

Shiur L'Yom Shen¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah B'har:*** **Leviticus 25:1-10**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 32:6-12**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Luke 4:16**

You are to return everyone to the land he owns

[Leviticus 25:10]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 67:1-2;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 7, *Kabat* [the Petition for Ingathering]

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

It is *Yom Shen* – the ‘second day’ of the week. In less than two more weeks now we lift our voices on the Sabbath and proclaim: *Chazak! Chazak! V'nitchazeik!* [*i.e. Be strong! Be strong! And may we all be strengthened together!*] As usual, the Holy One is not going to end a sefer of His Torah with a sigh or whimper. He has another grand surprise – another breath-taking Kingdom download – in mind for us. He has reserved for the end of *Sefer Vayikra* a subject the Holy One that will *stretch us* to the breaking point – i.e. challenge us to the core of our *love for Him* and our *trust in His goodness and provision*. Who has ears to *sh'ma*? And who has a heart to turn toward, and joyfully follow, the Voice that speaks the instruction as well as the instruction itself?

A New Download of Divine Speech Begins!

The focus of the Holy One's instructions this week is going to be on *what we are to do with – and how we are to heal - the land*. It will start with reconnecting – in our mind's eye, heart, and spirit – with *the land of Israel*. That land is to be the center of gravity of our lives. But alas, that land, like the rest of the world, is presently wounded and bleeding. Throughout the centuries that we have been in captivity, the land the Holy One promised to Avraham and his progeny has - like the rest of the world – been brutally abused and traumatized by the dark side of humanity. Instead of bringing blessing, beauty, fruitfulness and harmony to Creation as mankind was created to do, men have spread the poison of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’, and ‘evil’. Instead of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, shalom, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-denial, mankind has been spreading manure-load after manure-load of folly and uncleanness; of idolatry, adultery, and fornication; of greed, sloth and gluttony; of

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jealousy and envy, violence and vengeance; of occult practices and paranoias; of profane ranting and outrage mongering; of hate and war, rape and murder; and of every kind of narcissistic, self-absorbed pettiness the fallen mind and animalistic appetites of men can dream up. All Creation groans in eager expectation ... for deliverance, for redemption, for healing, and for restoration to Edenic state. After the trauma that has been inflicted upon it by the Kena'ani and the warring nations the land needs to be nurtured back to health and productivity patiently and gently. We are therefore to expose the land to high levels of *kedusha* energy. We are going to have to interact with the land according to the Holy One's brilliantly innovative ecosystem management protocols if we are going to bring out the best in it, and return it to its intended Eden-like state of fruitfulness and harmony. We must dose it with *shalom*, *tzedekah*, *mishpat*, and *kedusha* constantly in order to do our part in the great healing of the land that the Holy One intends to use as the beachhead for the Kingdom of Heaven's peaceful, benevolent invasion of the world.

The Sanctification of Time – Phase II

Toward the end of last week's parsha, *Emor*² the Holy One laid out for us in outline form our covenant responsibility to serve as His *sanctifiers of time*. We are to join Him, meet with Him, and learn from Him on a series of Sabbaths, of *mo'edim* [Divine Appointments], and of *miqra'ot* [prophetic rehearsals]. Treasuring and teaching our children to treasure these special days is to be as much a part of our identity, mission, and destiny as loving our neighbor, or caring for the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. The verses of today's aliyah are going to supplement and expand upon those foundational time-sanctification instructions. So welcome, Dear Ones, to Phase II of the Holy One's Plan for a great *sh'ma* people to arise and extend *kedusha* [i.e. holiness] into every facet of life on earth!

The instructions the Holy One has ordained for us to receive today will describe events He has scheduled on His Divine Timetable to *recur every seventh and every fiftieth year once we reach and claim our inheritance in Eretz Yisrael*. The Holy One is going to let us know in these verses that in the recurring cycle of Sabbath years and "Jubilees" the hieroglyphic picture of '*b'har Sineh*' will be portrayed over and over again, in every generation. We are not to reckon years by groups of ten [i.e. by decades]; we are to reckon them by groups of *seven*.

It Is Much, Much Bigger Than Us – It is Designed to Carry the Grand Redemptive Plan Into All Successive Generations!

If we are to be Effective Witnesses on behalf of our Redeemer-King we need a *captivating, paradigm-shattering, awe-inspiring story to tell* – AND we need to be constantly connected to and totally invested in that story. It needs to be OUR story

² See in particular Wednesday and Thursday's studies from parsha *Emor*.

as much as it is His story. Among other things, that means we need to have personally experienced the events that make up that story. We need to have seen those events with our own eyes. We need to have heard them with our own ears. We need to have felt them – and all the nuanced emotions of them - within the deepest recesses of our own souls. And we need to relive, indeed refresh, that story every *year* - and every *seven years* - of our lives.

Being the Holy One's kingdom of *kohanim* means that the life experiences described in the Psalms become our life song. The life experience of Psalm 1 - *i.e.* walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, standing not in the way of sinners, and sitting not in the seat of the scornful, but delighting and meditating on the Torah day and night until we become like a tree planted by the rivers of living water – needs to be part of our life song. The testimony of Psalm 23 - *i.e.* learning to lie down in green pastures rather than ravenously eat our way through them; and learning to stroll calmly beside rather than dive into and sully still waters; and learning to walk through the valley of the shadow of death fearing no evil – need to be part of our story. The life experiences of Psalm 27 [though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear]; of Psalm 34 [I will bless the Holy One at all times; His praise will continually be in my mouth]; of Psalm 51 [purge me with hyssop, and I will be clean]; as well as of Psalm 91, and Psalm 119, and Psalm 121, all need to flow together as verses in our life anthem.

For that to happen, we need to be constantly stretched. We need to be intimately and experientially familiar with – yet remain in awestruck wonder of – all the various ways in which our Bridegroom-King's supernatural protection and provision work. We have a great story to tell; and a great song to sing. But it needs to be a story we have lived, and a song we know and feel in our innermost being.

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Cultivating a Culture of Radical Trust

In order to cultivate a culture of trust that will, generation by generation, permeate and transform the homes and villages of His Model Nation, the Holy One is about to introduce two elements of time-sanctification strategy that are guaranteed to *stretch us in the faith department*. Indeed, the two elements of relationship to chronological time and geographical space that He is about to introduce are designed to challenge us to the core of our Covenant Identities. These things are not about us getting to Heaven when we die – these things are about the part we have been created and called to play in His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to its Full Edenic Potential.

Both our *love for Him vis-à-vis the material things of this world* and our *trust in His goodness and provision as opposed to our own ingenuity and hard work* will be severely tested. But that is altogether right and good. For if the most critical elements of relationship are not tested – and tested severely – how then are we [or the world] supposed to know that they are real?

We must understand that the Holy One's redemptive plan is hindered, not furthered, by a people who lives in a comfort/pleasure bubble, who relies upon its own intelligence and hard work, who frets over evildoers, and/or who glories in its own morality, ideology, philosophy, tradition, productivity, or strength. Such a people, obsessed with self, would bring no honor to the Holy One whatever. Such a people will always place its trust in its own fallen humanity - not in Him Who Created humanity.

So, in order to assure that His People never allow themselves to spend even one generation living independent of His protection and provision, the Holy One is about to send us forth to live a lifestyle of *radical dependence upon Him and His faithfulness to His Covenant with our ancestors*. Our Bridegroom-King intends to make sure that each generation of His People is able to *testify to the world from first-hand knowledge of the goodness, covenant faithfulness, and miraculous provision power of our Bridegroom-King*.

The Holy One is Omniscient. Even as He prepares to give us the challenging instructions of supernatural lifestyle that make up parsha *B'har*, He knows full well that we as a nation will fail to walk in them consistently. He knows that after we leave Sinai and begin to walk through the cycles of time He has ordained for us to sanctify we will encounter staggering levels of resistance both from the outside world and from our own flesh. He knows we will quite regularly – and sometimes dramatically - stray away from the supernatural lifestyle to which He has called us.

He knows that as soon as we leave Sinai the enemy of our souls will bombard our hearts and minds with his age-old ‘Did God truly say?’ inquiry. He knows that our fallen brains will try to reason away His supernatural life-instructions rather than take the necessary steps to align our lives and lifestyles with them. He knows that our fallen wills will hunger for everything the Serpent – or is it our own flesh – even suggests is pleasant to the eyes, good for food, and able to make one wise. He knows that our corrupted emotions will rise up in rebellion against His Plan and demand immediate comfort, pleasure, and pain-avoidance – not to mention self-righteous indignation - at the cost of His Best. He knows that as a people we will have our glorious *gazing-on-His-glory, standing-in-awe-under-His-Chuppah* seasons; but that these will be followed by some pretty disgusting *golden calf seasons*. He knows we will have exciting *all-the-Holy-One-has-spoken-we-will-sh’m-a-and-we-will-asah* seasons – but that soon afterward we will have whimpering ‘*let-not-the-Holy-One-speak-to-us-lest-we-die*’ seasons. He knows that we will have *united and focused building-the-Throne-Room-of-Heaven-on-earth* seasons – but He also knows that we will have divisive and competitive *let’s-start-our-own-fire-and-make-a-big-flashy-show-for-our-own-entertainment* seasons. He knows it is all part of the cycle.

Check the nation of Israel’s last seven years – and the seven years before that, and so on to the formation of the nation in 1948 – and see if you can recognize those recurring patterns. And while you are at it take a look at your own life. Look at it in seven-year intervals. See if the same up and down, high and low pattern I have described above has not been recurring in your life as well.

The Holy One wants us to see *every descent of our personal or national lives as leading to a later, greater ascent*. He wants us to understand that *how high a person of the Covenant goes in the season of ascent* is almost always directly proportional to *how low he or she – or someone in his or her lineage - went in the preceding season of descent*.

You may think you are stumbling and bumbling through life. Your flesh may scream out to that you – or a child, or a grandchild of yours – is careening out of control, and has no hope of recovery. But you are a child of the Covenant. Your children and grandchildren are sons and daughters of promise. For sons and daughters of the Covenant, stumbles and bumbles are never the end of the story. There is, for sons and daughters of the Covenant, always an unseen Hand very near, just waiting to pick them up, dust them off, and place them back on the pathway that leads to their Covenant purpose and destiny. His Covenant promise is to use even our own mistakes to provide a beautiful and powerful testimony that we can carry with us into that destiny. For every voice calling you or your children

of promise to detour from mission and/or fall into despair, therefore, there will always be a Higher Voice calling you and them to refocus, recalculate, and reorient to destiny, and rejoin the throng of the Redeemed as it makes its ascent to the Place of His Throne.

Understanding the Prophetic Message of Sh'mittah and Yovel

How has the Holy One determined that our trust in His goodness and provision – as opposed to our own ingenuity, intelligence, and labor - is to be tested regularly? First came the instructions concerning the Seventh Day. Then came the instructions to leave corners of our field, gleanings, etc. for the poor and the foreigner and to make pilgrimages in the middle of harvest seasons. And now come the instructions to *plant no crops whatever in every seventh year* and to *start all over at ground zero every 50th year*.

This is ... well ... *radical*. It is absolutely absurd. It is totally irrational and unthinkable. But ... do we love Him - or don't we? And will we trust Him - or won't we?

The Divine Bridegroom of Heaven has ordained that through *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing His instructions relative to the marking off of the 7th year Sabbath [*Sh'mittah*] and the 50th year *Yovel* in each generation the Holy One's people will have the privilege of *revealing to the world the manifest, miracle-working, covenant-keeping Hand of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov*. But He knows our flesh – and our flawed and self-obsessed capacities of reason – will resist. Of course, He has a strategy to deal with that as well.

What Is the Holy One Trying to Teach Us About Covenant?

Through His teachings regarding the *Sh'mittah* and the *Yovel* the Holy One desires to greatly expand our knowledge of two essential aspects of covenant relationship with Him – two aspects of covenant relationship which we will very much need to cling to in all subsequent phases of the relationship. The first such covenant concept is known in Hebrew as *bitachon*, which is usually translated into English as 'trust'. The second covenant concept the Holy One is going to teach us is *geulah*, usually translated into English as 'redemption'. Let's discuss these covenant concepts one at a time, shall we?

***1. Introducing Bitachon*³**

Bitachon is one of the primary things birthed in us by the Holy One's instructions concerning the *shemittah*, or 7th year Sabbath of the land. We are going to need to

³ The verb root of this Hebrew word is *batach*, *beit*, *tet*, *chet*, Strong's Hebrew word #982. It means *to make oneself vulnerable to another*. Envision so binding yourself up with another person that you see your hope, expectation, life, health, reputation, and destiny as being in their hands.

think, speak, breathe, leak, excrete and live *bitachon*. So let's examine the Hebraic essence of this covenant concept, shall we?

A. *Bitachon Distinguished from Western Culture's Ideas of 'Faith'*

Bitachon – i.e. which our English translations of the Bible often call 'faith' or 'trust' - plays a critical role in Hebrew thought. Indeed, *bitachon* is absolutely essential to the Torah lifestyle. Western ideas of 'faith' are primarily humanistic in origin and approach. The Greek philosophy underlying Western culture is '*I think, therefore I am*'. Western thought is all about man, and what man has and what man does and, of course, most of all, about what man 'thinks'. As a consequence Westerners are programmed to think of 'faith' as something a man has, does, and, most of all, thinks. Modern Westerners add the idea that 'faith' is something man 'speaks' and something man 'feels'. If you do not get what you want, according to Western thought, it is because you either did not have enough 'faith' to start with, did not do the right 'faith exercises', did not think the right 'faith' thoughts, did not speak the right 'faith' words, and did not feel the right 'faith' emotions. This is totally *chol* - i.e. man-centered and man-focused. It is the polar opposite of *bitachon*, which is *kadosh*.

Bitachon is based upon a consciousness and humble acceptance of the fact that the Creator of the Universe is, and intends to always be, actively involved in every aspect of our lives on earth, and is constantly working all situations and circumstances in our lives toward that which is – ultimately - our good. *Bitachon* tempers the drive toward independent initiative - the initiative to rectify and bring redemption to the entire world - with the recognition that it is the Holy One alone who gives us the power to achieve anything.

Bitachon is not just positive thinking and/or confession. It is not witchcraft. It is not white magic. *Bitachon* in no wise involves the Holy One serving us or doing what we want. *Bitachon* is about us serving the Holy One. *Bitachon* is realizing that our Divine Bridegroom has already blessed us richly, and more than we could ever deserve, with whatever material and spiritual blessings we already possess, and therefore surrendering all we have, and all that we could ever acquire or achieve, to Him, for Him to use - or dispose of – any way He sees fit.

Bitachon is neither in a hurry nor a self- or circumstance-obsessed huff. *Bitachon* enables a person to be patient in trials, to persevere in difficult times, and even to suffer without surrendering to offense or self-pity.

B. *Where Bitachon Comes From*

Unlike the Western counterfeit so often called 'faith', *bitachon* is not something a human being can theoretically conjure up on demand through positive thinking

about his needs or situation or which he can manufacture through hopeful confession. *Bitachon* is instead a bi-product of Divine encounter. No encounter with the Holy One, no reverent awe of the Holy One in operation, and no surrender of the human will to His as a result of such an encounter, means no *bitachon*. That is the reason the Master taught us to pray ‘*Our Father Who is in/of Heaven, Holy is Your Name*’ and ‘*May Your Kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven*’ before we throw out petitions like “*Give us this day*”, ‘*Forgive us ...*’ and ‘*Lead us ...*’ *Bitachon* comes from revelation about Who the Holy One is. And that is not a product of the human mind. Revelation about Who the Holy One is comes only through Divine Encounter and Communication.

C. *Developing The ‘Bitachon Reflex’*

At Creation the human being was programmed to respond to the Holy One’s Voice. Each of us was therefore born with what I like to call a *Bitachon Reflex*. Much as the human body produces adrenalin when it encounters a challenging situation and senses the need to respond to that situation in ways beyond the body’s ordinary level of function, so the human soul produces *bitachon* when it encounters its Creator and senses the need to respond to Him in ways beyond the soul’s ordinary level of operation.

Bitachon is thus simply the natural and unhindered response of the eternal human soul to a Heavenly interaction containing a revelation download. If, as, and to the extent we *sh’ma* the Words of our Creator, aided by the reverent fear and awe of the Holy One, our *bitachon reflex* engages. In response to Divine Encounter, prompted by Divine Communication, *bitachon* renews not only the mind, but also the will, and emotions, in response to entry of the Holy One’s words.

Divine communication flowing from Divine encounter is always the key that unlocks *bitachon*. And there is a reason for that. The engagement of the *bitachon reflex* evidences the reality that we have experienced a supernatural enhancement of perspective and outlook. Every time the Holy One speaks wisdom to our hearts or the *Ruach HaQodesh* reveals something empowering to us *bitachon* kicks in. Flooded with Divine Energy we begin to see beyond all the natural or self-imposed obstacles and limitations that previously had us feeling impotent and overwhelmed. We suddenly begin to see things the way the Holy One sees them. And we suddenly cease to see the situations we are facing through the usual lenses of self-interest, pain-avoidance, and comfort-seeking, and instead see the spiritual sparks of potential for growth and transcendence that we had previously missed.

Once the entry of the Word of the Creator activates the *bitachon reflex* we do not look at our lives and situations as we did before. We suddenly do not see ourselves as either impotent victims or scrappy survivors. We suddenly do not see our

situations as ‘cruel fate’. We suddenly do not see our life circumstances – or those of our loved ones and friends – as tragic or overwhelming. We suddenly do not see our problems, or theirs, as insurmountable. We suddenly see the bigger picture – and thus recognize the configuration of difficulties and challenges we – and our loved ones – face as nothing more than just another obstacle course to be navigated pursuant to the wise instruction and with the capable assistance of our Bridegroom-King. Our *bitachon reflex* tells us that our God can do anything. And through Him, we can overcome any obstacle. We see personal trials and setbacks and illnesses and failures as opportunities for the Holy One to step in and do wonderful works of healing, deliverance, and restoration. We see Him delivering real people from real messes as the primary way He will cause the knowledge of His glory to fill the earth as the waters covers the sea.

But there are always going to also be ‘*survivor-mentality*’ people. Survivor-mentality people look at the events of life as a series of obstacles they must overcome by the sheer force of their strength of character or their own efforts. E.g. a youth might think: *I have to work hard to get good grades in my studies, or I won't be able to get a good job. If I am not able to get a good job, I won't be able to support a family the way I should, and that will mean that my family and I will be unhappy.* So life goes for persons with survivor-mentalities. They constantly fear that if they do not constantly remain on top of every aspect of their lives their world will collapse around them.

People who allow encounters with the Holy One to infuse their lives with *bitachon* on the other hand accept that it is not they who control the events and circumstances of life on earth – it is the Holy One. And through experience they gradually become confident that the Holy One will provide for people in covenant with Him everything those people need both materially and spiritually.. They recognize the fate of nations, great and small, the destiny of whole generations, and, as well, the most minute personal needs of each individual are all under our Covenant Partner’s control. Such a people gradually rejoice in becoming co-laborers with the Holy One - weaker partners in a covenant relationship with Him - instead of day laborers trying to impress or earn something from Him or from the world.

A person with *bitachon* therefore engages in the normal activities of life – i.e. he or she studies, shops, sleeps, marries, eats, and works for a living – not in order *to survive*, but in order that he or she can offer the Holy One a vessel to use in every nook and cranny of this world. He gives us spheres of influence – we joyfully give them back to Him to do with as He wills.

People with *bitachon* engage in the *mitzvot* of Torah joyfully simply because by doing so they sense that they are participating, as they were created to do, in a great project of the Divine Will – i.e. the making of this world into a more holy and God-honoring place. By engaging in the *mitzvot* of Torah - albeit imperfectly – wherever we go we come to understand that we are thereby cooperating with rather than resisting Our Covenant Partner’s Plan to make every place He shall cause the sole of our feet to tread a little bit better place.

2. Introducing Ge’ulah

The second covenant-relationship affecting concept expanded upon in parsha *B’har*, a concept separate from but closely related to *bitachon*, is known in Hebrew as *ge’ulah*. This Hebrew noun is usually translated into English as ‘redemption’. Unfortunately however the English word ‘redemption’ has in our generation become something of a religious *buzzword*, thrown around frequently – although usually without any real substantive understanding. We will address this concept fully in *Shiur L’Yom Sh’lishi* [Tuesday’s study], when we speak in detail concerning the *Yovel* [Jubilee]. For now, just understand that *geulah* is inextricably tied to covenant. It is not a ‘random act of kindness’, or the product of human compassion or pity. It is what stronger covenant partners do for weaker covenant partners because the covenant constrains them to do so.

Before we get much deeper than that into *geulah* however let us examine the specifics regarding what the Holy One has to say to us about the seventh-year Sabbath we are to observe when we get to *Eretz Kena’an* – i.e. the ultimate *bitachon*-enhancing *mitzvah* of Torah.

Introducing the Shemittah – Seventh Year Sabbath

Before we ever left Sinai the Holy One wanted us to know *that the land of milk and honey that we were destined to possess was not and would never be our land.* It belongs - and will forever belong -- to Him, just as we belong and forever will belong to Him.

Our Divine Bridegroom is a KING. And His right to rule – and to give land and blessing and authority to whom He wills - is what His KINGSHIP and His KINGDOM are all about. Meanwhile, the land to which our Divine Bridegroom is taking us and in which He promises to establish us as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is *in the process of violently “vomiting” out the former occupants – the Kana’ani* [i.e. Canaanites]. The *Kena’ani* have, you see, been using the Land as a base from to commit horrifying abominations for generations. Innocent blood cries out to the Holy One – and He is about to bring judgment against the *Kena’ani* through subjecting them to invasion by a horde of redeemed slaves.

The arrival of the household of the Holy One in the land is designed in the mind of our Covenant Partner to have a profound effect upon the land – it is actually going to give the land a Sabbath of rest. The coming of the ‘sons of God’ to the land will enable it to rest from its labors of forcefully vomiting out the Kena’an’i.

The Holy One established Melchi-Tzedek’s throne there to call men to holiness. He sent Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov there to demonstrate a lifestyle of walking with the One True God. To wake the people up He sent *three separate famines, two devastating foreign invasions* and a *stunning introductory judgment* [on Sodom, G’morrah and the cities of the plain].

But the Kena’ani did not *sh’ma*. They continued to pursue perversion and wreak abomination. The land has been convulsing violently under the weight of that perversion and abomination for a long time. But now, *finally* the season of perversion and abomination in the Land is nearing its end. The Land needs a Sabbath. And it needs the sons and daughters of the living God - the heirs of the Avrahamic Covenant - to release that Sabbath over it. Hence verse 3 of today’s aliyah of Torah specifically says:

When you come into the land which I give you then the land will have Shabbat, a Shabbat to the Holy One.

The appearance of the sons and daughters of the Covenant will bring sweet relief to the holy land. It will be freed of the perversions and abominations of the Kena’ani at last. And so, in commemoration of this the Holy One decrees that every seventh year thereafter the land is to have a Sabbath commemoration.

In every seventh year we are to *refrain from plowing* the land of milk and honey. We are to refrain from planting seed in it or pruning its vineyards and orchards. We are to refrain from harvesting its produce. We are not even to cut the weeds it produces. Why? *Ah, Beloved* - there is something we must understand about our relationship with Eretz Yisrael. It is a first fruits land.

In his letter to the Romans Shaul of Tarsus said this: ***The Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.***” Romans 8:19. Of all the lands of Earth only *Eretz Yisrael* has to date experienced the revelation of the arrival of the ‘sons of God’. But *Eretz Yisrael* has, to some extent at least, experienced it. And to that extent the land has been “set free” to be the “holy land” it was created to be. *Eretz Yisrael* is unlike any other land on earth.

Our arrival in Eretz Yisrael under Y’hoshua, you see, brought *Shabbat* to the land - the way the arrival of the seventh day of the week brings *Shabbat* to us. And so

from our arrival in Eretz Yisrael the Holy One instructed that we were to start *counting off the years*. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. *SEVEN*.

Forget marking off time by decades as the world does. In our Divine Bridegroom's kingdom time is marked off instead in '*weeks of years*'. Every seventh year is to be a *commemoration* of the Shabbat the land received upon our arrival. Just as importantly it is to be a *prophetic rehearsal* of the Shabbat all Creation will receive upon the manifestation of the sons of God in the Holy One's appointed time.

All of Creation will likewise experience the manifestation of the 'sons of God', in due time - according to the Holy One's prophetic timetable. *Eretz Yisrael* is merely the *first fruits*. Through the sanctification of the 'first fruits' land will in time come the fullness of the harvest, which will in the day of Messiah's Kingdom spread to all the continents and outermost islands of the earth. And when that happens truly "*all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Holy One*" [Numbers 14:21], and "*all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Holy One as the waters cover the sea.*" Habakkuk 2:14.

Weaker Covenant Partners Are Called to Sanctify Their Stronger Covenant Partners' Land as well as His Name

The Holy One specifically instructs us not to plow, sow, prune, or harvest the land He is entrusting to us in the seventh year. Why? What possible purpose could this serve? We have learned already that as a holy people, and as the Holy One's peculiar treasure, the Redeemed Community is to sanctify TIME. At the conclusion of last week's aliyah we learned that we as the Redeemed Community are to sanctify THE HOLY ONE'S NAME. The *Shemittah* however takes us into another dimension of holiness – the dimension of the sanctification of SPACE.

We are to treat the Land – *Eretz Yisrael* – with the same respect as we treat the Holy One's Name and His Torah. We are to consider the land He promised to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov and to us their descendants as *Holy Geography*. It is indeed for us "*the holy land*". The Holy One therefore introduces the *Shemittah* with the following words:

ki tavo'u el ha-aretz asher ani noten lachem

When you come to the land that I am giving you,

V'shavetah ha-aretz Shabat l'Adonai

the land must be given a rest period, a Sabbath to the Holy One.

Shesh shanim tizra sadeicha

For six years you are to plant your fields,

v'shesh shanim tizmor karmeicha v'asafta et-tevu'atah

and for six years prune your vineyards, and harvest your crops,

Uvashanah ha-shvi'it Shabat Shabaton yihyeh l'aretz

but the seventh year is a sabbath of sabbaths for the land.

Shabat l'Adonai

It is a Sabbath unto the Holy One

sadeicha lo tizra v'charmecha lo tizmor

during which you may not plant your fields, nor prune your vineyards.

Et sefiach ketzircha lo tiktzor

Do not harvest crops that grow on their own

v'et-inevey nezireicha lo tivtzor

and do not gather the grapes on your unpruned vines,

shnat Shabaton yihyeh l'aretz

since it is a year of rest for the land.

[Leviticus 25:2-5]

Some view the *Shemittah* as merely good “land management” – *i.e.* letting the land lie fallow one year of seven so as to allow it to replenish itself. That however is only one small and virtually insignificant aspect of what the *Shemittah* is all about. What the *Shemittah* is about is land *sanctification*, not land *management*. The *Shemittah* is about acknowledging the Holy One’s ownership of the land, and about re-affirming and perpetuating in each generation the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham our father regarding that Land.

The *Shemittah* is, you see, about honoring Ya’akov’s promise that if the Holy One would bring him [*i.e.* us, his descendants] safely back to the land after his [*i.e.* our] sojourn in the land of Lavan [or Pharaoh, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Torquemada, or James II, or the Czar, or Hitler, or a thousand others], he [*i.e.* *we*] would make the Holy One our God, would make Eretz Yisrael a special place of habitation for the Holy One and would return to the Holy One a tithe of all He places in our hand. See **Genesis 28:20-22**.

We do not ‘count down’ as other men do. We ‘count up’. We are climbing rungs on a ladder, so to speak – counting as we go. Come Beloved - let us go *up* - to the mountain of the Holy One our God!

The Continuous Counting of the Weeks of Years

But the Holy One is not finished. Next, in an instruction similar in concept to the instruction to ‘count the omer’ for 7 sabbaths between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*, He instructs us to ‘count’ seven *shemittot* [7th year Sabbaths of the land].

V'safarta lecha sheva shabatot shanim sheva shanim sheva
You are to count seven sabbatical years, that is, seven times seven years.

pe'amim vehayu lecha yemei sheva shabatot
The period of the seven sabbatical cycles

ha-shanim tesha v'arba'im shanah
shall thus be 49 years.
[Leviticus 25:8]

Thus the Holy One instructs us to be in the process of *counting* all our lives – not just for 7 weeks during the spring.

Numbers are very important to the Holy One. No, I don't mean numbers of people, or houses, or cars, or bank accounts etc. I mean numbers of *days the Holy One has given us the opportunity to fulfill our Divine Purpose on earth*. And I mean numbers of *Sabbaths* – those days specially infused with blessing and holiness which the Holy One has given us to practice life in the World to Come. And I mean numbers of *Yom Kippurs*⁴ – those special days we receive into our souls and spirits the forgiveness and redemption of the Holy One.

Counting such days, you see, in the spiritual world in which the Holy One has called us to dwell, means *ascending*. We do not '*count down*' as other men do. We '*count up*'. We are climbing rungs on a ladder, so to speak – counting as we go.

Come Beloved - let us go *up* - to the mountain of the Holy One our God!

Questions for Today's Study

1. The primary subject of today's aliyah is the *Shabbatot* [Sabbaths] of the land⁵.

[A] When and where did the Holy One give the instructions concerning the ***Shabbat HaEretz*** [the Sabbath of the land]?

[B] When and where were the Israelites expected to begin obeying these instructions?

⁴ All the counting periods focus on Sabbaths. The counting of the years for ***Shemittah*** is actually a counting of 'Great Sabbaths' – i.e., *Yom Kippurs*. *Yom Kippur* is called the 'Great Sabbath' because on it we not only refrain from ***melachah*** [ordinary work], and rest, as we do on every Sabbath but we also fast, and because on it we receive again through the special mediation of our Great High Priest the blessing of forgiveness and redemption. Hence, when the shofar is sounded to announce the beginning of the ***Yovel*** [Jubilee] year, on what day is it blown? Not on *Yom T'ruah/Rosh HaShanah* – but on *Yom Kippur*.

⁵ This subject is also covered in parsha ***Mishpatim***, at Exodus 23:10-11. There we are told: "***You may plant your land for six years and gather its crops But during the seventh year, you must leave it alone and withdraw from it. The needy among you will then be able to eat [from your fields] just as you do, and whatever is left over can be eaten by wild animals. This also applies to your vineyard and your olive grove.***"

[C] What specific things did the Holy One tell B'nei Yisrael not to do in the seventh year, to make it a Sabbath year?

[D] What were the Israelites and the people who dwelt with them to eat in the Sabbath year? Explain how they were to have enough to eat [verses 6, 20-22]

[E] What purpose in the lives of the People of the Holy One do you think the seventh year "*Shabbat of the Land*" was to serve?

[F] The *Shemittah* is a "Sabbath of Sabbaths *for the land*". What is the Hebrew word our English bibles translate as "land"? Write that word in Hebrew, with its vowel markings. The first usage of that word is in Genesis 1:1, where it is translated as the "earth". Look also at Genesis 1:10-11, 24, where the Holy One performs miracles of creation using the "earth" (the same Hebrew word as is translated "land" in today's aliyah, and at Genesis 1:28 where the Holy One gave man specific instructions of what to do with the "earth"). With all this in mind, write a one-page essay on the Hebraic concept of the "land".

2. In order to understand today's Haftarah you need to begin by reading *Yirmayahu* [Jeremiah] 32:1-5.

*The word that came to Yirmayahu from the Holy One
In the tenth year of Tzidkiyahu king of Y'hudah,
which was the eighteenth year of Nevukhadretzdar.*

*Now at that time the king of Bavel's army was besieging Y'rushalayim;
and Yirmayahu the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard,
which was in the king of Y'hudah's house.*

*For Tzidkiyahu king of Y'hudah had shut him up, saying,
Why do you prophesy, and say,*

*Thus says the Holy One: "**Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Bavel,
and he shall take it;
and Tzidkiyahu king of Y'hudah shall not escape out of the hand of the Kasdim,
but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Bavel,
and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall see his eyes;
and he shall bring Tzidkiyahu to Bavel,
and there shall he be until I visit him, says the Holy One:
though you fight with the Kasdim, you will not prosper.**"*

The Holy One had announced to Yirmayahu that Nebuchadnezzar and the army of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar's command were acting as *His servants* in connection with the siege of Jerusalem, and that hence the siege would prevail and all Israel would fall to Babylon. The 'Real Estate Bubble' was about to burst. Land in Israel was thus about to become worthless – and it would stay that way for at least a generation. Buying land at this point would generally make no sense whatever. But the Holy One sees things different from men who think themselves wise. He sees things through a long-term lens. His viewpoint is colored by His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of

Creation to its Intended State of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and Shalom. So, He tells Yirmayahu:

*Behold, Chanam'il the son of Shallum your uncle
shall come to you, saying, Buy my field that is in `Anatot;
for the right of redemption is yours to buy it.*

So when Yirmayahu's kinsman Chanam'il came to Yirmayahu in prison and asked Yirmayahu to exercise his right of redemption with regard to the family plot in the land of Binyamin, in the city of *Anatot*' [which Yirmayahu knew was about to become totally worthless], Yirmayahu says:

*Then I knew that this was the word of the Holy One.
I bought the field that was in `Anatot of Chanam'il my uncle's son,
and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.
I subscribed the deed, and sealed it, and called witnesses,
and weighed him the money in the balances.
So I took the deed of the purchase, both that which was sealed,
containing the terms and conditions, and that which was open;
and I delivered the deed of the purchase to Barukh
the son of Neriyah, the son of Mechaseyah,
in the presence of Chanam'il my uncle's son,
and in the presence of the witnesses who subscribed the deed of the purchase,
before all the Y'hudim who sat in the court of the guard.*

[Jeremiah 32:6-12]

Keep in mind that Yirmayahu was a *kohen*, of the tribe of Levi, and that *Anatot* was one of the Levitical cities located within the territorial allocation of the tribe of Benyamin [Benjamin]. Read ahead in parsha *B'har* to Leviticus 25:32-34, concerning the redemption of Levirate lands.

[A] What was going on when the Holy One told Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] to buy the field at *Anatot*?

[B] Why was it Yirmayahu's "right and duty" to buy this field?

[C] What did Yirmayahu's redemption of this land as a prophetic act symbolize?

[D] Yirmayahu speaks of things in the deed which are "open" and other things which are "sealed". What do you think all this means?

3. In the B'rit Chadasha reading I have selected for parsha *B'har* we will find that Yeshua has just returned to the *Galil* [Galilee] from the Temptation in the wilderness [Luke 4:1-13]. He is about to 'to public'. Luke says that to start things off Yeshua went to Synagogue in Natzeret [Nazareth] "*as was his custom*"⁶.

⁶ Nowhere does Torah tell us we are to schedule or attend formal religious services on the Sabbath. That appears to be *man's plan*, not the Holy One's. While the apostolic writers tell us it was Yeshua's *custom* to attend synagogue gatherings on Shabbat, take note that every time we are told He went to a synagogue on the Shabbat what He is described as doing there was disrupting the service and, in one way or another,

*He came to Natzeret, where he had been brought up.
He entered, as was his custom,
into the synagogue on the day of Shabbat, and stood up to read.*

Our English text tells us cryptically that Yeshua “stood up to read”. Anyone who has been to a synagogue knows what this means. Honored members and guests are called to the “*Bema*” [platform], and asked to read a part [an *aliyah*] of the pre-assigned Torah or *haftarah* section of the week. Those called to the *bema* do not, however, choose what they are to read. The officials of the synagogue have already opened the scrolls to the prescribed passage, and direct the reader to it. In this instance, the scroll which the officials of the synagogue had laid out was that of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah]. They had almost certainly opened that scroll to the place later assigned the designation of “Chapter 61”. The subject matter, we will find out tomorrow, “just happens” to be ... the *yovel*!

[A] Look up the word “custom” in Strong’s Concordance. Write the Greek word [Strong’s Greek word #1486, *etho*] in Greek letters, and write the definition Strong’s gives to the word. Then, look up other usages of this Greek word in the apostolic writings – Matthew 27:15, Mark 10:1, Acts 17:2 – and describe the concept in your own words.

[B] Why do you think Yeshua went to the Synagogue in Natzeret [Nazareth] on this particular day? Considering what *haftarah* Scripture was laid out for Yeshua to read as “He stood up to read”, do you have any idea what day it was?

[C] Look up the word “synagogue” in any resource books you may have available to you. [You might start with the dictionary or encyclopedia, then progress to one or two Judaic sources]. Write a one-page essay entitled “*The First Century Synagogue*”, describing [i] the origin of the synagogue (*i.e.* when it developed, and what its original purpose was); [ii] who “ran” the synagogue by the First Century (who served as its officials), and [iii] what went on there (the order of service).

[D] In what language is the scroll of *Yeshayahu* written? In what language do you think Yeshua read the scroll?

*May the people of the Holy One always count upward --
As if we were counting the steps as we ascend Mount Moriah
to Enter the Millennial Temple from which Messiah Reigns.*

The Rabbi’s son

effectively cutting it short. Sometimes He did so by casting out a demon, other times by healing somebody, and still other times by saying something He knew full well would so offend those in charge to the point they would stop whatever they were doing and give Him their full – if not loving – attention.

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 67:1-2

*May the Holy One be merciful to us,
bless us, and cause his face to shine on us. Selah.
That your way may be known on eretz,
and your yeshu`ah among all nations,*