

Introduction to Parsha #32: B'har¹

READINGS: ***Torah:*** **Leviticus 25:1 – 26:2**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 32:6-27**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Luke 4:16-21; Acts 4:31-37**



And the land will yield its fruit . . .
[Leviticus 25:19a]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 7th Petition: *Kabatz*-[Ingathering]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe – *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe . . . b'har Sinai* –
at/on Mount Sinai . . . Leviticus 25:1

Our annual journey through the ***Book of Bridal Calling*** is nearing an end. By introducing the stunning object lesson of the *Blasphemer Narrative*², the Holy One has brought His long and awe-inspiring *Kedusha Discourse* to a dramatic conclusion. The *sweet shalom* of Sinai has been shattered. The season of sitting in our Beloved's shade, as He feeds us raisin cakes, is at its end. It is time to move on. It is time to seek an even *greater, more permanent, kind of shalom*, than we have experienced on the mountain of the thorn bush. The next phase of the Kingdom of Heaven's 'Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover' protocol calls to us. The Holy One knows – even if we do not - that for the next phase of the Makeover to have its intended level of transformative effect, we are going to need a paradigm shift. We are going to need to learn to consider *Israel our only home* and

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² This dramatic narrative unfolds near the end of parsha Emor, at Leviticus 24:10-23.

Jerusalem our chief joy and eternal capital. He knows that it is time for us not just to pray for, but to connect with and begin to draw upon, the sweet *shalom* of the City of our King. The peace of Jerusalem is not an idealist, utopian, honeymooner's kind of *shalom* like unto that we have experienced at Sinai, however; it is a very practical, very real, Face-the-Fury-of-Hell-And-Know-That-We-Will-Persevere-and-Overcome kind of *shalom*.

Preparing for a Season of Major Transition

There is *something in the air*, Beloved. Can you feel it in your spirit? Can you hear the Voice of your Bridegroom whispering on the wind? Is your heart suddenly sensing a prophetic call to:

ARISE!
ARISE!
ARISE!

Take up your bed . . . and WALK!

Ah, Beloved ones – we are standing at the threshold of a *period of significant transition*. Our time of focusing on Divine Betrothal, and sitting under the shade of our Bridegroom's 'apple tree', has been *absolutely wonderful*. But alas the time for such things is *drawing rapidly to a close*. The Bridegroom of Heaven wants – and deserves - much, much **MORE** from His betrothed Bride-to-be than this.

Our remarkable journey through the ***Book of Bridal Calling*** is nearing an end. The Great *Kedusha Discourse* has given way to the Holy One's final 'Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover' instructions. Soon we will move on to a whole new *sefer Torah* [i.e. book of Torah]. As we approach this milestone however you should be aware that we are on the brink of something very, very big. The new prophetic season we are about to enter will be inaugurated by world-shaking changes. A *new wind* is blowing. A major transition is imminent. One of the primary goals of the commentaries this week will therefore be to *prepare all of us for the dramatic season of transition that is looming on our horizon*.

What The Divine Bridegroom Really Wants From Us

In the initial "honeymoon"-like period of redemption from bondage to Pharaoh we simply sat at Sinai, marveled at the deliverance we had experienced, and let the Holy One *reshape our individual and collective self-images* by the *power, and yet infinite tenderness*, of His spoken words. The Song of Songs describes this 11-month period of spiritual bliss as follows:

*I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
His fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banquet hall [literally 'house of wine'],
His banner over me is love.*

*Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love.
His left hand is under my head. His right hand embraces me.*

[Song of Songs 2:3-5, HNV]

For those who make *t'shuvah*, and return to the Holy One by choosing Messiah Yeshua as the surrogate for ***korban chata't***, each individual experiences a similar phenomenon. It happens early on in the relationship. It is comparable to what newly married couples used to experience as a 'honeymoon'. There will, in this case, inevitably be a second honeymoon, and a third honeymoon, and probably many, many more. Our new Covenant lifestyle will start out in youthful passion and emotion, and then just keep getting better and better. There will be some really difficult times; but as each challenge is face and overcome in union with our King, we will find ourselves falling head-over-heels in love with Him over and over again. It will begin to sink in at some point: we have the tremendous privilege of participating in an intimate, interactive, constantly deepening and maturing covenant relationship with the Creator of the Universe! Some of us were *born* into that privileged status [i.e. some are physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov/Yisrael]; others who read these *shiurim* have been *engrafted into the covenant relationship*, despite the fact that they were not born Hebrew³. In Messiah, these two groups of people share equally in the privilege of covenant relationship. There is ***one Torah*** – for Hebrews and foreigners alike. **Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:16, 29.**

The Torah-based covenant relationship with the Creator starts with what I call 'the *intertwining*' phase – i.e. the stage during which the Holy One intervenes in the life of, introduces Himself to, awakens the soul of, and cuts covenant with an individual. But cutting covenant with the Holy One is *just the beginning*. From the *point of intertwining* forward, our covenant relationship with the Holy One is intended to be *an on-going adventure of the highest magnitude*. The moment of intertwining initiates a *process of ascent* that involves the following steps/phases:

³ Of course, the *privilege* of being born into the Covenant Community and *enjoyment* of covenant relationship are two different things. Many of those born into the privilege of covenant relationship with the Holy One, as well as many of those who have been engrafted into it, have, for one reason or another, failed to appreciate, exercise, and walk in that privilege in its fullest intended sense. Hence, some physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov have rejected the Messiah Who embodies and gives substance to the covenant in favor of something else -- a *form of organized Jewish religion* and/or humanistic social activism - while some engrafted non-Jews have, in an equally-misguided manner, while accepting the Messiah *in name*, rejected the Torah lifestyle of the Holy One which is the substantive essence of Messiah, in favor of a *form of institutionalized Christian religion* and/or a humanistic social gospel.

[a] *detoxification*, [b] *infusion/infilling*, [c] *apprenticeship training* (frequently called ‘*discipling*’), [d] *co-laboring*, [e] *assignment of territory(ies) of ambassadorial representation*, [g] *fruitfulness/bearing much fruit* and [h] *releasing Kingdom blessings over, and being a bright light of inspiration to, the people and places around you*. It is the greatest privilege – and joy - a person can know in life to walk arm-in-arm with the Bridegroom-King through the steps/phases of this *great adventure of ascent*. But each of us has to choose, at each step in the process, how much of ourselves to surrender, and how much we would rather keep. The Bridegroom-King will not force us. But the less of ourselves we surrender, the less transformation, the less joy, and the less fruitfulness we will experience.

Relationship Status: It’s Complicated

In the context of *human-to-human relationships* we understand that things – and the relationship - are constantly changing. After all, the parties to the relationship are mortal human beings, and are thus in a more or less constant state of flux. Human relationships therefore change dramatically as time goes by. Issues of health and hard-knocks arise. Conflicting loyalties of family, faith, and finance present themselves. Environmental, attitudinal, sentimental, emotional, and other distinctly ‘human’ factors require adjustments to the relationship along the way. Relationships are, by definition, *dynamic*. Relationships do not stand still. Relationships ebb and flow. They deepen and solidify, or stagnate, or deteriorate, based upon any number of environmental as well as ‘human’ factors. At any given moment every relationship a human being can have is either *maturing* – or *disintegrating*. Like molecules of H₂O that transition, depending upon their environment, between a gaseous state [vapor], a liquid state [water], and a solid state [ice], relationships are sometimes ethereal and sometimes mundane, sometimes delicate and sometimes determined. Relationships necessarily consist of alternating periods of highs and lows - and multiple levels in between. Relationship statuses are, therefore, always ‘complicated’.

It is, alas, no different for our relationship with the Holy One. That relationship is always ‘under construction’. And it is always either trending toward maturation . . . or disintegration.

Understanding the Steps/Phases of Maturing ‘Divine Romance’

The fact that one party to the Torah-based covenant relationship is not a mortal, but is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, gives our relationship with Him much more stability than any other relationship we will ever have. However, since we – the weaker partner to the covenant relationship - are human, the basic principle that relationships are dynamic rather than static nevertheless remains true. The Holy One *does not change*; we, on the other hand, most definitely *do*.

We grow. We mature. We advance. He stays the same – and walks us through our growth phases. The *Divine Romance* involves a whole lot more than a stunning introduction or a sweet season of infatuation. The Holy One is in this for the long haul – until either we die or we start to think, speak, react, and behave the way He designed us to do, instead of the way our flesh would like us to do.

The phase of relationship that follows immediately after the initial honeymoon phase– which is the phase into which our ancestors are about to transition in *Sefer B'midbar* - is also described metaphorically in Song of Songs. The second, more mature, phase of Divine Relationship the Holy One has in mind for us is initiated when *He comes into our consciousness with a new and powerful manifestation – a Divine Suitor*. When He comes in this manifestation, He calls us His Beloved – and invites us to “*Arise*”, *leave the pleasant place in His shade*, to *Run with Him* in practical service to the world. Here is how the Song of Solomon explains what this looks, sounds, and feels like to us:

*The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes!
He is leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills.
My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart. Behold, He stands behind our wall!
He looks in at the windows. He glances through the lattice.
My Beloved spoke, and said to me,
“Rise up, my love, my beautiful one, and come away!
For, behold, the winter is past.
The rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the eretz;
the time of the singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The fig tree ripens her green figs. The vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away!”*
[Song of Solomon 2:8-13]

This second phase of the Divine Romance will begin as soon as we step into *Sefer B'midbar* – the so-called ‘Book of Numbers’. In that book, the focus of the narrative will shift from things like *where we have come from*, *Who has brought us here*, and *what He wants to do in us*, to *where we are going*, *how we are going to overcome the formidable challenges of the vast, mysterious wilderness*, and *what kind of impact we are supposed to have on the peoples, nations, kingdoms, and generations of the world*.

What Does Any of This Have To Do With Us?

Is all this relevant today, for you, for me, and for our families? Indeed it is. As go the earthly representatives of the Holy One in the assigned weekly Torah portions, so always go the current representatives of the Holy One in real time. So we need

to be ready for our own season of dramatic transition. *Houston, we have intertwining.* Next phase – *detoxification! T-minus 3 chapters . . . and counting.* What will our season of detoxification look like? How well – or badly - will we handle it? That depends on how thoroughly we have intertwined our souls with our Bridegroom-King – and the extent to which we have, while in the initial intertwining phase of the relationship, truly been *sh'ma*-ing His Words, *sh'mar*-ing His Covenant, and catching His Vision. The time for *asah*-ing the things we have been taught – making them practical and functional, as we will need to do in the Bridal Chamber of Eretz Yisrael, to which He is taking us - is at hand.

Attention All Eaglets – Time To Get Out of the Nest!

What is the essence of the transition that lies before us? Ask the *mother eagle*. Like a mother eagle, the Holy One is about to push us from the comfortable security of His “nest” atop Sinai into the ‘real world’. He is preparing us to make the transition from the safe, secure realm where the primary focus of our lives is to receive *verbal instruction* [i.e. the kind of interaction with the Holy One -- and His Torah -- which we have been experiencing at Sinai], to the somewhat frightening world of *on-the-job training* and *hands-on experience*.

It is the *on-the-job training* and *hands-on experience* phase that will characterize Sefer *B'midbar* [the Book of Numbers]. We all enter that phase of relationship eventually. And that is a GOOD thing – especially if we keep in mind a few ‘keys to success’ that are operative in this new, more responsible phase of Bridal lifestyle. The three primary keys to success in this new realm, we will find out the hard way, will be to:

- [a] enter the ‘hand’s on’ experience realm only *at the Holy One’s direction*,
- [b] no matter what situation we face, to *remain calm and confident in our calling and of the sustaining power of His covenant*, and
- [c] to voluntarily remain *under His watchful care* all along the way.

What will happen in this new phase of relationship *will not always be pretty*. We *will often wipe our brow and wish desperately we were still back at Sinai*, sitting under His shade, soaking up His Words of Life. But our calling – our covenant – and our purpose in life - is not merely to *sh'ma* [listen to and absorb and conform to] the Holy One’s words. Our calling also requires that we *asah* [build/mold/shape/create something useful with/out of] every Word of Divine Speech we have *sh'ma*-ed. And we simply cannot do that isolated from the world, in the middle of a desert, sitting under a *Radiant Cloud*. So, in anticipation of the transition the Holy One gives us⁴ parshot *B'har* and *B'chukotai* - the last two

⁴ In most years the study of *B'har* and *B'chukotai* are combined into one week. In leap years, however, each party is studied for a week.

parshot of Sefer *Vayikra*. Through the messages He gives us in these concluding passages the Holy One is preparing us to leave Sinai - and actually begin to put to the test in the desert heat the things He has taught us under His *Chuppah*.

The Vast Uncharted Wilderness Awaits Us

The desert that awaits us is a *whole new world*. There, in the midst of heat-chafed flesh, tired children, whining relatives, rude neighbors -- not to mention imperfect leaders who alternatively fight among themselves, claim honor and credit which belongs to the Holy One, and blame us whenever things do not go to suit them - we will learn *the hard lessons of spiritual life*. We will meet *the enemy without . . . and the enemy within*. And we will either *get in tune with our Bridegroom . . .* or we will *die*. It is time to gird up our loins, Beloved. We will *fail miserably* in many instances. We will encounter *tragedy* as much as *triumph*. Many – indeed the vast majority of those who are alive today – will simply give up and *die in the desert*. Each of us will have to choose between the “easier way” offered by charismatic speakers – modern-day Datan’s and Korach’s, among others – and the ‘*path of the just*, in which Y’hoshua and Kalev [Joshua and Caleb] will urge us to travel. Which way will *you* choose? How well will you handle the coming season of transition?

A Travelogue for Parsha B’har

Let’s take a few moments to steal a quick look ahead to see how the Holy One is going to prepare us for the season of transition that awaits. We begin the final week of this season of Torah with parsha called *B’har*. By *yom ha-chamishi* [the fifth day of the week, also called *Thursday*] however we will have transitioned to the parsha called *B’chukotai*.

A. The Stages of our Journey Through Parsha B’har

The Holy One is now ready to begin the process of preparing us for the upcoming transition by ***turning our eyes and our hearts toward home!*** His plan for the redemption of mankind includes not only a *Bride-People* but a *Homeland*⁵. And the Bridegroom King knows how to stir our hearts with a holy hunger for the only home that will ever satisfy our souls.

The first thing the Holy One wants us to know about the glorious Home-Land He has prepared for us is that ***the Land will be just as happy to see us as we are to see it!*** The Land has endured quite enough innocent blood and perversion under the Kena’ani since our forefathers headed South to Egypt to reunite with Yosef. The

⁵ A Kingdom requires three primary components – a King who is willing and able to lead and govern, a group of subjects who is willing to follow and serve, and a geographical base of operation and sovereignty in which the king and his subjects can work together to implement the kingdom’s lifestyle and mission.

land is groaning with eager expectation for the coming of the sons of Avraham – and for the Sabbath it will enjoy when we return!

1. A Prophetic Expansion of the Sabbath Concept

The Holy One will quickly introduce us to two stunning prophetic concepts that He intends to integrate into our Covenant identities and our relationship with the Beautiful Land. Both of the prophetic concepts He will introduce will constitute an expansion our concept of the ‘Sabbath’.

Just as we are called by the Holy One to mark *time* in terms of *seven-day weeks*, we will also be called by the Holy One to mark *epochs in time* in terms of seven-year intervals. As every seventh day is for us a Sabbath day, so is every seventh year to be for us a Sabbath year. The Sabbath year will be called the ***Sh’mittah***. And at the end of seventh ***Sh’mittah*** we are to mark the beginning of a new *epoch of epochs* with a special Sabbatical year called the ***Yovel*** [*i.e.* the year of ‘Jubilee’]. Each ***Sh’mittah*** is to be a year of rest for *the land to which the Holy One is bringing us*. During a *sh’mittah* year, we are neither to *plant*, nor *sow*, nor *prune*, nor even *harvest what grows on its own, throughout the land of Promise*. We are to *live supernaturally*.

2. Introducing the Yovel [Jubilee]

We are to count the ***sh’mittahs*** of the land, and ten days after each seventh ***sh’mittah*** ends, on Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement], we are to blow the ***shofar*** [*i.e., a trumpet made of a ram’s horn*] to mark the beginning of a ***Jubilee*** – *i.e.* a very special 50th year in which all land reverts to its former owner, all debts are cancelled, and all slaves go free.

The ***Sh’mittah*** and ***Yovel*** concepts are to be so *integrated into our thinking* and *our economy* that we are to take where we are in the cycle when we buy or sell interests in land. After all, the value of what we are bargaining is affected greatly by how close the transaction we are negotiating is to the year sowing and reaping are forbidden, not to mention the year that debts are cancelled, slaves go free, and the land returns to its former owner.

3. The Next Phase of Supernatural Provision

Since leaving Egypt we have been living in phase I of our Divine Bridegroom’s supernatural provision. Manna falls from Heaven. Water flows from a Rock. But this phase of Supernatural Provision is not designed to last forever. When we reach the Holy Land, the manna will stop falling, and the water will stop flowing. How will we feed our families then? Will we do so solely by the ‘sweat of our brow’, the way other nations do?

The Holy One will begin to address this issue by offering answers to our natural but unspoken questions about how we are supposed to eat in years we neither plant nor sow nor prune nor harvest. He answers our question before we ask it, by promising us that if and to the extent we are faithful to *sh'mar* [highly value, keep watch over, guard, protect, observe, and preserve] the Sabbath years He has ordained for us, He will cause our land to produce such a bountiful harvest in the sixth year of each cycle that we will have more than to eat in not only that year, but in the seventh and eighth years as well. If the Holy One could fill the storehouses of Egypt to overflowing for Yosef with sufficient grain to provide for the whole world during seven years of famine, surely He is able to provide food in abundance for us in our *Sh'mittah* and *Yovel* years.

4. Faithful Stewardship of the Land

Further instructing us with regard to how we are to sanctify the land of promise to which He is taking us, the Holy One instructs us specifically regarding under what circumstances and what conditions the interests which He is giving us in that land may be transferred to others. The land of Israel is *not ours*; we are mere stewards of it. And, since it is not ours, we *cannot sell it* – at least not in the sense that land is sold in other countries. All we can do by way of conveyancing is to entrust all or part of our portion of it to someone else's care temporarily - *until the next Yovel comes around*. And even such a conveyance must be made *expressly subject to a right of redemption* whereby we or one of our close relatives can buy-back the interest we conveyed for fair value.

With regard to rural properties and unwalled villages the seller's right of redemption endures until the next *Yovel*. Even with regard to houses within walled cities however the right of redemption endures for a minimum of a year. For Levi'im, the right of redemption as to urban properties endures longer.

5. Using the Holy One's Blessing on the Land to Provide for the Poor Who Live Among Us

As we study further in the upcoming week we will learn that of whom much is given in regard to the Promised Land, much is required. The Holy One instructs us that if and when one of our fellow covenant brethren becomes impoverished, those of us closest related to him who are able to do so are to come to his aid through making him an *interest-free loan*. This is not an obligation of the 'government', or some local charitable or religious organization – it is something *individuals* are to engage in personally.

If even an interest-free loan does not get our neighbor/kinsman through the down period, and he winds up having to ‘sell himself’ into servitude, we are to treat him not as a slave but as a hired servant employee. We are to make sure his workload is reasonable, and are to consider his obligation to us *paid in full* at the *Yovel*.

6. *Our Dealings With the Goyim*

The Holy One then concludes parsha *B’har* with a discussion concerning dealings and transactions with those outside the covenant community. The Holy One did not prohibit such dealings, nor did he suggest we try to avoid them. To the contrary His instruction was that in connection with dealings involving persons outside the covenant, we are not to surrender our covenant identities or become like the gentile(s) with whom we are dealing. We are instead to continue in *derech Adonai* – the way of the Holy One – namely, His Torah.

7. *The Different Destinations of the Two Pathways Described*

Having described in delicious detail the rich blessings that He has programmed to flow into the lives of those who choose to walk with Him in the covenant-life style, the Holy One now warns us of the consequences that will flow from abandoning the Bride’s path and going our own way. If, as, when, and to the extent we stubbornly choose to reject the Shepherd’s gentle leadership and wander away after the lusts of our own flesh, we will step outside our Bridegroom’s broad umbrella of protection and provision into a dark, dangerous, dehumanizing patch of enemy territory.

The further we stray away from the Garden Path the Bridegroom-King has blazed for us, the more severe the dangers we will face. Ultimately, if we stray far enough from the pathway of protection our Divine Bridegroom has laid out for us, we will experience famine, invasion, defeat, and exile. Even yet, the Holy One makes it clear that He will never forsake His covenant with us, but will instead continue to have compassion upon us in the land of our enemies, and will, even in our rebellion, intervene as necessary on our behalf to prevent our enemies from destroying us completely.

8. *The Price & Protocol of Redemption*

The section of promises and warnings will then give way to a discourse in which the Holy One announces principles according to which values are to be assigned to things which some of us will voluntarily pledge and vow to give to Him to be used in the ministry and maintenance of the *Mish’kan*.

A Quick Look at the Haftarah for the Week
Jeremiah 32:6-27

It is our assigned privilege to spend some time this week visiting with the prophet *Yirmayahu*, whom the Western world knows by the Anglicized nickname 'Jeremiah'. At the time Yirmayahu was writing this particular part of Holy Writ, the armies of Babylon were just beginning a long siege of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria were all reeling under the uncleanness of generations of flagrant breaches of the Covenant. Yirmayahu was in prison in Jerusalem - not for committing any crime, but for offending the sitting king of Judah. How had he offended his king? He had dared to prophesy that instead of weathering the Babylonian storm and/or being supernaturally delivered, Jerusalem was about to fall. The prophet had tried to tell his king that this was all just an unpleasant part of the Holy One's plan of reasonably necessary redemptive discipline.

Through tear-filled prophetic eyes Yirmayahu could see that the destruction of Jerusalem was coming, that the desecration and razing of the Temple was imminent, and that a long Babylonian captivity had been decreed. No one would listen to him. Then, as the darkest days of siege and starvation approached, the Holy One told Yirmayahu - a *kohen* - that he was to purchase his kinsman Chanamil's tract of land in Anatot as a prophetic sign. What's the big deal, you might ask? How would this be a prophetic sign to anyone, you wonder? Anatot - a Levitical city was only about three miles from the city walls of Jerusalem. As soon as the army of Nebuchadnezzar approached Jerusalem the residents of areas surrounding Jerusalem, including Anatot, had to flee their homes. The whole region was threatened with holocaust, so the towns around the fortress city of Jerusalem were virtually - if not totally - deserted. It was almost a certainty that that the Babylonians would ravage the village looking for any food or supplies that might have been left behind, then burn all its houses, orchards, and fields and leave it completely desolate.

For Yirmayahu, a man in prison in a city about to be destroyed by a hostile army, to purchase a tract of land in one of the city's suburbs looked like absolute insanity. Foolish perhaps . . . but then maybe not! Prophecy is designed by the Creator to empower us to see beyond our present circumstances and all the challenges that loom before us. Prophetic vision and utterance is designed to awaken human beings to hope and to inspire them to see the present circumstances through the eyes of the Ultimate Redemptive Strategist. Some saw

Anatot as under an imminent assault; the Holy One saw men arising who would repair the breaches, restore the ancient walls, and bring back the sweet sound of the laughter of the Bridegroom and Bride to the ancient streets.

Yirmayahu prophesies to us of a future day when not only is the Covenant People restored to the Land, but when *all the nations of the world will come to them* to exchange their false gods for the knowledge of the true God:

***Then Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say,
"Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.
Will a man make gods for himself which are not gods?" "Therefore behold,
I will once and for all cause them to know, I will cause them to know
My hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is [the Holy One]!"***

Take a close look at the world around you. What do you see, *Yirmayahu*? Do you have a vision for this ‘end-game’ prophecy?

A Glance at the Apostolic Scripture Readings for the Week

Luke 4:16-21; Acts 4:31-37

We will actually read two short passages this week. We will begin in the gospel account of *Lukas* [Luke], with the inspired physician’s chronicle of what happened the first time *Yeshua* went to the synagogue in his hometown after receiving *mikveh* in the Jordan. When He was handed the scroll of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] to read, *Yeshua* brought fresh new energy and import to the passage we know as Isaiah 61:1-2 – the passage in the prophetic writings that spoke most eloquently of the great year of *Yovel*. The Master read the ‘Spirit of the Sovereign Lord’s’ mission statement passage as if it had been written about HIM. Then He stopped abruptly without completing the reading⁶, gave the scroll back to the attendant, *sat down* and stunned everyone present by saying:

Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.
[Luke 4:21]

We will also read a short passage in the Book of Acts. This time *Lukas* will tell us about how, in the immediate aftermath of the great outpouring of the *Ruach HaQodesh* at *Shavuot* in the year of *Yeshua*’s passion, a Levi from the isle of Cyprus who had come into the city for the Festival sold a tract of Levitical land he owned and laid the proceeds of the sale at the feet of *Yeshua*’s apostles.

*May the Ruach HaQodesh prepare your hearts, minds and households
for the dramatic season of transition which looms before us all.*

The Rabbi’s son

⁶ *Yeshua* left off reading with the phrase ‘to proclaim the year of the Holy One’s favor’; He intentionally stopped short of pronouncing ‘the day of the vengeance of our God’.

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week
The Seventh Petition: Kabatz [Ingathering]

T'kah b'shofar g'dol l'charuteinu
Sound the shofar for great deliverance

v'sah nes l'kabetz galuteinu
Make a miracle, and ingather us from our lands of exile

v'kabetzeinu yachad m'arba kn'fot ha-aretz
ingather us by your Hand from the four corners of the earth

Baruch Atah Adonai,
M'kabetz ni'dchai amo Yisrael
Blessed are You, Holy One,
Who gathers the outcasts of His People Israel