

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Kedoshim:*** Leviticus 20:1-27
 Haftarah: Amos 9:7-15
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:15-16

You are not to live according to the customs of the nations

[Leviticus 20:23]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:175-176;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 2, *Teshuvah* [Turn Back to the Torah]

Ish ish mibenei Yisra'el – A man, a native of Israel ... ***umin-ha-ger hagar b'Yisra'el*** or a foreigner who dwells among Israelis ... ***asher yiten mizar'o la-Molech*** - who entrusts his seed to Molech ... ***mot yumat*** – death, surely death ... ***am ha-aretz yirgeimuhu va'aven*** – the people of the land are to heap up stones. Leviticus 20:2.

Have you paused lately to consider the present state of planet earth in general and humankind in particular? The Holy One has. He sees all. He knows all. He understands precisely how the bionetwork He entrusted to Adam and his seed is struggling. While human beings – especially in their fallen state – cannot see what the Eternal, Omniscient Creator sees, surely we can at least agree with Him that on our watch the familiar realm the Great *Elohim* of the Creation story calls ‘*ha-aretz*’ is currently much closer to ‘*tohu v'vohu*’ condition² than it is to ‘*Edenic state*’. While the air is still breathable, the water still drinkable, and the basic biome still viable, the ‘*raging nations*’ and *vain-imagination obsessed races & ethnicities* that make up fallen humanity are doing quite a number on both the planet and the firmament. Corrupt government officials and the sinister cabals that control them are wreaking havoc on the ecosystem. Offended races, ethnicities, and minority populations keep sowing the outrage wind – and quickly reaping the inevitable pushback whirlwind. Perverse entertainment and information peddlers fill the earth – and the minds and souls of men – with vile filth. Vengeance promoting and violence encouraging populist movements take turns making up narratives, rewriting history, redefining truth, and fomenting chaos under the guise of emotionally charged virtue-signaling labels like ‘social justice’, ‘common sense’, ‘diversity, inclusion, and equity’, ‘wokeness’/’anti-wokeness’, ‘anti-fascism’, ‘anti-nationalism’, etc. Toxic industries are spreading pollution; toxic institutions are promoting self-serving propaganda; toxic ideologies are spewing fear-mongering, hate-mongering, class-envy inciting, gender- and generation-offense

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² This is a reference to the state of the earth before Day 1 of Creation Week. The Hebrew phrase ‘*tohu v'vohu*’ is commonly translated as ‘without form and void’. In other words, a wasteland incapable of sustaining life.

stirring lies that no one even bothers to fact-check; political systems conjure up bogeymen and promulgate conspiracy theories in order to keep the deceived minions they call their 'base' in a constant, controllable state of agitation. The talking heads of man-made religions promote genocide in the name of 'activism'. With all that is happening, to the human eye it looks like the ecosystem of earth is spiraling out of control. But the Holy One is not so foolish. He knows He can fix this. He has a plan to do just that. Are you interested?

Send Us the Cure ... We've Got the Sickness Already!³

The Creator of the Universe has a truly inspiring vision for both humanity and the earth ecosystem. He has graciously consented to reveal that vision - and His grand plan to bring the vision about - in the Torah. One essential element of this vision is to call, raise up, and train the biological seed of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov [KJV 'Abraham', 'Isaac', and 'Jacob'] and the disciples He brings into their tutelage to serve the world as 'KEDOSHIM'. In English translations of the Torah, these are called 'Holy Ones' or, in archaic English 'Saints'. *Selah!*

The world is waiting for the Beautiful People the Holy One describes in Leviticus 19 to ARISE ... and to brightly and unapologetically SHINE. The Holy One has decreed it, so arise they will. The critical question is WHEN THEY ARISE ... WILL YOU BE ONE OF THEM? When the saints come marching in, will you be in their number?

How does one – a mortal, fallen human being – become one of these 'holy ones' /saints? The process – and that is what it is - requires a person to take on the attribute of 'holiness' as a Kingdom discipline. The term 'holiness' sounds mysterious or super-spiritual to many people, but it is neither of those things. Holiness, in the Biblical sense, is not a spiritual status imparted based on sacrament or orthodoxy - it is a practical, consistent, shalom-infused, Divinely-empowered and guided lifestyle of gentle, selfless service – all based in intense reverence and love for and strong covenantal commitment to the Creator.

What are the essential 'signs' and 'evidences' of this practical lifestyle? The Holy One summed them up in the chapter of Torah we read yesterday – *i.e.* Leviticus 19.

³ This famous line from the play *Fiddler on the Roof* was spoken by Tevye in 'prayer' while lamenting the poverty, hatred, and discrimination he as a Jew faced in his little Ukrainian village of Anatevka in the time of the rise of Bolshevik ideology. The line followed and explained in folk language the prayer of Jeremiah the prophet as recorded in Jeremiah 17:14: *Rafa'einu* (Heal us), *Holy One, v'erapei* (and we will be healed); *hoshi'einu v'ivashei'a* (save/deliver/rescue us, and we will be saved/delivered/rescued). See also, in this connection, the poignant prophetic admonition of Hosea 6:1: *"Lechu v'nashuvah al-Adonai [Come, let us return to the Holy One]. For he/it has torn, but He will heal us; he/it has stricken, but He will bandage us."*

Now, in chapter 20, He wants to show us the POLAR OPPOSITE of what He has in mind. Take a deep breath – this isn't going to be pretty!

***Sacrificing Children of the Covenant to Molech?
Frequenting Practitioners of the Occult Arts?
Practicing Every Form of Sexual Perversion?
This is Not the Stuff of Kedoshim/Holy Ones/Saints!***

What a roller coaster ride we are on? Leviticus 19 was ecstasy; Leviticus 20 is agony. Please, someone, tell me that the sickening list of serpent-inspired practices the Holy One describes in Leviticus 20 – could never – happen in the Holy One's covenant nation! Tell me, for instance, that no *ish* or *ishah* of Israel – or for that matter, any foreigner who dwells among us even for a few days – would ever throw away everything worthwhile in this age and the age to sacrifice his seed to a two-bit cult delusion indulged by superstitious pagans? How is such a thing even in the realm of possibility? How could anyone who has tasted the goodness, seen the beauty, known the majesty, or experienced the Covenant Faithfulness of the Creator of the Universe even consider investigating – much less serving - the 'dark side'?

Alas, it *will* happen. It isn't likely to happen all at once, of course – it is probably going to be the result of a lot of *here a little, there a little, Hokey Pokey-style* compromises. It is probably going to come on us gradually, if we indulge seasons of lukewarmness, wade the troubled waters of assimilation, and slip and slide our way into the cesspool of syncretism. Like all things the Holy One warns us, the 'Molech seduction' is a temptation we need to understand in its subtlest forms as well as its blatant ones. It is one of the many facets of paganism that we need to understand as a *matter of degree – a slippery slope* encountered any time one ventures off the Garden Path of Torah into the *chol* [*unholy, profane*] and *tamei* [*unclean; fragmenting, wholeness-shattering*] realms⁴.

***Alas, There Will Always Be Some – Even Of Our Own People –
Who Get Restless, Embrace Folly, and Wallow In Uncleanness***

The *Kedusha Discourse* is entering the home stretch. Over the course of several blessed weeks our King has been showing us, detail by detail, and situation by situation, what His love languages are and how they work, and what Covenant-based Holiness looks like consists of. As part of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover, He has been teaching us what it means, in real time, to ***be/become holy***

⁴ The writer of the pseudepigraphal '*Book of Jubilees*' equates giving a son or daughter away in marriage to any person who is not both 1. actively embracing the Avrahamic Covenant, and 2. attempting to live a Torah-based lifestyle – with giving/entrusting one's seed to Moloch. Some further opine that participating in any romantic or sexual relationship with such a person also activates the dangerous spiral.

as He is holy. He has taught us that doing/making holiness appear on earth His way begins with:

[a] *honoring our father and our mother* (the essential first step in making tikkun for our bloodline);

[b] *protecting, guarding and cherishing the holiness of the Holy One's shabbatot* [Sabbaths],

[c] *providing for the destitute people who actually live among us*, in our community, and are known to us, out of the abundance the Holy One has granted,

[d] *personally accepting and loving the foreigners* that the Holy One brings within our personal spheres of influence;

[e] *acting as we would like to have others act toward us* in all our business and personal dealings;

[f] *being truthful and kind to all*, and *refusing to hate any person or group*;

[g] *being instantly forgiving*, because we trust the Holy One to avenge and punish any wrongs inflicted on us or upon our loved ones as and when He sees fit;

[h] *keeping our tongue from Lashon Ha Ra* – *i.e.* saying negative things about other people, even if we are convinced that those things to be true;

[i] *not tampering with natural order and DNA of Creation* by mixing things that He says should remain separate and distinct;

[j] *not adopting hairstyles, facial hairstyles, body art styles, and clothing that mimic the pagan world and make us look like the "Canaanites" or "Egyptians" of our world*;

[k] *highly valuing and honoring the aged* among us;

[l] *treating the foreigner who lives among us with dignity and respect*;

[m] *not engaging in reckless or dangerous conduct* just for a thrill;

[n] *showing no favoritism, or bias of any kind*, in our dealings with people;

[o] *honoring betrothal and marriage*; and, of course,

[p] *loving our neighbor as we ourselves have been and are constantly being loved* by the Holy One.

The fact that loving our neighbor is the last thing on this particular list does not mean that it is the least important. To the contrary, it the weightiest matter – and most critical challenge - of Torah. The most important part of living by the Holy One's *Kedusha Code* is to receive, embrace, and extravagantly share His unique and inimitable style of unselfish, unconditional 'love'. The love we are called to show the world is to be as different from 'loving' the way unenlightened men are used to doing as the mountains of earth are different from the oceans. We are not put here on earth at such a time as this to judge sinners. We are not sent here to condemn fools. We are not even here to expose liars, thieves, hypocrites, or perverts. We are here to love. We are here to love our Creator, and we are here to love our fellow man. We are here to love until it hurts – and then push through, forgive, step up our game, and love even more. We are not to ever let our hearts –

or our love – grow cold ... or even lukewarm. We are never to let ourselves get cynical or critical. We are never to shame our King by setting ourselves up as the world's – or even our own community's or family's - *holiness or halakah police*. Our mission is to love people ... *all people ... the Bridegroom-King's Way* – i.e. lavishly, uncompromisingly, faithfully, joyfully, and especially powerfully when they least deserve it. We are to function as infectious carriers of Divine love. That is our *Job One*. And if we do not stay focused on and fully engaged in this assignment, nothing else we do – no level of either Torah observance or purported ministry 'in His Name' - will matter one whit. See I Corinthians 1-8.

What Happens When the Creator-Love/Neighbor-Love Protocols Set Out in Leviticus 19 Are Not Embraced in a Culture?

Alas, not everyone we encounter will receive, embrace, and join in our personal or communal dance of love. Our mission is to *offer* love, *model* love, and *draw people into the beauty realm of love* - but the choice of how they respond is theirs. Many men and women will not respond well. They will choose fear, anger, angst, and offense over love. They will choose the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of interpersonal drama and the 'morality' and 'immorality' measures of philosophy, ideology, religion, and politics over love. They will choose the haughty self-righteousness of intellectual cynicism, criticism, and pessimism over love. They will choose fretting over evil doers and worrying over the bad news reports and political scandals of the day over love. They will choose to indulge disappointment, disillusionment, sorrow, depression, and despair over love. They will choose lies, illusions, manipulation, and occult oppression over love. They will choose deception, and theft, and violence, and abuse, and courses of destructive behavior like human trafficking, rape, and murder, and perversion over love. Sometimes they will make bad choices like this because, quite frankly, we failed at modeling love to them and drawing them into love's beauty realm. Other times their choice will just be because the allure of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will just be too much for them. Whatever the factors that led to such choices, what is to happen when they make them? How is the world to be 'fixed'? How can the Great Plan of Redemption continue to move forward despite the choice of men and women to take such huge steps backward?

The remainder of parsha *Kedoshim* – which assumes our incorporation into our lives and relationships of the atonement protocols the Holy One spelled out in Leviticus chapters 1 through 7, all of the wholeness protocols He spelled out for us in Leviticus chapters 8 through 10, and each of the love protocols He spelled out for us in Leviticus chapter 19 – consists of the *protocols of toxicity-purging* that our Sanhedrin is to follow when people living within our community refuse to respond to and walk in the Bridegroom-King's great call to love. *News flash* - the

cities, towns, neighborhoods and houses in which we are called to live are not going to be utopias in which everyone does what the Holy One says - at least not in the present age. In the present age, therefore, being servants of the Holy One is not always going to turn out the way we would like – either for us or for the people within our various assigned spheres of influence. Sometimes, we – or others around us – will choose to do things the way that seems right to us in our/their own eyes. Sometimes we - or others around us – will walk in the futile thinking of the fallen human mind. Sometimes we – or others around us - will choose to follow the perverse, self-obsessed inclinations of the fallen human heart instead of *sh'ma*-ing, *sh'mar*-ing, and *asah*-ing our Bridegroom-King's wise instructions for life, health, and peace. Sometimes we – or others around us – will eat of the wrong tree. Sometimes we – or others around us – will try to build another Tower of Babel, or resurrect and worship another golden calf. Sometimes we – or others around us - will follow the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful. Sometimes we – or others – will behave like unclean animals and/or yield our bodily members to manipulation by *tamei*/unclean spirits. Okay ... so if/as/when/to the extent that the atonement protocols, the wholeness protocols, and the love protocols the Holy One has spelled out for us thus far in Sefer Vayikra do not solve the problems such really bad choices create - what then?

The consequences to us of misrepresenting our King and His Kingdom to the world, and the consequences to others of rejecting the love of our King and His Beautiful Plan of Redemption for mankind and Creation are significant – and sometimes will, to our minds, seem severe. But even the most severe consequences that the Holy One, in His Wisdom, decrees are necessary for the community to thrive and move forward are motivated and guided by love. And those consequences are not to be imposed by angry, offended mobs of vigilantes. They are not to be imposed in anger, or in retribution, or in religious fervor. The Holy One calls for us to be merciful – and calm - even in judgment. He therefore calls upon us to establish a system of accountability that operates under the watchful eye and calming influence of due process. Only after both the love protocols of Leviticus 19 have been exhausted AND all the due process protocols of Torah fulfilled is discipline to administered.

Protocols of Communal Purging –

After Someone Rejects All Atonement, Wholeness, and Love Protocols

The Holy One has designed, and is revealing at Sinai as part of the *Kedusha* Discourse, a system through which He wants His Redeemed Community to deal with mission-sensitive social and societal atonement/wholeness/love rejection problems as, when, and to the extent they arise. He started by declaring the responsibility of the *Sanhedrin* to enforce the sentence of death in regard to the

most blatant forms of anti-Kedusha – i.e. sacrificing children to idols and practicing occult arts. That passage began a section of Torah in which the Holy One specifies what penalties the Sanhedrin is to enforce in specific situations where it has been proven beyond a strict standard of proof [upon the testimony of two or three witnesses] in a judicial proceeding that a person in the redeemed community has committed actions that the Holy One in His Wisdom advises are so incompatible with the holiness of the land that punishment is necessary. The *minimum amount of force necessary for the protection of the Redeemed Community and keep its greater redemptive mission moving forward* is always the guideline. The goal of the Holy One is neither retribution nor deterrence. What He calls for by the Holy One is simply what is necessary to purge the Redeemed Community of any bitter root toxic enough to derail our grand redemptive mission and put out our light.

The Protocols of Enhanced Accountability and Due Process Under Which the Holy One Calls His Redeemed Community To Live

In today's aliyah our Bridegroom-King is about to expand upon the news that our Covenant with the Bridegroom-King is from time-to-time going to require the ruling council of our people to enforce some serious consequences upon certain people within our communities whose actions compromise the Great Collective Light-Bringing and Salt-Spreading Mission to which we have been called. This is, however, to be a very rare occurrence – not our primary focus by any means. And when it occurs, it is to be done only when and as the Holy One says. There are three primary protocols of purging He directs us – through our ruling council, not individually or privately – to consider and/or employ.

Phase I Discipline/Purging: *The Setting of the Holy One's Face Against Those Who Turn Their Path Away from the Covenant*

As sons of Adam we are designed to live in the Light of our Creator's Shining Countenance. We are programmed to thrive in His Presence, under His watchful, approving eye, as He *blesses us and keeps us, makes His Face shine upon us, lifts His Countenance upon us, and gives us shalom*. See also Psalm 67:1: ***God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, Selah!*** And consider also: ***Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes*** [Psalm 119:135] and ***"In the light of the King's face is life, and His favor is like a cloud of the latter rain.*** Proverbs 18:15. See also Daniel 9:3: ***I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.*** Our King's Presence is fullness of joy. His words are beauty and wisdom poured forth simultaneously. His Favor is life itself. And oh, the energy and magnetism that comes to us from HIS FACE! As Ya'akov said: ***I have seen God face to Face, and my life is preserved.*** Genesis 32:30. And as David said: ***When You said, "Seek My face", My heart said to You, "Your face, O Holy One, I will***

seek” [Psalm 27:8] and As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your Face forever. Psalm 41:12.

We flourish when and to the extent – but *only* when and to the extent – we abide *al-p’nei* [i.e. face to Face] with the Holy One. With the Holy One’s Face comes His Favor, His Voice, His Words, and His Breath. Think about that for a moment. Now perhaps you can see why seeking His Face – and all that comes with it – is so important for us. So, any time we start taking steps away from His Presence, what we are really doing is *depriving ourselves of the most valuable thing in the Universe – the Light of His Face*. Out of a mixture of wisdom and love, therefore, the first phase of discipline that the Holy One invokes therefore is simply what He calls *setting His Face against us*. Since the pathway upon which we have chosen to embark is leading away from His Presence, the further we go from Him and His pathway the dimmer the Light of His Countenance gets. The farther we go from His Presence and the Light of His Face, the less Divine illumination we enjoy, and the more darkness we experience. The Light of our Bridegroom-King is ever behind us, ever inviting our return, ever calling us back to His Presence and to the beautiful pathways of life, health, and *shalom* that He has established for us. We should respond and return. But if we do not, what comes next?

As Sh’lomo declared on behalf of the Holy One: ***“I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble. The path of the just is like the shining sun that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. But the way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. Proverbs 4:11-12 and 18-19.*** What is the effect of walking in increasing darkness? At first a person just experiences what skiers call ‘flat light’. That means a dim, hazy level of light that does not permit depth perception. You don’t see obstacles and dangerous drop-offs ahead until you are right on them. Unable to avoid these obstacles and pitfalls, you lose the sense of controlled movement. You slip. You stumble. You begin to lose confidence. Or at least you should. How you respond is up to you. The Light of our Bridegroom-King’s Face always illumines and clearly marks off the way back to His Presence. But it will never illumine the way forward into rebellion. It will never facilitate us in running away from our covenant identity, mission, and destiny. If you choose to continue further down the pathway leading away from the Bridegroom-King’s Presence, therefore, you find that the Light of the Bridegroom-King’s Face becomes even more faint. You experience a sense of overwhelm and confusion. You get angry. You blame God. You blame the people around you. You blame your environment. You blame your parents. You blame your lovers and friends. You even blame yourself. But through it all, in the midst of all your blaming, you continue doing the very things that got you in the mess in the first place. You keep repeating

the same behaviors and hoping for different results. When it does not seem to be working, you resolve to try harder. But trying harder to do the wrong things does not ever help; indeed, it just makes things worse. You keep running into obstacles you did not see coming. You keep falling into the same traps over and over again. About the time you think you have regained your equilibrium and are about to make some progress you get blindsided again. This time you don't just stumble – it knocks you off your feet. You hit hard. You gasp for breath. You bleed. You bruise. You ache. You scream. This is where the script calls for you to think about your father's house, home, and bread, dear prodigal. But unfortunately, let's say you choose another way.

If instead of going back to the Light of Father's Face you decide to continue on the same bearing at which you departed the Garden path, you become like one of those about whom Yeshua spoke: ***Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather light, because their deeds are evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*** John 3:19-20.

Once you begin seeking the darkness instead of running to the Light, you *quit giving thanks to the Holy One. You stop meditating on His Words of Life.* Your internal light therefore is reduced to an ash-covered ember, visible to no one except the Holy One. You stop acknowledging the Holy One as your One and only King. You begin to resent Him. You marginalize Him. You scoff at His Ways. You embrace the serpent's thoughts concerning Him – that He is only trying to keep you from knowing what you want to know, seeing what you want to see, feeling what you want to feel, doing what you want to do, and becoming what you want to be. You willingly start serving other gods. It starts with self-will, of course, but also proceeds quickly to expand to entertainment, romance, sensuality, philosophy, ideology, cause, Mammon and hate. Having neither the Light of the Holy One's Countenance nor any significant glow from your own internal lamp results in the opening of a door to conversations with spirits that hover around uncleanness. The darkness surrounding you invites visitations from dark forces. As darkness becomes more and more pervasive around and in you, you find yourself entertaining, and ultimately making deals with, unclean spirits. Bit by bit, piece by piece, you surrender authority over your soul – i.e. your mind, your will, and your emotions - to the dark energy of the unclean spirits you hang around. As a result, you find yourself seething with anger all the time - and you have no idea why. As you are slowly being poisoned by the toxic juices of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you start becoming hypocritical and self-righteous – and you are the only one who cannot see it. You start applying ever higher moral, ethical, relational and performance standards to the people in your spheres of influence – as well as those outside of them, especially in the media realm - even as you simultaneously apply lower and lower moral, ethical, relational, and performance standards to yourself. You become

really adept at placing blame and calling out hypocrisy – but really inept at loving or actually helping anyone. Your conversation degenerates into self-serving *serpent-speak* – i.e. sarcasm, cynicism, accusation, condemnation, deflection, misinformation, projection, and incitement. You start to experience ever-more-dramatic mood swings. Your behavior becomes addictive, as you look for anything that will comfort and pleasure your flesh – or at least make you forget your higher calling. You spend money on all the wrong things. You simultaneously indulge self-pity – and inordinate human compassion. You simultaneously embrace self-hatred and prejudice towards other races, economic classes, nations, regions, and groups other than your own. You alternatively surrender to rage, to fear, to sadness, and to the futile search for *nirvana* – the demonic mirage of a perfect state of being. This level of darkness is known as *spiritual blindness*. And when the blind lead the blind ... well, you know how that turns out, don't you? The Holy One is not deterred. He says: ***“They have turned their back to Me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, ‘Arise and save us.’”*** Jeremiah 2:27.

Phase II Discipline/Purging:

Karat [Being Cut Off from One's People]

If for whatever reason a person refuses to respond to Phase I of the Holy One's discipline, the Holy One does not give up on him or her. He just resorts to Phase II of His great prodigal-retrieval plan. This phase of the disciplinary process is called *karat*⁵ – i.e. *cutting off*. Our English Bibles refer to this type of divine discipline as a person being ‘cut off from his people’. Like everything associated with the Kingdom – or for that matter the Hebrew language – *karat* comes in stages/phases. And every stage of *karat* – except the last, ultimate stage of axe to the root destruction - is strategically designed to bring about the critical goal of *prodigal retrieval*, and is therefore released in carefully measured doses in order to attain maximum results with the least possible amount of actual harm to the prodigal.

At first, the person cuts himself off from others. Think about it. The people he previously associated with – i.e. ‘his people’ – were the ones with whom he used to share the Light of the Bridegroom-King's Countenance. When he decided to leave the well-lit pathway of the King, he necessarily had to leave the people who remained on that pathway. They continued to bask in the Light; he wandered off into the darkness. He thus started the process of *karat* by cutting himself off from his people. This is the first level of *karat* – the level that is totally self-inflicted. After all, as the prophet Amos astutely observed: *Can two walk together unless they be agreed?* **Amos 3:3**. Once a person starts walking away from the King's Countenance he begins to find less and less subject matter for conversations with those who are

⁵ *Karat* is *kaf, resh, tav*. Strong's Hebrew word #3772, it means to be cut off like an unproductive tree limb – i.e. pruned for the sake of the tree's health and/or the maximization of the harvest, or even cut down like a tree [axe laid to the roots].

still basking in that Light. What can they talk about? All those in the Light want to talk about is the King, His Goodness, and His Ways. That has lost interest to the prodigal. What then can they say to one another? What can they do together? Being around ‘his people’ is suddenly just too uncomfortable for the prodigal to handle. Iron sharpens iron, and he is convinced he is quite sharp enough. He wants to run wild. He does not want wise counsel. He does not want correction. He most certainly does not want conviction. He therefore cuts himself off from ‘his people’. He finds new associates - i.e. people who are running away like he is, and people who will talk about the kind of things he now wants to talk about. He finds himself drawn to people who share his opinions – and the unclean spirits that inhabit those opinions. He finds people with whom he can spout off about sensuality and sexuality, politics and religion, philosophy and ideology, entertainment and illusion, money and power, and morality and cause.

The problem is that none of the new people the prodigal finds to talk to and walk with actually inspire him. None feeds his zest for life. None really fills any of the ever-expanding holes in his soul. They just keep disappointing him. And he keeps disappointing them as well. They are all looking for inspiration – and life, and love – in all the wrong places. They are all chasing a mirage. They are all living out Ecclesiastes’ *vanity of vanities* nightmare. And each of them has an entitlement mentality that both feeds into and feeds off of their narcissistic tendencies as well as those of their new ‘associates’. And so, eventually, all the new, pathological cronies leave the prodigal – or he leaves them. They are all too toxic in thought, speech, and behavior to tolerate for long. So, the prodigal retreats into himself and his world of corrupted thought and emotion. He goes through withdrawal syndrome. He self-identifies as ‘rejected’, ‘misunderstood’, and ‘mistreated’. He adopts a victim mentality. He becomes addicted to toxic substances and behaviors. He yields his will as totally as he knows how to the unclean spirits that have made themselves at home in his mind, his heart, and his members.

But this is up to the individual. Sometimes the individual in exile just gives up, and gives in. Sometimes he accepts exile as his lot – instead of as just one phase in a long journey to restoration. And if the individual persists, and joins the pagans around whom he now finds himself in dishonoring the Bridegroom-King’s Name and Ways at levels that constitute *to’ebah* [i.e. *abomination*], the Holy One will reluctantly assign him to the final, and phase. Hence the traditional position found in Judaism that the ultimate expression of *karat* is *a soul forfeiting its portion in the World to Come*.

Phase III Discipline/Purging:
The Mot Yamut [i.e. Death, Surely Death] Decree

The death consequence does not play a large part of the revelation stream of Torah at

all. But it does play a part. The role of *mot yamut* is miniscule in comparison to the overarching role of Divine love, blessing, empowerment, mercy, forgiveness, and atonement, but it serves a critically important purpose nevertheless. This particular phase of Divine discipline is, however, reserved for the ultimate, incurable, and intolerable level of *tumah* that mankind can introduce.

The idea of death as a consequence of extreme human misconduct that reaches the level of being totally incompatible with the Divine Redemptive Plan was first introduced in the Garden of Eden. The Creator told Adam: ***Mikol etz-ha-gan achol tochel*** [i.e. of every tree of the garden you may eat freely], ***ume'etz ha-da'at tov v'ra lo tochal mimeinu ki b'yom acholcha mimeinu mot tamut*** [i.e. but of the tree of the intimate, experiential knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for in the day that you eat of it - *mot tamut* (death, surely death)⁶]. **Genesis 2:16-17**. Think about the extreme level of toxic effect the human conduct about which the Holy One warned Adam would lead to *mot tamut* (you will die) consequence actually released into the world. Man went from a Garden of Eden level existence, of constant, sweet fellowship and intimate co-laboring with our Creator, to a fallen state of self-absorption, pathological covering-up, hiding our true selves, and blaming others for our problems. Do you see it? Adam and Chava did not just eat a piece of fruit like you and I do. They opened a portal of uncleanness, corruption, and destruction into human experience that is far more destructive than every volcano, tornado, typhoon, or earthquake the earth has ever experienced put together and multiplied exponentially. Now you understand the level of extreme toxicity and negativity that *mot yamut* involves, dear ones.

Even yet, the *mot tamut/mot yamut* form of Divine discipline is progressive. Death does not occur all at once. Just as it was for Adam and Chava, *mot yamut* turns out to be a progressive form of dying. It comes in stages. And until the last and final stage, it is reversible. Do you know the stages of death, dear ones? The Holy One knows them well. What usually begins the dying process is *separation from life support*. The Holy One's Breath is to the human being's spirit what the ventilator is to the body. His Presence is the human spirit's dialysis machine. His Community is the human spirit's IV pump. His Torah is its feeding tube. When these are removed – or as happens more frequently – ripped out by the person himself in an outburst of negative emotion - the human spirit begins to die.

The second stage of death is *acceptance of palliative care only*. When all a person wants is *pain relief* – i.e. a way to escape reality through ingestion of substances and circumstances that cloud the mind – death becomes inevitable. As long as we can feel pain, the Holy One can talk us through it and put us back on the road to healing.

⁶ The Hebrew phrase *Mot tamut* means 'you will die' The Hebrew phrase *mot yamut* means 'he will die'.

If we refuse to listen to Him, however, and instead insist on medicating or escaping the pain, we cut off any possibility of healing communication.

The third stage of death is *losing one's appetite for what previously was enjoyable*. Food and drink ceased to be received with thanksgiving. Visits from and interactions with family members and friends are received without acknowledgement, without joy, and without meaningful, coherent efforts at participation.

The fourth stage of death occurs when *necrosis begins to set in, affecting major organs*. The kidneys – which process toxins, waste from cellular degeneration, and unusable water out of the bloodstream – are usually the first to suffer the effects of necrosis. For the human spirit, this means there is no cleansing and purification through confession, making *t'shuvah*, *receiving and appropriating forgiveness*, etc. In the stage of necrosis, pockets of *tumah* begin to grow and fester. Eventually the *lungs* – i.e. our organs of respiration and inspiration – also begin to experience dysfunction, as do our *brains* and ultimately our *overburdened hearts*. We no longer function as intended. We proceed through life in fits and starts.

The fifth stage of death occurs when *the critical organs of life shut down and cease functioning altogether*. The kidneys cease, and we simply accumulate and overdose on toxins. The lungs shut down, the Breath of our Creator expires, and we 'give up the spirit.' The heart stops beating, and we know longer feel anything. Eventually, all brain function as well ceases, and we lose the capacity to understand or respond, much less to regenerate.

Solemnly Accepting the Part the Holy One Has Called Us to Play in the Final Phase of Divine Discipline – Mot Yamut

In the Torah the Holy One has made it clear that a *mot yamut* responsibility on our part, exercisable only by order of the Sanhedrin, arises whenever one of the following happens in ISRAEL (never in any other country on earth):

[a] a man intentionally decides to strike another man in such a manner as to make the other man die [Exodus 21:12];

[b] a man either strikes or curses his father or his mother [Exodus 21:15, 17];

[c] a man *shanghais* [i.e. takes by force to be a slave] another man, and then sells him [Exodus 21:16];

[d] a man knows he has an animal with a history of attacking humans, and takes no precautions to prevent it from doing so again, resulting in another human death [Exodus 21:29];

[e] a man copulates with an animal [Exodus 22:19];

[f] a man profanes the Sabbath [Exodus 31:14-15 and 35:2].

The Creator of the Universe knows that, whether we humans can see it or not, each

of the above extreme actions of rebellion against the Divine Plan has the potential to open just as toxic a portal of uncleanness, corruption, and destruction into His Creation as did Adam and Chava's dalliance with the serpent in the Garden. The One Who designed and created the world knows far better than humankind what is best - and worst – for the world He Created. He sees the end from the beginning. He sees the harvest from the seed. We are just going to have to learn to trust Him.

To the Holy One it never has been and never will be a matter of 'ethics' or 'morality'. To Him it never has been and never will be a matter of 'right' or 'wrong', or 'fair' or 'unfair', or 'good' or 'evil'. Those concepts are the pitifully weak product of the fallen human mind. Those are all *illusory concepts* – vain imaginations introduced to the human mind by the ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the *knowledge of* – you guessed it ... *good and evil*. To the Holy One the *mot yamut* decision is always a matter of maintaining *Divine balance* and the *forward momentum of the Grand Plan of Redemption*. To His Brilliant Mind it is always a matter of what is needed for the created order that He has so wisely established to continue and prosper, on the one hand, versus what has the capacity to cause His Creation to lose momentum, change direction, and self-destruct, on the other hand. To the Holy One *mot yamut* is all about essential *purpose, functionality, and practicality*. It is not that he downplays or discounts either the emotions or the individual suffering involved in *mot yamut* situations; it is just that He is far too wise and much too caring to let those transient and temporal things outweigh His long-term objective, which is to do what is best for His Beloved Creation. He is determined to always encourage that which promotes and put limits on that which sabotages His Wonderful Plan.

What does all this have to do with us? What does it have to do with the Avrahamic Covenant? Quite a bit, to our chagrin. Now that a Divine Betrothal has occurred at Mount Sinai; now that, through the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Protocols the Holy One is training us, along with thousands of other human families, to co-labor with Him to start reversing the effect of the Fall on Creation and to bring the hope of restoration to the world through love, joy, shalom, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness to Covenant, gentleness, and self-control; now the Holy One is finally ready to talk to us in detail about His least favorite part of the responsibility of running and lovingly stewarding the Universe. As He has called us to co-labor with Him in loving our neighbor and our enemy, so He is now ready to call us to take upon ourselves part of the distasteful responsibility of dealing calmly, collectively, and appropriately, with the most toxic forms of human misconduct. Being omnipotent, the Holy One could of course just take out the most toxic people on earth and the unclean spirits that motivate them. He could unleash floods, rain fire and brimstone, send fire from Heaven, and release earthquakes, tsunamis, bolts of

lightning, etc. But those things all entail far more physical and emotional trauma and cause a whole lot more collateral damage than calling upon people in Covenant with Him to establish a functional and responsible legal system to administer *mot yamut* as well as other, less drastic, modalities of in-flight course correction. His way is the latter. He is not angry. He is all about life. If others choose to be all about death, however, and carry it to the extreme of hardness of heart, He knows how to oblige.

The Divinely Assigned Consequences of Radically Destructive Behavior Patterns

The Holy One prescribes specific consequences that the purging protocols of the Covenant prescribe for 15 specific behavior patterns that threaten to undermine the Holy One’s great plan of redemption. Here is a listing:

<u>Toxic Behavior Pattern</u>	<u>Prescribed Purging Protocol</u>
1. Child sacrifice	[<i>mot yamut</i>]
2. Consulting mediums/fortune-tellers	[<i>karat</i>]
3. Cursing father or mother	[<i>mot yamut</i>]
4. Adultery – non-relative	[<i>mot yamut</i> – both]
5. Fornication with mother/stepmother	[<i>mot yamut</i> - both]
6. Fornication with daughter-in-law	[<i>mot yamut</i> – both]
7. Homosexual fornication	[<i>mot yamut</i> – both]
8. Fornication with mother & daughter	[<i>mot yamut</i> – all involved]
9. Bestiality	[<i>mot yamut</i> + animal killed]
10. Staring at a sister/half-sister unclothed	[<i>karat</i>]
11. Sexual intercourse during menstruation	[<i>mot yamut</i> – both]
12. Adultery with aunt or niece	[forfeit parental rights/heirs]
13. Adultery with brother’s wife	[forfeit parental rights/heirs]
14. Necromancy [contacting the dead]	[<i>mot yamut</i>]
15. Wizardry/Use of Occult Arts	[<i>mot yamut</i>]

Note carefully what types of conduct the Holy One considers to be so inconsistent with and so dangerous to the society and redemptive mission of the redeemed that consequences had to be Divinely prescribed and enforced by the Sanhedrin. Welcome to the ‘fear of Heaven’ Code.

The Bridegroom-King’s Kedusha Code

Remember that the subject the Holy One is addressing in parsha ***Kedoshim*** is holiness – i.e. ***kedusha***. He is not advocating vigilantism. He is not expressing moral outrage. He is not enforcing property rights. Those things are at issue in pagan societies – not His Kingdom. He is dealing instead with the critical matter of Kingdom Advancement – and is pointing out to us situations that pose a threat to the continuation of the special, holy society which is to function in the world as

His *mamlaket kohanim* [kingdom of priests] and *goy kadosh* [nation of holiness]. He is dealing with the things that endanger the critically important purpose and calling unique to the sons of Avraham – the ‘*light to the nations*’, salt to the earth calling. Our King knows exactly what kinds of conduct in the holy land, and what kind of behavior involving the people who walk and live in His Courts, would if unchecked threaten to *blot out our light* and *render our “salt” flavorless*. Let’s look at the list of things which the Holy One says are so inconsistent with the Torah lifestyle that *mot yamut* is the only appropriate consequence.

What Kind of Due Process Procedure Did Torah Envision Before Any of the Purging Protocols Was Ever Imposed?

The final chapter of parsha Kedoshim prescribes/warns of serious consequences for various extreme types of mission-threatening breaches of covenant. Some of these consequences are going to be enforced by the Holy One Himself. With regard to others the Redeemed Community itself is to be involved. Please however take note of two very important things about the king of participation the Torah envisions the Redeemed Community having in the enforcement of these consequences. First of all, *the consequence provisions cannot be viewed outside the context in which they are given*. Leviticus 20 follows immediately after and is intrinsically connected to Leviticus 19. If the Redeemed Community follows Leviticus 19 no one will be [a] *perverting justice (Leviticus 19:15)*, [b] *spreading slander (false accusations) about anyone (Leviticus 19:16(a))*, or [c] *doing anything that endangers another’s life (Leviticus 19:16(b))* – this would include *encouraging or condoning any action for which the Divinely prescribed consequence is death*. Even more important, under the literal wording of Leviticus 19 *no one was qualified to be a witness against another in regard to a sin unless he or she had first “rebuked [the Hebrew verb is yakach] his neighbor frankly”* – otherwise, Torah instructs us, we could *bear the sinner’s guilt* (disqualifying us as witnesses). The interpretation of the phrase “*yakach his neighbor frankly*” in Hebraic understanding has always included specifically [a] modeling the right behavior steadfastly; [b] gently warning the wrongdoer that the conduct in question not only violates the Torah, but carries a specific consequence (and what it is); and [c] encouraging and attempting to lead the wrongdoer to make *t’shuvah*.⁷ If a person does these two things, and does so *in love, and not in a show of self-righteous judgment*, as Leviticus 19:17 requires, and the wrongdoer still refuses to cease the wrongdoing and make *t’shuvah*, then and only then is the one who has thus “*yakach[ed] his neighbor frankly*” qualified to go to the authorities and act as a witness against the wrongdoer. Moreover, unless there are at least two of such

⁷ For examples of how Yeshua followed this practice of frank rebuke, read the accounts of his rebukes of Kefa [Peter] – see Matthew 16:23-27—and Nicodemus - see John 3. Consider how He frankly and repeatedly rebuked His fellow Jews, especially the P’rushim [Pharisees] and Sofrim [scribes].

persons who have thus “*yakach[ed] his neighbor frankly*”, under the Torah there can be neither an adjudication of guilt nor the imposition of any punishment. This is due process. It is not optional. It is not less important than the purging protocol. It is perhaps even more important. Sometimes it will mean the guilty go unpunished. That is better for the redemptive plan than resorting to judgmentalism and vigilantism in the name of human ideas of ‘justice’ – but which is anathema to the Kingdom Kedusha way.

Yeshua’s Affirmation and Implementation of the Torah’s Wise System of Procedural Due Process

Remember the episode where a woman ‘caught in the act of adultery’ was brought to Yeshua for judgment? This episode is frequently cited as proof that Yeshua did away with the Torah, because although Torah plainly says a woman caught in adultery [and the man, for that matter] is to be stoned to death, Yeshua did not stone her. But look closer. Look at this through *Torah eyes*. When in Yochanan [John] 8:7 Yeshua said to the accusers of the woman caught in adultery “*He who is without sin cast the first stone*” He was not excusing the woman from Torah-mandated consequence. He was merely fully implementing Torah’s system of procedural law. If legitimate witnesses had been present, and had insisted, He would not have physically stepped in to stop the stoning – because in that situation for Him to do so would be violate the Torah. That He would not do.

Read the text. Yeshua did not in any wise say ‘Torah is wrong – this woman should not be stoned!’ He did not abrogate the Torah -- He invoked the Torah. He asked if there were any Torah-qualified witnesses against the woman – i.e. any persons who did not bear this woman’s guilt according to Torah, because they had before bringing her for punishment “*yakach-ed his neighbor*” as the Holy One’s Kedusha Code required. What Yeshua did in John 8 to disperse the accusers was to point out that there were no qualified witnesses – because none of those present had *yakach-ed* the woman frankly according to the Hebraic understanding, in love and without judgment – with the result that, since they all desired evil to happen to the woman, according to the Torah, *they actually bore her sin* under Leviticus 19:17(c). Hence because those who claimed to be witnesses against the woman bore *her sin*, they were not “*without sin*” in the matter, and could not serve as witnesses. And since under Torah legitimate Torah-qualified witnesses had to be the ones to cast the first stone, there could be no stoning. Moreover, under Torah, if these men persisted in making their accusations, though they were not qualified witnesses, they would themselves become subject to the same punishment they sought for her. **Deuteronomy 19:16-19**. That is why they all dispersed, and left the woman uncondemned. What saved the woman caught in adultery from stoning was thus not some new doctrine of forgiveness being brought forward by Yeshua – it

was *Torah*.

Who Was Responsible for Enforcing the Purging Protocols?

Secondly, it must be kept in mind that not just anyone was expected or authorized to enforce the Divinely scripted consequences spelled out in Leviticus 20. The consequences were not to be enforced by either individuals or mobs⁸. The Torah establishes a fair and efficient *judicial system* (see **Exodus 18:17-26, Deuteronomy 16:18-20**, for instance) that is to handle such matters. Cities of refuge were provided. Rules about qualifications of witnesses (as discussed above) were enforced.

It was never the job of individual persons – or mobs - to enforce the Divinely ordained purging protocols of Leviticus 20. It was the natural result of a society of persons who were walking out a betrothal covenant relationship with the Holy One. It was a community of love – for only in the context of a community of love does punishment for wrongdoing (after multiple warnings coming from hearts of love, with refusal to make *t'shuvah*) reflect the Holy One's marvelous Light. The Holy One's Covenant community is not a mob of self-righteous, vigilantes who swing a bloody sword or a sharp tongue at everything we do not like. Nor does the Holy One's Redeemed Community practice "*sloppy agape*", and test the limits of grace. The Holy One's Redeemed Community follows Torah - including all Torah's enhanced accountability instructions. But it does so ever mindful and respectful of Torah's corresponding due process instructions. The Covenant People of the Holy one see our task as not to enforce morality, or even 'law' and 'order' or 'justice' – but simply to *sh'ma* the words of the Holy One – *all* of them, not just a few that suit our fancy or seem to justify what our corrupted flesh wants us to do.

At this point in our studies it should be very clear that the Holy One intends for us to seek guidance and directions in situations and relationships, knowledge and insight into the future, and discernment of spirits only from Him. He intends for us to do this through prayer, through reading, studying, and meditating upon, and walking out the instructions of Torah as well as the rest of Holy Writ in the footsteps of Messiah. He makes Himself available to us 24/7/365. He blesses our socks off. His mercies are new every morning. He literally provides us everything we need for life and godliness. **II Peter 1:3**⁹. As the Psalmist sang:

*How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,*

⁸ This is another Torah-consistent reason why Yeshua did not 'condemn' the woman. Judgments such as stoning were under Torah reserved for *the Sanhedrin* – not the Messiah. The Messiah will judge sinners and rogue nations upon the establishment of His millennial reign – but that time had not yet come.

⁹ II Peter 1:3 says: ***His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue***

*and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light*
[Psalm 36:7-9]

Our natural response to His goodness and His love for us should be to delight in Him – and cling to Him – and turn away from the voice of a stranger. We need to wake up to some spiritual realities in this regard. We need to realize that seeking to satisfy our curiosity or appetite for either power or knowledge from any source other than intimate communion with our Bridegroom-King is totally incompatible with our new Redeemed identities. How can we love the Holy One our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength if we are seeking pleasure, insight into the future, and strategies for increasing influence, power, romance and/or wealth from His enemies? How can we even think we love our neighbor if we are using the dark arts to control and manipulate them into doing what we want them to do? We have to know that we simply cannot be in covenant with the Holy One and conspire with His enemies. We have to choose which of those things we want to do. And lest we have any tinge of temptation to choose consorting with His enemies as our path, the Holy One warns us from the outset that such a choice will not turn out well for us or anyone concerned. Hence He says:

V'ha-nefesh asher tifneh el-ha-ovot

And the soul who turns to mediums and familiar spirits,

v'el-ha-yid'onim liznot achareihem

to prostitute himself with them

venatati et-panai b'nefesh hahi

I will set My face against that soul

vehichrati oto mikerev amo

and I will cut him off from his people.

[Leviticus 20:6]

The Holy One regards the pollution of the land of Israel with the ‘dark arts’ as a very serious threat to His Grand Redemptive Plan. We are supposed to be representing Him to the world; we are not supposed to be seeking, believing, or spreading propaganda put out by His enemies. He has too much invested in us as a kingdom of *kohanim* and a *goy kadosh* to just sit back and let that kind of destructive sedition happen. He promises to get personally involved for the protection of the Land, the People, and the Mission. If a man or woman prostitutes his/her soul – i.e. his/her mind, his/her will, and his/her emotions – to either wizards or familiar spirits, He will intervene in two ways:

1. He Will Set His Face Against a Soul
2. The Cutting Off of a Soul From His People

***What is Mot Yamut – Is Such A Drastic Decree
Ever Really Necessary? And if So, By Whom, and According to
What Protocols, Is it to Be Enforced?***

The Holy One created man. He knew exactly what He was getting into when He made Adam and Chava with free will. He is not vindictive. He is not pushing either the panic button or the delete key. He is not even a little bit depressed. He is joyful. He is 100% confident the great adventure with mankind will turn out just fine. He is not sulking. He has absolutely zero appetite for human suffering. He gets no thrill at all out of the thought of spilling human blood. He cares for all men deeply. Being the Author and Giver of life, hope, health, and peace, He will not lightly issue a *mot yamut* decree with regard to any human being He has designed, created, and breathed the breath of life into. His plan is always for fountains of goodness and blessing to come forth from every single human life, and for this to happen from the moment of conception to the grave, throughout the earthly reign of Messiah, and then on and on forever in the *Olam Haba*. But this is not always the way things work out. People make choices. Some of those choices are really, really bad – for the person and for the world. Most of the choices – and most of the people who make most of the bad choices - are redeemable. That is the goodness of our Creator at work. But alas some men – those who consistently and unrepentantly make the worst types of choices, and who will, if allowed to, will lead others down the same dangerous path they have chosen to travel, are not willing to accept redemption. These must, because of their own choices and intransigency, be stopped before they do even more damage. Their impact on the world must be minimized. For the sake of the rest of Creation – and in order to maintain the forward movement of the Grand Redemptive Plan – there are certain behaviors of man that evidence such a total immersion in darkness and *tumah* [i.e. corrupting uncleanness] that He is left with no other option but *mot yamut*. When the level of *tumah* being discharged by an individual exceeds the maximum safe level of toxicity the Grand Redemptive Plan for Mankind and Creation can absorb and counter-act, the Holy One has to do something drastic in order to cut off the toxic discharge and limit the damage. He knows exactly when a person crosses the point of no return. He knows when a person's actions leave Him – and the people in covenant with Him - no choice but to do the most unpleasant act of damage control possible. He knows when *mot yamut* is necessary to prevent deadly *tumah* from spreading uncontrollably throughout the Redeemed Community and thus spilling out into the world He is trying to save.

***The Mot Yamut Decree Is Reserved for the Ultimate, Incurable, and
Intolerable Level of Tumah Mankind Can Introduce***

The death consequence does not play a large part of the revelation stream of Torah at all. But it does play a part. The role of *mot yamut* is miniscule in comparison

to the overarching role of Divine love, blessing, empowerment, mercy, forgiveness, and atonement, but it serves a critically important purpose nevertheless. The idea of death as a consequence of extreme human misconduct that reaches the level of being totally incompatible with the Divine Redemptive Plan was first introduced in the Garden of Eden. The Creator told Adam: ***Mikol etz-ha-gan achol tochel*** [i.e. of every tree of the garden you may eat freely], ***ume'etz ha-da'at tov v'ra lo tochal mimeinu ki b'yom acholcha mimeinu mot tamut*** [i.e. but of the tree of the intimate, experiential knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for in the day that you eat of it - ***mot tamut*** (death, surely death)¹⁰]. **Genesis 2:16-17.**

Think about the extreme level of toxic effect the human conduct about which the Holy One warned Adam would lead to *mot tamut* (death surely death) consequence actually released into the world. Man went from a Garden of Eden level existence, of constant, sweet fellowship and intimate co-laboring with our Creator, to a fallen state of self-absorption, pathological covering-up, hiding our true selves, and blaming others for our problems. Do you see it? Adam and Chava did not just eating a piece of fruit like you and I do. They opened a portal of uncleanness, corruption, and destruction into human experience that is far more destructive than every volcano, tornado, typhoon, or earthquake the earth has ever experienced put together and multiplied exponentially. Now you understand the level of extreme toxicity and negativity that *mot yamut* involves, dear ones.

The Holy can now talk to us about His least favorite part of the responsibility of running and lovingly stewarding the Universe. As He has called us to co-labor with Him in loving our neighbor and our enemy, so He is now ready to call us to take upon ourselves part of the distasteful responsibility of dealing with the most toxic forms of human misconduct. He, being omnipotent, could of course just take out the most toxic people on earth and the unclean spirits that motivate them to do their works of destruction. He could unleash floods, rain fire and brimstone, send fire from Heaven, and release earthquakes, tsunamis, bolts of lightning, etc. But those things all entail far more physical and emotional trauma and cause a whole lot more collateral damage than calling upon people in Covenant with Him to establish a functional and responsible due process system to administer *mot yamut* as well as other, less drastic, modalities of in-flight course correction.

There is, however, a point of no return. It is reached through any number of short-term lapses, indiscretions, or even rebellions. It is only reached when a human makes the ultimate choice to refuse to even listen to the Holy One's tender calls to *teshuvah*/return. Think of Pharaoh in the time of the First Great Redemption. Where was his point of no return? It was when he refused to see or speak with Moshe, the

¹⁰ The Hebrew phrase *Mot tamut* means 'death, surely death to you' The phrase *mot yamut* means 'death, surely death for him.'

prophet of the Holy One, ever again, saying: *Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! for in the day you see my face you will die!* **Exodus 10:28.** Up to that point, though Pharaoh had behaved horribly, had blasphemed the Holy One, and done much damage not only to the Hebrews but to his own people and all the nations of the world, the door of *teshuvah* was still open for him. He was still being given instructions that, if he followed them, would bring the possibility of redemption. But then came the day of Exodus 10:28 – and Pharaoh himself permanently slammed the door of redemption shut - and dead-bolted it.

The Holy One has long-term vision and perspective. He sees the events of every human life in *fluid motion*, not as a random collection of *still images*. He sees the ultimate end from every simple beginning. He does not simply see a seed – He sees a sprout coming forth from that seed, sees a stem producing leaves coming forth from that sprout, sees branches producing fruit coming forth from that stem, and sees ever expanding reproduction until the seed with which the whole process started has morphed into forest – whether for the healing of the nations or for their further poisoning.

***The Great Holiness Calling of Torah –
It is Not About Our Salvation, But About Everyone Else’s***

The Holy One is calling every person He has redeemed to *be holy* in a unique and powerful way that releases an ever-flowing fountain of blessing for the world. The water that this fountain offers to the nations has to be very, very pure, and very, very sweet. It has to smell and taste - and refresh and inspire – after the pattern of the river of life that flows through and issues forth from the Throne of our King in Heaven. The Community of the Redeemed has to provide visible evidence of Heaven’s beautiful vision of how mankind can be empowered to overcome the Fall and shine once again like stars in the Heaven. It has to present the song of Heaven in full voice and true tone. We have learned this week that this is the *central theme of the entire Torah* – and indeed the *central focus of all God/Man interactions*. Our Bridegroom-King has called us to be BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. He wants us to be *Godly dads, moms, brothers, sisters, and kids*. He wants us to be *good neighbors*. He wants us to be *faithful servants*. He wants us to be *trustworthy stewards*. He wants us to be *honest businessmen*. He wants us to be *hospitable hosts*. He wants us to be *patient, caring friends*. He even wants us, when necessary because of the attitudes of others toward us, to be *honorable enemies*. He wants us to model His Ways in real time – and to thereby offer men a clear tree-of-life based lifestyle, as an alternative to whatever version of the soul-numbing fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge based death-spiral each nation, culture, family, and household of the world has adopted for itself and its unwitting victims.

One More Thing ...

There is however one last issue the Holy One wants to address with us this week. It concerns those who choose to try to become *kedoshim* through ‘other ways’ than those prescribed by the Holy One in Torah. Contrary to modern ‘pop theology’ there are not ‘many ways’ to God, nor ‘many ways’ to relate to Him. Torah is **the** prescribed pathway. Every other pathway is **chol** -- a way initiated and powered by, and which plays to human self-will or ego, which leads away from the Holy One, and which ends in death. Hence the concluding words of our parsha are as follows:

V'ish o-ishah ki-yiheyeh vahem ov o yid'oni

Any man or woman who is involved in [the practices of] the mediums or oracles

mot yumatu ba'even yirgeimu otam d'meyhem bam

death, surely death – gather and pile up stones with regard to them.

The *medium* [necromancer – who contacts the dead] and the *wizard* [soothsayer, fortune-teller, diviner] must be put to death by legal process. Moreover, anyone who consults a medium or wizard must be *cut off* from the community [Hebrew *karat* - a form of excommunication or banishment, according to most sages]. But some might ask, ‘*What is the danger to the holy nation of this type of activity?*’ The lifestyle of the Holy One’s people is to be a *sh'ma* lifestyle.¹¹ **Deuteronomy 6:4-9.** They/we are to live not by ‘*bread alone, but by every word which comes forth from the mouth of the Holy One.*’ **Deuteronomy 8:3.** To *sh'ma* the Holy One, you see, means that we consciously choose to *lo sh'ma* all other voices – and that means all other sources of spiritual knowledge/insight. Yeshua said, “***The voice of another they will lo sh'ma.***” The problem of Chava was that she *sh'ma*-d the voice of the Serpent regarding spiritual matters – whether the Holy One “truly said” what He said, whether she would “surely die”, and whether the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was “good for food” – and in so doing, lost contact with the reality of what the Holy One had said.

Necromancy – contacting the dead through ‘mediums’ – is the seeking of spiritual knowledge/insight from a source other than the Holy One – from the realm of DARKNESS and DEATH. Wizardry – seeking to know the future, or place curses on, or manipulate people or circumstances by magical means – likewise requires turning the back on, and refusing to *sh'ma*, the Holy One. If the *mamelekat Kohanim* is to live by “***every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Holy One***”, seeking other voices, and other means of dealing with life, is poisonous fruit indeed.

¹¹ An article on the elements of this lifestyle, written by the Rabbi’s son, is available to anyone who desires to read it, free of charge. Just email the author at rabbisson@cableone.net.

Keeping First Things First

The Holy One is passionately calling His Redeemed Community to *be different from the other peoples of the world* in every way. He has been calling His people to be *kedoshim* – “holy ones”, or saints. This means He calls us to be a *betrothed Bridal community*, visibly set apart to Him, reflecting His Light to the nations instead of absorbing their darkness. This requires, in a context of love and right judgment, after warnings and offering several chances of restoration, for those who threaten to introduce darkness into the Community to be purged – according to carefully-worded instructions from the Holy One, by and through honest, capable elders of our community upon whom the Spirit of God rests. This is not “legalism” – it is *true love*.

The penultimate words of our aliyah - and for that matter of parsha *Kedoshim* - constitute words for much meditation this *Shabbat*. In these words the Holy One sums up all He has said before about the holiness He has called and empowered us to exhibit on this earth in a few lines. Here they are:

Ush'martem et-kol-chukotai v'et-kol-mishpatai va'asitem otam

Safeguard all My decrees and all my judgments, and asah them,

v'lo taki etchem ha-aretz

and the land will not vomit you out

asher ani mevi etchem shamah l'shevet bah

which I am bringing you to settle.

V'lo telchu b'chukot ha-goy

Do not follow the customs of the nation

asher-ani meshale'ach mipneichem ki et-kol-eleh

that I am driving out before you, since they did all the above mentioned

asu va'akutz bam

and I was disgusted with them.

Remembering the Essentials of Identity, Mission and Destiny In the Midst of It All

Ah, but the Holy One has focusing on the negative long enough. He will not end today's aliyah with anything negative. He will instead declare over us once more the simple beauty of His glorious plan for us to bring redemption to the world. Read these words carefully, dear ones – for they declare your identity, your mission, and your destiny:

V'heyitem li kedoshim ki kadosh ani Adonai

And be holy to Me, for I, the Holy One, am holy,

v'avdil etchem min ha-amim liheyot li

and I have separated you out from among the nations to be Mine.'

[Leviticus 20:22-26]

Always remember *who* and *Whose* you are. You are part of a people called to release fountains of vision, life, health, joy, and peace. You are called to stay on mission, and to gently nurture as many as will follow toward a greater destiny. That means we are not to yield to the distraction of events and circumstances that we cannot change - however traumatic those events may be. We are never to surrender to either despondency, disgust, outrage or fear. When either cataclysmic events on the world stage or emotional drama on the personal stage take place we are to respond differently from the rest of the world. We are called to keep our eyes fixed on Messiah and what He is doing in the world at all times – and not to let ourselves be distracted or made distraught by what any terrorist, politician, Beast, false-prophet, or Anti-‘Christ’ on the world stage -- much less some two-bit prima donna or drama queen mucking up the waters in our neck of the woods -- is doing to distract the attention and disturb the peace of those around us.

We are to continue to meditate on and walk out the Holy One's beautiful Torah day and night. We are to resist the temptation to join the conversations of the nations catch their paranoia, or take up their offenses. We are to continue speaking of Torah’s revelations about the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven and the Bride Calling upon our lives as we lay down and as we rise up, as we sit at meat and as we walk along the way. We are never to give in to our wily but outclassed Adversary's pathetic attempt to distract us toward silly political theories, moralizing, and grandstanding rhetoric. No, Dear Reader. We have been put on earth at such a time as this for a much greater purpose. We have been on earth at such a time as this not to despair and point fingers alongside the humanists and secularists and clueless devotees of powerless religion, or to condemn the darkness of this world; we have been called forth at such a time as this to shine the glorious Light of Heaven into the world’s darkest places, spaces, and faces.

In the midst of hollow and superficial people, we are to be people of great depth and substance. In the midst of plastic and artificial people, we are to be very, very *real*. Our calling is not *theological, theoretical, doctrinal, intellectual, philosophical, political, ideological, or institutional*; it is far more radical and substantive than any of that. It is covenantal. Our calling is not to sit in ivory towers or around coffee shops debating ideas, concepts, and principles. It is, instead, to roll up our sleeves and show the world what love, joy, peace, hope, humility, unselfishness, and delight look like in real time, as we co-labor with the Creator of the Universe to prepare the world for redemption and *tikkun olam*. Our mission does not involve dictating better platform items to political parties,

spouting bullet points of ideology to media personalities, arguing scientific theories with educators, expounding policies to governmental officials, lecturing corporative executives on morality, or begging institutions and foundations to include us in their charitable giving campaigns. Our mission, instead, requires humbly modeling holiness and kindness to ordinary people, in the course of living ordinary lives. We have not been incorporated into the Avrahamic covenant, given the precious gifts of life and inspired speech, and assigned separate spheres of influence in order to manipulate people into praying a prayer, agreeing with a doctrinal statement, or reciting a creed, rallying around any flag or religious symbol, patronizing any institution, or joining much less funding any organization. This is not a religious game we are playing. The stakes – for ourselves and the world – are very, very high. Our calling is therefore extremely *real*, intensely *practical*, and *oft-times very controversial*. We are called to have a *redemptive*, *restorative*, and *transformational* effect on the people and places to which the Bridegroom-King sends us. We are not a bunch of ‘believers’ – we are real-time *shalom asah-ers*, *freedom bringers*, *righteousness models*, *wisdom counselors*, *life coaches*, and *joy spreaders*. We are not called to practice a religion; we are called to glorify a King and co-labor with Him to expand His Kingdom. We are called to change the atmosphere, everywhere we go - in real ways, in real-life situations, in real time.

Arise and shine, Beautiful People - for the Glory of the Holy One has risen upon you! As you press in to the Heart of the Divine Bridegroom, and walk the narrow path of His Torah, He will turn this era of intense darkness into your greatest hour!

Questions For Today's Study

1. Today's Torah reading starts with a discussion what should be the response and reaction of the Holy One's people to the fully-developed self-centeredness which leads to child abuse - in this case, the act of “giving” children to the god of the Ammonites and Phoenicians - *Molech*. That action had been prohibited in Leviticus 18:21 [parsha **Acharei Mot**]. For background of how this self-centeredness, was not judged, but infected the people of the Holy One, read I Kings 11:7 and II Kings 16:3. See also Jeremiah 32:35:

And they built the high places of Baal, which [are] in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through [the fire] unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

[A] What do you think led Shlomo and Ahaz, who were called to be ***Kedoshim*** just as you and I are, to set up altars to Molech?

[B] What does Torah say is to be done with one who gives his child to Molech? Why?

[C] What does the Holy One say the effect and result of offering a child to Molech is?

2. In verse 7 the Holy One repeats the central theme of the book of Vayikra, and particularly of this passage - ***Be Kedoshim, for I am Kadosh!***

[A] According to verse 8 how do *Kedoshim* act?

[B] List the breaches of Covenant mentioned in Leviticus 20 that require a death sentence.

[C] List the breaches of Covenant mentioned in this chapter that require that the perpetrator be “cut off from his/her people”.

[D] List the breaches of Covenant for which the punishment is imposed by God, instead of by B’nei Yisrael.

[E] What is a “medium” or “spiritist”, and why do you think the Holy One says a person who makes a lifestyle of practicing their craft is under a death curse?

3. In verses 25-26 the Holy One repeats for emphasis the instructions concerning animals whose flesh the Holy One’s ***Kedoshim*** are, out of love for the Holy One and in full confidence that the Holy One knows what is best for them, to choose not to eat. These are not “Jewish customs” or “traditions of man”, but very clearly pronounced instructions from the Holy One Himself.

[A] What if anything do you think the food we choose to eat (and not to eat) might have to do with our “glowing” [that is, reflecting the Holy One’s Light] as ***Kedoshim***?

[B] Do you think the instructions the Holy One gives regarding food have passed away as part of an abandoned covenant? If so, how can you trust a God who abandons a covenant, or changes His mind about what is right and good?

[C] Chapter 20 is largely about appropriate punishments. Is a specific punishment prescribed for disobedience to the instructions about eating animal flesh? What does that say to you?

4. In the Haftarah a shepherd named Amos from a village called Tekoa [20 miles South of Y’rushalayim] receives from the Holy One a prophecy about the “day of His coming” upon fallen Israel.

[A] What does the Holy One say He will do in the “day of His coming” to the “sinners” in the midst of Israel?

[B] What Torah instructions do you think they violated?

[C] What do you think today’s Torah has to do with today’s Haftarah?

5. After prophesying judgment upon the sinful ones in the nation of Israel, Amos prophesies a dramatic regathering and restoration.

[A] What is “David’s fallen tent”?

[B] What does it mean that “the plowman will overtake the reaper”?

6. According to I Peter 1: 15-16 we are to be “holy” in “all we *do*”.

... but just as he who called you is holy, you yourselves also are to be holy in all of your behavior; because it is written, "You will be holy; for I am holy."

Write a one-page essay on what kind of *conduct* you consider [a] holy, and [b] profane, and on what criterion you base the distinction.

*May the Holy One’s people receive His words of love with joy,
and may all of us glow with His holiness, this and every day.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 119:175-176 [TAV]

Let my soul live, that I may praise you.

Let your ordinances help me.

I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

*Seek your servant, for I don't forget your **mitzvot**.*