up for us in Heaven. In the Kingdom of Heaven, loving human beings is simply the only reasonable response to how powerfully we ourselves are loved – and loved unconditionally, extravagantly, and immeasurably well - by our wonderful God. Freely we have received; freely we give. Anything else is hype. Anything else is man’s religion.

As part of the *Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Protocol* the Holy One knows, therefore, that He has to take us back to school, and help us unlearn everything we have learned about ‘love’ in the world. He knows He has to redefine love for us - whether the kind of love in question be for our ‘neighbor’, for our life-mate, or for anyone or anything else. Our Bridegroom-King has far too glorious a plan of redemption in mind for us and the world to let us continue to define love the way the world does - in terms of emotions and warm, fuzzy feelings, and pleasant reactions. If His radical plan of bringing Heaven to earth person by person, household by household, interaction by interaction, and life-challenge by life-challenge is going to move forward through us, He is not about to let us carry the fallen world’s weak concepts of love into our assigned spheres of influence. He is not about to let us think of love in terms of tender affections, looks of approval, requited advances, or shared assessments of worth. He is teaching us to define ‘love’ as a life-pathway, with a well-defined set of parameters involving specific, concrete types of *behaviors*. Our calling is not to relate to our fellow men as other men relate to each other; our calling is to relate to our fellow men *as our Bridegroom-King relates to us*. The Holy One is teaching us that love HIS WAY radically changes our whole approach to life and human interaction. We have to learn love and its ways all over again. We have to come like little children,

asking our Bridegroom-King to teach us what love is – and what it looks like in real time.

The Western idea of love is totally self-centered, because it is all about how the thing or person makes the person doing the ‘loving’ FEEL. A Western-minded person only ‘loves’ [*i.e.* has a ‘feeling’ of attraction, affection, and good-will] toward people to the extent – but only to the extent - those people in turn make him or her ‘feel’ good and/or ‘feel’ appreciated. That is not the Holy One’s way. That is not Biblical, covenantal love. In the people of the Holy One, that kind of love – that cheap, unsatisfying imitation of love – needs to die. We need to get free of it. We need to ‘do love’ the Holy One’s way. The Hebrew verb the Holy One used in connection with the radical, transformational, definitional empowerment ‘***you will love your neighbor***’ is *ahav*⁹. While we have come to translate this verb into the English language as love, the Hebrew commitment of *ahav*-ing bears little resemblance to the ‘love’ verb we throw around in casual conversation. What is the depth, the breadth, the width, and the height of the kind of love the Holy One is calling forth prophetically from us? What is the substance of the *ahav*-ing He is calling us to do?

Ahav-ing is not about our feelings or our affections; it is about the stewardship of precious soul. *Ahav*-ing is not about getting our fleshly needs met; it is about co-laboring with the Bridegroom-King to meet the deepest needs of another. *Ahav*-ing has nothing whatever to do with how something or some one makes US FEEL. *Ahav*-ing requires digging deep into the Covenant and looking beyond fleshly things and personal likes and dislikes and desires, and imitating our Father in Heaven by making and following through on a covenant commitment of caring for others - no matter what hindrances, obstacles, challenges or cost may be involved in doing so. Unlike Western notions of ‘love’, you see, *ahav* is not an emotion. To *ahav* does not mean to feel sentiments of physical attraction, affection, kinship, or goodwill toward something or someone as does our English verb love. To *ahav* means to see the great potential in something or someone, and therefore to steadfastly pursue, nurture, and patiently and unselfishly guide that thing or person to the place of maturity and fruitfulness the actor visualizes. *Ahav* is therefore not conditional upon a response or requital; nor is it to be accompanied by mixed motives or mixed signals; it is a radical plan of action we commit to pursue in partnership with the Holy One.

But Wait - Who is Our “Neighbor”?

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘neighbor’ is *re’a* [resh, ayin]. It

⁹ Strong’s Hebrew word 157, this verb is first used in Gen. 22:2, to describe the quality and substance of Avraham’s relationship with Yitzchak – *in contrast to his relationship with Yishmael*. Hebraically, *ahav* is not something one *feels* – it is something one *does* because of a conscious choice, or preference.

is a noun derived from the verb root *ra'a, resh, ayin, hey*, which means “he pastures/grazes”. Hence, a “neighbor” is anyone and everyone who ‘grazes in the same pasture’ - or works in the same field, office, enterprise, or factory - as you do. It is anyone you encounter on your journey through life. It is everyone with whom you share any element of life. A ‘neighbor’ can thus be a fellow Hebrew or a gentile. It is anyone with whom you have to choose to either cooperate with or compete against, but who - because of his presence in your sphere of influence - you simply cannot ignore.

What Specific Actions/Attitudes Must Be Present In Order for “Love” to be ‘Ahav’?

The Holy One does not want to be vague, hazy, or ambiguous about what love consists of. He wants us to know what *ahav*-ing someone looks like and consists of in real life and real time. He has therefore laid it out for us in very, very specific terms. The substantive elements of His *ahavat l'rei'acha* empowerment upon our lives are:

1. *Being forthright, honest, and above reproach in all dealings [19:13 (a)];*
2. *Respecting each neighbor for the unique creation of our Heavenly Father that he is and not seeking to take away from him anything the Heavenly Father has entrusted to his stewardship [19:13 (a)];*
3. *Withholding from no person the Essentials of Human Dignity [19:13(b)];*
4. *Resisting the fleshly temptation to judge other people and situations based upon what we see with our eyes and/or hear with our ears [i.e. according to the ‘flesh’, meaning on the basis of information you gather empirically by observation or by listening to gossip], but to instead choose to see, think about them, talk about them, react to them, and behave toward them as the Holy One Himself would [i.e. in righteousness] [19:13 (c)];*
5. *Viewing and Treating No Man as our Inferior or as an Object of Mockery or Scorn, but as one loved and highly valued by the Creator [19:14]*
6. *Behaving toward, reacting to, speaking to, and treating people exactly – and only - as the Holy One would if He was wearing our skin [19:15(a)];*
7. *Favoring neither the rich or the poor; but instead considering each human being to be unique and valuable, whatever his or her station [19:14(a)];*
8. *Neither listening to, giving credence to, or repeating any negative stories about anyone, ever [19:16 (a)];*
9. *Not allowing ourselves to think, say, or act like any ‘neighbor’s’ life is not worth saving or that their difficulties are deserved [19:16 (b)];*
10. *Never allowing ourselves to indulge any hatred, offense, unforgiveness, animosity, malice, or ill-will toward any human being [19:17 (a)];*

11. *Being up front¹⁰, out in the open, about our covenant identity, mission, and calling with all people; [19:17(b)];*
12. *Not attempting to minimize or cover up our breaches of covenant or help any person ignore theirs; [19:17(c)];*
13. *Becoming an instant forgiver and an agent of reconciliation [hold no grudge, and never try to personally punish or see that people ‘pay’ for their misdeeds]; [19:18];*

In shorthand form, considering all the above substantive elements, we are always to do unto our neighbor exactly as we would have him/her do unto us. But we know better than to ever again get lazy, and try to divorce any one or any combination of these elements from the others, much less merely substitute the ‘golden rule’ summation for the substance of its component parts. We know now they are all totally connected and interdependent. And we are realizing, at last, that there is no way we can walk the *ahavta l’rei’acha* empowerment of our Bridegroom-King out in the world as the Holy One intended if we have not first dealt with the things the Holy One has said about honoring our father and our mother, treasuring and cherishing His Sabbaths, prioritizing the Kingdom Agenda over our own, and keeping our relational shalom and thanksgiving fresh and vibrant. We are understanding, at last, that the Hebraic concept of love is *an integral part of the kedusha* – i.e. atmosphere-shifting holiness – to which the Holy One has called us and for which He is making us over into His image.

Becoming masters in the art of *ahavta l’rei’acha* is why we were redeemed. The Holy One has invested the resources of Heaven in us so that we can spend our lives learning – and putting into practice in real time - what each of the elements of *ahavta l’rei’acha* mean in real interactions between real people in the heat of real life. These empowerments define practical holiness in Torah terms. Yeshua of Natzret did not in any wise make up or introduce to mankind the ‘loving your neighbor as yourself’ language. It was there all along - in the *Kedusha* Discourse of Torah. We are realizing that Leviticus 19 is the Torah’s ‘love chapter’ every bit as much as I Corinthians 13 is the Apostolic Scriptures’ ‘love chapter’. And while there are many concepts and cheap counterfeits of ‘love’ other than the Biblical, Divinely Authored, one described in Leviticus 19 as *ahav*, if we accept a non-Hebraic, non-Biblical concept of love, we will sow to the wind, and we will fail in our most essential purpose.

Our Bridegroom-King is the most joyful Being in the Universe. He can be – and usually is - playful and fun. But He is not fooling around now. He is downloading the *weightier matters* of Torah. This is not a good time to skip class or watch butterflies floating around outside the window. The Holy One has a plan, you see

¹⁰ The Hebrew word used by the Holy One here is *yakach*, meaning to *be clear, be up front, shine* [hence Y’shua’s teaching ‘*let your light so shine before men, that they see your good works*’”]

– and it is radical. He actually intends to redeem humanity and gradually restore Creation from its fallen estate to its Eden-like potential. And He intends for us to play a critical supporting role in that plan. That is why He is getting very, very real with us in Leviticus. He is expecting us to respond accordingly. He expects us to get very, very real with ourselves – and the world. He is making our calling clear.

Who are we? It may surprise you to know that we are not called to be *theologians sitting in ivory towers*. We are not called to conduct intellectual debates on points of doctrine or *halakah*. We are not called to be *judges sitting in marble halls of theoretical justice*. We are not called to be *refugees from the world hiding in fortresses with familiar religious symbols on the walls, familiar religious catch phrases filling the air, letting stained glass windows obscure our vision what is really happening to real people in the world around us*. We are not called to be *crusading vigilantes shouting through masks of self-righteousness at everything and slashing at everyone that we perceive, through our flawed lenses of short-term memory and self-interest, as being ‘wrong’, ‘immoral’, ‘heretic’, ‘blasphemous’, or ‘unfair’*. We are not called to be *political activists tilting at the illusory windmills in the realm of ideas, nomenclature, and ideology*. We are not called to be *frightened, germ-and-demon-phobic hermits hiding in bunkers*. We are not called to be *super heros*. We are not called just to be holy either in our minds or in a vacuum. We are called to be holy as our Bridegroom-King is holy. Yes, you heard correctly – our calling is to become holy *as the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the Universe is holy*.

Wow! Bomb dropped. Mind blown. So that is what this *kingdom of priests* and *a holy nation* gig is all about. Is this madness – or is it absolute brilliance? Is it foolishness – or is it impeccable, unassailable wisdom? Is it intimidating – or is it inspiring? Depending upon the depth of your relationship with the Bridegroom-King, and the extent of your commitment to His Kingdom, it can be either one. What it is, you see, is the narrow path that leads through the straight gate to life, health, and peace. What it is – and what it means for the world - is what the great love story between the Bridegroom-King and His chosen Bride-people is all about.

Dealing With Groups of People Of Special, Long-Term Importance

Et-bitcha – i.e. your daughter. How any society/culture/nation or ethnic group deals with three groups of people will say volumes about both how influential they have the potential to be now and how strong they will be in future generations. The first area of relations that reveals the values, priorities, present potential, and future impact of a society, culture, nation, or people-group are its relations with *its women*. Hence the Holy One tells us: ***Al-techalel et-bit'cha le haznotah*** - i.e. *Do*

not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, v'lo-tizneh ha-aretz umal'ah ha-aretz zimah - lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of perversion. **Leviticus 19:29.** A holy nation highly values and carefully guards the purity of its daughters – and the daughters of those who sojourn within its borders. A kingdom of priests understands that *today's young girls and young women are tomorrow's educators and matriarchs* – and as such hold the future of the culture in their hands¹¹.

Al-techalel. The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'prostitute' is *chahal*. *Chahal* means to perforate, pierce, or wound. It means to take something or someone that is whole, pure, and unadulterated and introduce something foreign and corrupt into it. It means to take something that is undivided in devotion and purpose and make it become conflicted – playing many conflicting roles, and serving multiple conflicting masters. A holy nation does not see its young women, treat them as, or train them to become objects for either sexual pleasure or exploitation. A holy nation does not incentivize its young women to become baby mommas. It does not refer to its young women *bitches, ho's, dames, broads, winches* or *eye-candy*. It refers to them as *banot* – i.e. daughters and household builders. A holy nation does not encourage its young women – or any young women - to dress provocatively, to talk dirty, to start drama, to chase after money, fame, or sensual pleasure, to hate men, or to become either nags, shrews, drama queens, or divas. It does not encourage them to try out their sexuality in ways that the Holy One has warned us against – much less ways He calls an abomination.

Lo-tizneh ha-aretz. The way a society treats and trains up its young women defines how much and how lasting an impact that society will have on the world – and whether that impact will be positive or negative. Think of the culture of Shechem – and the way its prince thought and acted toward Ya'akov's daughter Dinah. In that culture, a girl was just a piece of property to be used and discarded. Think of Sodom – and how living there, in the midst of perversion, induced Lot to offer his daughters to a mob to use as objects of perverse lust. Think about Kena'an, and how living there caused Y'hudah to think about and treat Tamar. Think of Charan, and how its cultural view of young women is evidenced by the way Lavan treated Rachel and Leah. Note that all those societies have disappeared from the face of the earth. Now look at the Hebrew culture, and think particularly of the honorable interactions Boaz had with the young woman Ruth.

Ha-ger Hagar itchem – *the stranger that dwells among you.* The second area of relations that reveals the values and priorities of a society/culture/nation are its

¹¹ Of course, women can also be physicians, artists, architects, engineers, lawyers, writers, inventors, entrepreneurs, politicians, soldiers, financiers, and the like – but by Divine design their primary impact upon the world, the Holy One's grand redemptive plan, and the culture of the nations is as a matriarch and educator. Truly the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

relations with *foreigners/outsideers*. Hence the Holy One instructs us that, when we enter the land of promise, we are to welcome foreigners, treat them with dignity – even though we are never to adopt or adapt to their way of thinking or living. We are to model STRANGER-LOVE to the nations just as faithfully as we model BROTHER-LOVE and NEIGHBOR-LOVE to them. The Holy One says:

Vechi-yagur itcha ger be'artzechem lo tonu oto

And when a stranger¹² dwells with you in your land you are not to mistreat¹³ him.

Ke'ezrach mikem yiheyeh lachem hager hagar itchem

The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you,

v'ahavta lo kamocho

and you are to love him as you yourself are loved;

ki-gerim heyitem b'ereztz Mitzrayim ani Adonai Eloheichem

for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Holy One your God.

[Leviticus 19:33-34]

We are to be models of hospitality. An essential part of our calling as the model nation/culture of the world is to model the Holy One's heart of kindness toward those who are far from home – out of their natural environment. We are therefore to show outrageous hospitality to foreigners – even though we are never to adopt their customs, their value matrix, their calendars, their mindsets, their modes of dress and adornment, and/or their priorities. And of course, neither are we to let them seduce us into inquiring into, running after, joining them in the worship of, or in any way serving their gods.

Mipnei seyvah takum. The third area of relations that reveals the values and priority of a society/culture /nation are its relations with its elderly. The Holy One instructs us: ***Mipnei seyvah takum*** – i.e. *You are to rise before the gray headed, veadarta p'nei zaken* - and are to honor the presence of an old man, ***veyareita me'Elohecha ani Adonai*** - and you are to reverence your God: *I am the Holy One.* **Leviticus 19:32.** Why should we do these things? What can old, slow moving, grey-headed people possibly contribute to the world? Why should they be valued above the society's athletes, rock stars, rainmakers, politicians, celebrities and ... well, *beautiful people*? In youth-obsessed and entertainment-focused cultures, the elderly are not prioritized or treated well at all. Having passed their physical prime,

¹² In Hebrew, a *ger*. A sojourner, a temporary resident. This is what Avram was in Egypt and Gerar. **Genesis 12:10 and 21:23-24.** And this is what Lot was in Sodom. **Genesis 19:19.** And this is what Ya'akov was in the house of Laban. **Genesis 32:4.**

¹³ In Hebrew, ***yanah*** – i.e. act violently, oppress - like what the Egyptians did to the Hebrews. See Exodus 22:21: ***You are to neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress [yanah] him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*** See also Deuteronomy 23:15-16: ***You are not to give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place that he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you are not to oppress [yanah] him.***

and begun to lose some or all of their physical beauty, they are either secretly or openly marginalized. Some might call it ‘age discrimination’. The Kingdom of the Holy One is to be different. Since neither physical strength and beauty nor the ability to produce wealth or entertainment are priorities among the Holy One’s redeemed, the elderly are honored and revered. The Holy One’s people are always to set the ‘gold standard’ for all cultures and ethnic group as to how to value, honor, draw wisdom from, and care for, our elderly.

Maintaining Unassailable, Uncompromising Integrity in Interpersonal Dealings

For the earthly representatives of the Bridegroom-King and His Kingdom there can be no division between ‘spirituality’ and ‘business’. Hence the Holy One states very clearly:

***You are to do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume.
You are to have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin:
I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt***
[Leviticus 19:35-36]

We are to take no shortcuts in business dealings. Whatever others may do or say to entice a customer or close a deal, we are to maintain integrity, honor, and honesty. We should not project to the world that what we are about is money. If we live modestly and frugally, and neither try to live beyond our means or indulge ourselves with the luxuries and extravagances of this world, we will not get ourselves into debt nor have any need to use either trickery or oppression to extract money from the people we are put here on earth to bless.

Embracing Our New-Creation Identity, Lifestyle, and Mission

Our mission on earth is eminently challenging, but our assigned task is not particularly complicated. We are to bring the ways and the atmosphere of Heaven to earth – conversation-by-conversation, situation-by-situation, in real ways, in real time. The instructions of our King are the tools/implements we have been given for this task - and they are all we need. In all the interactions we have with people or with the challenges of life, what we are supposed to do is simultaneously apply the teachings and release the spirit of our Bridegroom-King’s Torah. Everywhere we go, whatever situation we face, in everything we do, we are to seek wisdom from – and walk in the ways set forth in - the Torah, even as we praise our King and spread the sweet fragrance of His *love*, His *joy*, and His *shalom*. We cannot play our part in our Covenant Partner’s Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation without being immersed in - and walking out and giving practical application to - His Torah. Hence the Holy One concludes today’s aliyah by saying: ***Ushmartem et-kol-chukotai v'et-kol-mishpatai*** – *i.e. and you are to cherish/treasure/carefully guard all My statutes and all My judgments, v'asitem otam ani*

Adonai - and you are to make them come alive: I am the Holy One. **Leviticus 19:37.**

The Holy One has a game plan. He has given us a playbook. All we have to do is stick to the plan and do what the King's instruction manual says. The power to overcome is not in us – it is inherent in the Words themselves. The *chukot* [i.e. statutes/ordinances] and the *mishpatim* [i.e. judgments/declarations of what our King would do in a given situation] are *pearls of crystallized wisdom*. They are the weapons of our warfare. They are the strategies of our victories.

Questions for Today's Study

1. In Vayikra 19:1 the Holy One says: “Be ***Kedoshim*** [literally, “holy ones”], because I am ***kadosh*** (holy)”.

[A] What does the Holy One mean when He describes Himself as “holy”?

[B] What does He mean when He calls on us to be “holy ones”—what do you think a “holy one” is like?

2. Beginning with chapter 18 the emphasis of the Book of Leviticus begins to shift from what goes on in and around the *Mish'kan* to what goes on in the tents and houses and streets and shops and fields and pastures of the Covenant people. Looking through verses 1-6 of chapter 19:

[A] How many instructions does the Holy One give relating to communal ritual at the Tabernacle?

[B] How many instructions does the Holy One give relating to daily life and conduct?

3. Note that many of the *mitzvot* in the first few verses of parsha *Kedoshim* look like the so-called “Ten Commandments” of Exodus 20, slightly reworded. Which of the “ten commandments” can you identify in Leviticus 19:1-6?

[A] Which of the “ten commandments” can you identify in Leviticus 19?

[B] Write three columns, with ten entries under each column. On the left, list the ten commandments, one per line; in the middle, write the verse(s) in Exodus 20 which contain the ten commandments; on the right, write the verse(s) in Leviticus 19 which parallel each commandment found in Exodus 20.

4. Some of the corresponding instructions in Leviticus 19 contain the phrase “I am the Holy One [***Ani Adonai***]” and others contain the phrase “I am the Holy One your God [***Ani Adonai Eloicheim***]”. Look at the things commanded with the words “I am the Holy One”; now look at the ones commanded with the words “I am the Holy One your God”. Can you tell a difference in the emphasis of the commands accompanied by “I am the Holy One your God” from those accompanied by “I am the Holy One”? Explain.

5. What do you think is the reason behind the three *mitzvot* [instructions/commandments] in Leviticus 19:19?

6. In verses 32 and 33 the Holy One prophesies over His people that they will turn social convention on its head because they will **honor** and **treat with extreme respect** two groups of people which our society today treats - and probably the societies of Egypt and Kana'an treated - with disdain.

[A] Write a list of at least five ways you can think of to walk out the life-instruction the Holy One gives in Leviticus 19:32.

[B] What do you consider to be “aged”?

[C] Is that different from “elderly”?

[D] Look up the words translated “aged” and “elderly” in Strong's and Gesenius, write the Hebrew words, and describe the Hebraic word pictures they present.

[E] What instructions does verse 33 give for interacting with “foreigners” [Hebrew *ger*, meaning “alien”, or “stranger”]?

[F] What reason does the Holy One give for treating foreigners in the manner He prophesies that they will be treated?

[G] How does the *mitzvah* the Holy One gives us in verse 33 interact with the custom of the Jews of Yeshua's time that they would have *no relationship with goyim*, even if they were devout “God fearers” [E.g. what, prior to the vision of Acts 10, stood between Kef (Peter) and Cornelius]?

7. In today's Haftarah Ezekiel is prophesying to the “elders” about the sins of their fathers. In verse 5 of the haftarah for today he reminds them that the Holy One had spoken certain things with the words “*I am the Holy One your God*”.

[A] Which specific *mitzvot* of parsha *Kedoshim* does Ezekiel say the fathers of these elders failed to do?

[B] What does the Holy One say is to be a “*sign*” between Him and those who have been redeemed by Him?

[C] What do you think the Holy One means that this is to be a “*sign*”? [Hint: The Hebrew word is *ot*, meaning “*mark*”, “*sign*”, “*insignia*”, “*symbol*”.]

[D] List the things that Ezekiel tells us the Holy One did - and did not do - “*for the sake of His Name*”.

8. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today Kefa [Peter] is speaking about holiness from a Hebraic perspective:

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober, and set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah – as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves according to your former lusts as in your ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, you yourselves also **be holy ones** [Kedoshim] **in all of your behavior ...***

[I Peter 1:13-15]

[A] If you look carefully, Kefa gives 5 *mitzvot* in verses 13-15. List the five *mitzvot*, and explain in your own words what you think each means.

[B] Obviously in writing this letter Kefa was expounding upon the particular passage/parsha of Torah we have been studying. Which of the five *mitzvot* he teaches relate to Leviticus 18:3-5, and which relate to Leviticus 19?

[C] The NIV translates the first *mitzvah* Kefa teaches in this passage as “*prepare your minds for action*”. This is a strained interpretation of the Greek wording, which literally means “*gird up your loins*”. The NIV loses something of the sense of ***putting on garments of holiness***. Going back to our discussion of Leviticus 13:47-59, we know that what garments a person wears has a spiritual significance, because “*clothes reflect the man*”. With what kind of garment, according to Torah, were the priests to “*gird up their loins*”? [Hint: see Exodus 28:42-43]. Assume for a moment that Kefa was telling Jewish followers of *Mashiach* to put on this type of garment, what spiritual implications do you think that would have?

*May you be adorned in robes of righteousness, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests,
clearly distinguishable from the society in which you live.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:161-168 [SHIN]

*Princes have persecuted me without a cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
I rejoice at your word as one who finds great spoil.
I hate and abhor falsehood.
I love your Torah. Seven times a day I praise you
because of your righteous ordinances.
Those who love your Torah have great shalom.
Nothing causes them to stumble.
I have hoped for your yeshu`ah, O Holy One.
I have asah-ed your mitzvot.
My soul has observed your testimonies.
I love them exceedingly.
I have sh`ma-ed your precepts and your testimonies,
for all my ways are before you.*