

# *Shiur L'Yom Shishi*<sup>1</sup>

[Friday's Study]

READINGS:    **Torah B'har:**                      **Leviticus 25:47 – 26:2**  
                  **Haftarah:**                                **Jeremiah 32:24-27**  
                  **B'rit Chadasha:**                      **Acts 4:31-37**

***B'nei Yisrael are servants to Me;  
they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt.***  
[Leviticus 25:55]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 67:6-7;  
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 7, *Kabat* [Ingathering]

***V'chi tasig yad ger v'toshav ameicha** – And if/when a foreigner attains influence, and dwells among you ... **umach acheicha imo v'nimkar l'ger** – and your poor brother sells himself to the ger ... Leviticus 25:47a.*

All week long the Holy One has been regaling us with the details of the Grand Plan of *Geulah* - i.e. *redemption* – that He plans to have us implement when we take possession of the Land of Promise. There is, with the Holy One, no situation or challenge in the world that is not pregnant with the hope of redemption. He is a *Ga'al* – i.e. a redeemer. He thinks like a redeemer. He looks at every human being and every situation through the eyes of a redeemer. He never surrenders to worry, to blame, or to despair. He sees challenging life situations as a springboard, not a trapdoor. He sees them as only a temporary estate –something we are just passing through'. He does not worry about who is to blame for a situation. His focus is solely on how the situation can be dealt with wisely and effectively, its challenges overcome, and the whole scenario turned into a testimony of redemption.

Our Bridegroom-King sees seeds of redemption where we see only the track-marks of sin and the scars of suffering. He sees a fruitful field waiting to burst into bloom where we see a dry, dusty desert. He sees the narrow pathway to life, health and peace where we see only the broad way leading to destruction. With Him failure is never an option. With Him giving up is never a reasonable alternative. With Him the over-riding reality of His frame of reference is that “*nothing is impossible*”. And He is training us to think the same way. He is not just training us to be *passionate lovers of God* and *humble servants of men*; He is also training us to be *faithful ambassadors of geulah*. He is training us to process every problem or situation we face through three truth lenses. Truth Lens #1 is: ‘***With God all things are possible.***’ Matthew 19:26. Truth Lens #2 is: ‘***God works all things together for***

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*good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.’ Romans 8:28. Truth Lens #3 is: ‘No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.’ I Corinthians 10:13.*

Along with giving us these three corrective lens - which I call *the ‘Redemption Trifocals* - the Holy One has equipped us with every weapon we will need to bring deliverance, healing, restoration and resolution to the thorniest problems that vex the human race. At the top of the list of thorny problems human face is the problem of poverty. Viewed through the Redemption Trifocals, poverty is only a temporary, and imminently fixable, status. Our King is a shepherd – and He knows how to make certain that the sheep under His Watch have food to eat. He is a renowned master at providing daily bread. He will not suffer those who are His to remain for long in a state of lack. And He wants to train us as kinsman-redeemers – mortal men who have been walking with Him long enough, and intimately enough, that we have developed eyes that see things the way He does. All it takes is someone who is committed – and who will commit their time and the resources He places in their hands – to co-labor with Him in His great plan for making *tikkun*.

Our Bridegroom-King actually believes that all it takes to accomplish redemption in any given situation is one man, woman, or child walking in Covenant with Him who will look past the obstacle to the solution. All any situation requires is one human being to transcend the blaming, complaining, hand wringing, tongue-wagging realm and begin to see things – and agrees to do things – the King’s way. All He requires is one man or woman or child who is committed – and who will commit their time and the resources He places in their hands – to co-labor with Him in His great plan for making *tikkun*.

For this reason, you simply cannot pose a problem to or throw a situation at the Holy One for which He doesn’t have a brilliant plan and a workable strategy of redemption. Case in point – a son of the Covenant becomes the slave or servant of a foreigner. Think back to the story of Yosef in the hold of the Midyani’s slave wagons, in the slave market of Egypt, in the house of Potifar’s wife, and in Pharaoh’s dungeon. The world hits the people of the Covenant with its best shot over and over again. But the Covenant stands firm through the darkest night – and in time, with the slightest modicum of cooperation from some anonymous cupbearer, the sad story of betrayal and calamity is transformed into a stunning masterpiece of redemption.

## *When A Son of Israel Serves a Foreigner*

The Bridegroom-King is teaching us a very important lesson - that every challenging situation or seeming setback we or anyone else will ever face in life is pregnant with redemptive potential. Understanding this, and appropriating into our worldview and approach to every situation, is an essential aspect of the Holy One's Ultimate Divine Bridal Makeover protocol. Hence in today's aliyah He presents us with a hypothetical situation that would make most of us sick to our stomach.

*Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich,  
and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor,  
and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you,  
or to a member of the stranger's family . . .*

[Leviticus 25:47]

Wow. What kind of a horrendous mess would a son or daughter of the covenant have to have gotten himself or herself into in order to see no better way out than to sell himself or herself into slavery/service to someone who knows not the Holy One or His ways? How many bridges would such a son or daughter of the Covenant have had to have burned to turn to a stranger for help as opposed to a kinsman? How desperate – or depraved - would a son or daughter of the Covenant have to even consider giving up his or her inheritance for a morsel of bread from a person who neither knows nor follows our Bridegroom-King's ways? Such questions pop into our minds. But the Holy One does not even consider them. His reaction does not depend upon how the son or daughter of the Covenant got into the mess. It doesn't matter who was to blame. No matter how bad the situation look, and no matter how much of the blame for the situation may reside on the one in the predicament, the Holy One's first thought is about redemption. Hence He completes the sentence left hanging above with *after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him; or anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself.* Leviticus 25:48-49.

As the eyes of the Holy One see it, every person who is touched by the soul-poison of *tumah* can – and is expected to – be made *tahor*. He provides the way for the redemption. In the thinking of the Holy One, every *metzora* [KJV 'leper'] can – and is expected to – be made whole. He provides the way for the redemption. And with the Holy One, every person who goes into bondage or enters the realm of human trafficking can – and is expected to - be redeemed. He provides the way of the redemption – and even pays the price. Do you see what I mean about our Bridegroom-King having 'redeemer's eyes'? We see failure and disaster – He sees redemption. We sit in the seat of the scornful and speculate about sin and blame – He sees recovery and restoration. All that matters to our King is that ... *after he is*

***sold he may be redeemed again.*** What a King! What a Covenant-Partner! What a God! Such a God it is indeed an honor – and a joy - to serve.

Our Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover is never complete – and the eternal truths of the *Kedusha Discourse* – are all geared to teach us how to see and approach the world the way our Bridegroom-King does – with ‘redeemer’s eyes’. Whatever else we have learned about wholeness and holiness, for us to function as His servants in a meaningful way, we still have to learn to see and approach difficult situations – even seeming catastrophes – with eyes that search for, with mouths that speak forth, and with members that work toward, *redemption*.

We are not here to point out what is wrong; we are here to bring redemption and resolution. We are not here to moan, groan, and complain about how unfair life is; we are here to set the captives free and lead them to the King’s pathway to life, health, and peace. We are not here to assign blame or condemn those responsible for the world’s messes; we are here to clean them up. We are not here to throw stones at sinners; we are here to awaken and embrace prodigals.

The Holy One wants us to always remember and identify with Yosef – and He wants us to be always looking for and expecting a ‘suddenly’ moment such as the one that accompanied Pharaoh’s dream. Our Bridegroom-king wants us to remember and identify not with the elder son but with the prodigal – and He wants us to always see the father running toward him, calling for a ring, robe, and sandals for his son’s feet. The Kinsman-Redeemer of all kinsman-redeemers wants us to remember and identify with Onesimus – and He wants us to always hear the words of Shaul of Tarsus ringing out around us, saying “***if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I ... will repay!***” The One Who has called us to serve Him wants us to serve Him by filling whatever sphere of influence He assigns us with sweet songs of deliverance. Our reasonable service to the Holy One is to act as *visioners for* and *agents of* redemption in regard to every challenging situation that we - or any of our kinsmen, friends, or even enemies - may face. No tongue wagging or finger pointing is allowed. No complaint, criticism, or pontificating will produce anything of value. Those kind of things are the work of the adversary, not the expected contribution of the servants of the King.

The Holy One explains how even the horrible situation the Holy One has described for us in Leviticus 28:47 can be rectified by those of His servants who have developed ‘redeemer’s eyes’:

***The price of his release shall be according to the number of years,  
from the year that he was sold to him until the Year of Yovel;  
it is to be according to the time of a hired servant for him.  
‘If there are still many years remaining, according to them***

*he is to repay the price of his redemption from the money with which he was bought.  
And if there remain but a few years until the Year of Yovel,  
he is to reckon with him, and according to his years  
he is to repay him the price of his redemption.  
He is to be with him as a yearly hired servant,  
and he is not to rule with rigor over him in your sight.  
And if he is not redeemed in these years,  
then he will be released in the Year of Yovel—  
he and his children with him.*  
[Leviticus 25:49-54]

Do you recognize the story of Yosef, slave of Potifar, in this hypothetical? Do you recognize the situation of *the prodigal son*, Dear One? Do you recognize the story of *Onesimus*, slave of Philemon? Are you sensing the Holy One's passion – and catching His vision – to always provide a path of redemption and deliverance? Are you understanding why wringing one's hands, wagging one's tongue, worrying, complaining, and assigning blame have no place in the Holy One's Kingdom? Are you learning to look for the narrow path to overcoming in every broad pathway that leads in the direction of destruction? Are you developing 'redeemer's eyes'?

***No Matter What House or Country We May Live In,  
or Who Thinks They Control Us, Whose Servants Are We Really?***

The Holy One is not content to share our services with anyone else for long. We are His special treasure people. We are His kingdom of priests. We are His holy nation. If He allows us to serve anyone else, He allows it only temporarily, only for our ultimate good, and only in order to equip us with another new and glorious testimony of redemption and deliverance. He may allow us to experience poverty – or even bondage – for a season. He may do so in order to test us – and He may do so in order to test others in our community and/or in the nations. He wants us to learn to see every difficult situation as a potential redemption story. He wants us to look for lessons we can learn, patience-skills we can hone, and empathy we can develop. He wants us to learn to stay thankful and joyful, ever on the lookout for and expecting to find opportunities to honor His Name. He therefore wants us to learn to resist the temptation of our flesh to complain, to accuse, and to place blame. He wants to train us to incorporate neither failure, nor poverty, nor estrangement, nor bondage into our self-image. He wants our eyes to ever sparkle with redemption light. He wants us to always look for the shaft of light that points the way out of every cavern, the miracle that delivers us from every dungeon, and the crimson cord that shows us the way out of every predicament. He wants us to remember and identify with Yosef – and keep ever in mind the 'suddenly' moment when Pharaoh had a dream. He wants us to remember and identify with the prodigal – and the vision of the father running toward him, calling for someone to bring a ring, robe, and sandals for his feet. And, remembering these things, He wants our hearts to



always be filled with and our mouths to always be releasing sweet songs of deliverance over every challenging situation that we - or any of our kinsmen, friends, or even enemies - may face.

### ***What Does our Service of – and Ultimate Allegiance to – the Holy One Mean?***

The Holy One then summarizes our ‘servant’ responsibilities to Him as follows:

***Ki-li b'nei-Yisra'el avadim***

*[All these instructions are given] in order that the Israelites can be My servants*

***avadai hem asher-hotzeti otam me'erezt Mitzrayim***

*They are servants to Me because I brought them out of the land of Egypt.*

***Ani Adonai Eloheichem***

*I am the Holy One your God.*

The Holy One is about to make it clear why He has stepped off His Throne in Heaven, out of time, into our world to redeem us. It was not so that we could have ‘freedom’ the way the world thinks of it. It was not in order that we could achieve some abstract idea of ‘self-actualization’. He redeemed us so that we could serve Him - and play a critical supporting role in His Divine Plan for the redemption of mankind and the restoration of Creation to an Edenic state.

We are not merely servants, of course. We are sons and daughters. We are intimate friends. We are His special treasure people. We are the apple of His eye. We are the sheep of His pasture. We are a lily among thorns. We are priests. We are royal ambassadors. We are His earthly shadow. We are His beloved Bride. But if we do not learn that what we are, first and foremost, is servants of our King, He knows we will wind up serving someone or something else. He knows that serving Him in meaningful ways, out of a heart of love and gratitude for what He has done for us, is an essential part of holding on to the redemption He has wrought for and in us, much less empowering us to participate in the great redemption He intends to accomplish through us. Think back to the story of Yosef. The Holy One saw redemption even when Yosef was chained up in the hold of the Midyani’s slave wagons. He saw redemption even while Yosef was being stared at, probed, and bid upon by potential buyers in the slave market of Egypt. He saw redemption even when Yosef was being ogled and propositioned by Potifar’s wife. He saw redemption even when Yosef was thrown in a dungeon upon false accusations. The Holy One likewise ALWAYS sees redemption as the logical and ultimate outcome of every mess we will ever get ourselves into in this world. Over and over the world keeps hitting the people of the Covenant with its best shot. But redemption is always what seems to come forth. Through every test, through every trial, and through every dark night of the souls, the Covenant stands firm. And time after

time, with the slightest modicum of cooperation from some anonymous cupbearer, every sad story of betrayal and calamity involving the covenant people of the Holy One winds up being transformed into a stunning masterpiece of redemption.

Because we serve the Bridegroom-King, and He does not serve us, He from time to time allows us to experience difficulty – even oppression - for a season. He may do so in order to reveal to us what uncleanness is still in our hearts and what self-obsession is still in our minds – or He may allow it in order to train us to be overcomers. In some cases He may allow us to experience trials or face difficult situations in order to test others – whether in our family, in our community, or in the nations. The point is that part of our essential training is to learn – through personal, practical, hands-on experience - to start to see every difficult situation as the next chapter of His ongoing and glorious redemption story. In every situation we face He wants us to learn to scan the presenting circumstances in search of lessons that we can learn from the experience – whether they be lessons of character, lessons of patience, or lessons of empathy. He wants us to learn to *stay thankful*, to *keep rejoicing*, and to *hold onto our shalom* no matter what happens. He wants to train us to be ever on the lookout for - and fully confident of finding in every situation –opportunities to honor His Name. He knows that if we are to function effectively as His agents of redemption we have to learn the hard way how to resist and overcome the temptation of our fallen flesh to over-react to challenges, offenses, the sins and sin consequences of others, and difficult situations of every stripe. He wants to teach us why whining, complaining, succumbing to fear, assigning blame, and/or adopting either a victim or a sole-survivor mentality are incompatible with serving Him –because they are totally counterproductive to His plan of redemption. He wants to train us to incorporate neither failure, nor poverty, nor estrangement, nor self-preservation, nor bondage into our self-image – or make any place for them in our life story. He wants our eyes to ever sparkle with redemption light – the way His do. He wants to train us to always look for the shaft of light that points the way out of every cavern, the miracle that delivers us from every dungeon, and the crimson cord that shows us the way out of every predicament.

### ***The Essential Elements of Our Reasonable Service***

Here is how the Holy One describes the most essential aspects of the scope of service He has called us to render to Him:

***Ki-li b'nei-Yisra'el avadim***

*[All these instructions are given] in order that the Israelites can be My servants*

***avadai hem asher-hotzeti otam me'eret Mitzrayim***

*They are servants to Me because I brought them out of the land of Egypt.*

***Ani Adonai Eloheichem***  
*I am the Holy One your God.*  
[Leviticus 26:1]

The verse that follows contains some very significant ‘bullet points’ that define what our ‘reasonable service’ to the Bridegroom-King is supposed to consist of – and what behaviors are not only inconsistent with our Covenant calling but totally counterproductive to the Grand Redemptive Plan. Let’s try to unwrap each of these Divine instructions a little bit.

**Covenant/Redemptive Plan Counterproductive Practice #1:**  
***Making Elilim Ufesel – “false gods”***

The first *bullet point* the Holy One makes to us has to do with something some of our English Bibles translate as ‘false gods’, or ‘idols’. The exact message of the Holy One - in transliterated and translated Hebrew at least – is:

***Lo-ta'asu lachem elilim ufeisel***  
*Do not craft for yourselves false gods.*  
[Leviticus 26:1(a)]

One mark of our relationship with the Holy One is to be that no matter what our neighbors do – or what anyone we know may do – we will not make, reverence, bow down to, serve, or worship a ‘false god’. That would not only be inconsistent with our Covenant with the Holy One; it would be totally counterproductive in regard to His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation to Edenic Potential. False gods we are to ***lo ta'asu***, the Holy One says.

***Lo ta'asu.*** Servanthood involves what we do with our creative energy and talents. The parables of the Master were replete with references to this kind of service. Hence the parables frequently concluded with the affirmation ‘***Well done, good and faithful servant***’, or the declaration ‘***Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant***’. What is the difference between a ‘good and faithful servant’ and a ‘wicked servant’ in the eyes of the Holy One? It is all about what we do – or do not do – with the creative energy and the people and resources within the sphere of influence He assigns with us. If we act like Him, following His ways, in relation to those things, we become like the ‘good and faithful servant’. If we use our creative energy for other endeavors, or interact with the people and resources within our assigned sphere of influence in ways that are not like Him at all, however, we become like the ‘wicked servant’.

What are we supposed to do with the creative energy He has given us? The Holy One has previously told us plainly what it is He wants us to spend our creative energy and talent *asah-ing* – *i.e. shaping, fashioning, building, making, and giving form and visible expression to*. What He wants us to build are *the mitzvot of Torah*.



He wants each of us to apply our own unique gift of creativity and energy in such a way as to *make His Words come to life for all mankind to see*. Whatever else we may do in this life, this is always to be job one. It is our first priority. Why? It is not in order to earn righteousness. It is because the reason for our calling is to be His ambassadors and emissaries on earth. As Y'shua said: ***You are the salt of the earth. If the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?*** We have been given the breath of life, the faculties of speech, creative energy, and a sphere of influence in order to prepare a way for the Kingdom of Heaven to come to earth in real, tangible, visible ways that the people and nations of the world can see and understand. We are called to play an essential role in our Bridegroom-King's Grand Redemptive Plan. Failure is not an option. Every moment of our allotted time on earth is a stage. We are each assigned a chapter of the great redemption story of our King to release on the earth in that moment. We are to live the story, then we are to tell it. We are to experience it, rejoice in it, and then share it. Over and over, situation and circumstance by situation and circumstance, we are to serve as His supporting actors in all the scenes of the great drama of life.

How do we learn to do this? It is all in the Script – *i.e.* the Torah. Each of us is to take the script of Torah, and blend it with and incorporate it into the raw materials of our lives. That includes *our family situation and relationships, the material goods with which He has blessed us, all the circumstances and obstacles we experience, all interactions and relationships that make up our life, and the 'times' in which we live*. We are to inject the script of Torah into and infuse it with the raw materials of our lives in such a way make our King's great Dream of Redemption and Blessing for Mankind visible, real, and relevant to all people that He sees fit to bring within our sphere of influence. But, if we are to spend our allotted time and energy *asah*-ing what He has told us to *asah*, *we must not waste a single second of precious time or a single ohm of precious energy* building a counterfeit. The 'wicked' servant's problem is that he gets distracted by and caught up with counterfeits. What counterfeits are we talking about? The first counterfeit building project that might distract us from our mission is 'false gods' or 'idols'. As Y'shua said: ***A man cannot serve two masters.***

It is totally inconsistent with our service responsibility to the Holy One, our Redeemer, to make, revere, serve, bow down to, or worship 'false gods'. The Hebrew phrase that our English Bibles translate as *false gods* or *idols* in this passage is *elilim ufeisel*. The first word in this phrase, *elilim*, is the masculine plural form of the word *elil*, meaning 'not god'. The second word in the operative phrase, *feisel*, is a compound word consisting of the conjunction 'and' [the Hebrew letter *vav*, here pronounced with the *oo* sound] a noun form of the verb *pasal*<sup>2</sup>, meaning to

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<sup>2</sup> *Pasal* is *peh, samech, lamed*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #6458.

*cut, carve, mold, or hew into a shape, form, or image.* Putting these two Hebrew words together, literally, would mean to *not-gods* and *crafted images*. For most of us, the first things that comes to mind when reading the phrase *elilim ufeisel* are golden-calf like things - figurines, sculptures, busts, etc. which depict some artist's image of someone's mythical 'god' - *may the names of and myths concerning all such things be blotted out of human memory, in our lifetime and forever.* Putting this kind of interpretation to the phrase *elilim ufsel* makes us feel good about ourselves, since probably no one reading this shiur has, in recent memory at least, taken carving knife, potting clay, chisel, or artist's palette in hand and shaped a figure of a mythical 'god' into wood, clay, stone, or canvas. But have we congratulated ourselves too soon? Is it not true that *the Word of the Holy One is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.* Hebrews 4:12-13.

## **Covenant/Redemptive Plan Counter-Productive Practice #2:** **Raising Up Matzevot**

The second thing our Divine Bridegroom lovingly warned us not to waste the creative energy and talents He has given us *asah*-ing is any 'sacred pillar'. In the Hebrew what our English Bibles call a 'sacred pillar' is just one Hebrew word: *matzevah*. The specific wording of the warning from the Holy One is:

***umatzevah lo-takimu lachem***

*Do not raise up for yourselves pillars/edifices/strongholds.*

***Lo takimu.*** With regard to a *matzevah* – or 'pillar', what we are warned to do is 'raise up' such a thing 'for ourselves'. The Hebrew verb is *qum*, meaning *to raise up; to cause to arise; elevate to a place of visibility, prominence or importance.* Just as we are not to *asah* – i.e. fashion as an artisan, build, make, or apply creative energy toward the shaping and forming of – any *false god*, we are also not to *qum* – i.e. raise up or elevate to a place of visibility, prominence or importance – any tangible object or structure – natural or man-made - as a 'pillar' for ourselves. What is a 'sacred pillar' you ask? The first usage of the word *matzevah* in Torah is found in Genesis 28. After Ya'akov [Jacob] awoke from an amazing God-encounter dream at Luz he raised up the stone on which his head had laid, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on it, and made the following vow to the Holy One: ... *this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.* Genesis 28:18-22. See also Genesis 31:45-52.

Have you ever called a man-made building or structure 'God's House' or 'the House of God'? Have you ever attached the Name of the Holy One to a ministry

or organization established, run, and managed by men? Have you ever suggested that someone paying a ‘tithe’ or making an offering to such an entity was giving to God? Have you found yourself talking more about yourself or some other man, ministry, church, synagogue, organization, religion, or movement more than you talk about the Holy One Himself? Perhaps we should not be so presumptuous. Perhaps we should not be so easily swayed off of Kingdom focus and moved off Kingdom mission. Perhaps we should quit lying to ourselves and the world about tithes and offerings paid to support the operations of men and organizations being the equivalent of gifts to ‘God’. Perhaps we should spend our energies actually raising up the Holy One in the eyes of the world instead of promoting men, organizations, and doctrines. At least it is something to think about.

### **Covenant/Redemptive Plan Counter-Productive Practice #3:** ***Establishing an Eben Maskit on our Own Land***

The third thing our Divine Bridegroom lovingly warned us not to waste the creative energy and talents He has given us *natan-ing* [*i.e.* presenting; establishing; putting in place] any *engraved rock or stone* before which one worships. In Hebrew what is prohibited is any *eben maskit*. The specific wording of the warning from the Holy One in this regard is:

***v'eben maskit lo titnu b'artzechem***

*and do not set in place a kneeling stone in your land*

***L'hish'tachavot aleyha***

*so that you can prostrate yourselves at it.*

***ki ani Adonai Eloheichem***

*For I am the Holy One your God*

***Lo titnu.*** A little later in Torah the Holy One will tell the generation who are about to cross over the Jordan and possess the land of the Patriarchs that when they arrive in that land they are to do four things ***‘drive out all the inhabitants of the land . . . destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places.*** Numbers 33:52. The first aspect of pagan culture B’nei Yisrael was called upon to destroy was *engraved stones*. So ... what are ‘engraved stones’? An engraved stone is *a rock or stone into which is inscribed or on which is written a hieroglyphic or pictographic image or message* - especially one that honors anyone or anything other than the Holy One. The modern equivalents would appear to be things like engraved cornerstones or capstones for buildings, memorials and other monuments of stone with words or names carved into them, stone grave markers, and commemorative plaques on buildings. It should be noted, of course, that Torah’s instruction is not against the engraving of stones by itself; what the Holy One instructs us not to do is to set in place stones with carving on them for *the purpose of worshipping/venerating anyone or anything [including*

God] at the location where the engraved stone has been ‘set’. I have seen thousands of such things in my life and travels – throughout America and abroad. Have you?

What is the problem, you say? Why should we not honor our fore-bearers and benefactors and commemorate important events by carving their names and stories in stone and putting them in, on, or next to places of worship? The problem is it is way, way off mission. Instead of expending our energies, resources, and creativity honoring men and commemorating events by carving them in stone what we are supposed to be doing using those same energies, resources and creativity *asah*-ing the Words and Dreams of the Holy One – *i.e.* making them come *to life* in real-time. A million carvings in stone cannot hold a candle to one living, breathing, example of the Kingdom of our Divine Bridegroom doing what we he or she is supposed to be doing right here, right now. Taking energy, resources and creativity that is supposed to be engaged fully in the Kingdom lifestyle of Torah and using them to purchase, engrave, set-up, and call people’s attention to chunks of stone is not only distracting, it is flat-out counterproductive.

### ***One More Instruction Before We Leave Parsha B’har***

The ultimate test of servanthood for a son or daughter of the Covenant is revealed in the closing instruction of parsha B’har. That instruction read as follows:

***Et-Shabtotai tish’moru***

*Treasure, cherish, and carefully guard My Sabbaths*

***umik’dashi tira’u***

*and hold My holy place/things in reverent fear.*

***Ani Adonai***

*For I am the Holy One.*

**[Leviticus 25:55 – 26:2]**

Think back to the first words the Holy One spoke to us on Mount Sinai – what the world has chosen to call the ‘Ten Commandments’. He said: “***I am the Holy One your God, Who led you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.***” Exodus 20:1. A few moments later He said: ***Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*** Exodus 20:8. That download formed the opening bookend of the great Sinaitic revelation stream. Leviticus 26:2 introduces sort of a ‘closing bookend’ for that revelation stream. With the message that started the stream, so it will end. The consistent message is that He is *our God*. Do we understand what that means? It means He is not a genie-in-a-bottle to grant us wishes. He is *our God*. And we are *His People*. That confers upon us a great honor and some unbelievable levels of privilege; but also introduces certain very real – and very reasonable - responsibilities. And just so we understand, He repeats for emphasis, in no uncertain terms, that He is *really*

*serious* about that Sabbath stuff. He actually thinks its more important than just about anything else He has talked about on Sinai. It is His love gift to us. He knows *it does not need us* – but that we desperately need it. He wants us to learn to receive, embrace, treasure, cherish, and carefully watch over to guard His Sabbath. It is, after all, holy. It is, after all, blessed. It is, after all, our down payment on the Messianic Kingdom to come.

The Holy One wants us to know that observing His Sabbaths is one of the most essential elements of our service. It is not that He needs the Sabbaths – it is that WE need them. The Sabbaths of the Holy One’s calendar are the strategic release points for all Kingdom revelation, counsel, encouragement, and direction. Each Sabbath is designed to function like a ‘reset’ button. When that ‘button’ is ‘pushed, the Kingdom software on our hard-drive is re-installed. The Kingdom’s anti-virus software begins to run. Our hearts and minds and wills get de-fragged. Wherever we have strayed from course, in attitude, in thought, in emotion, in word, in reaction, or in behavior, the Holy One refreshes our vision and readjusts our course. So of course we are to treasure, cherish, and carefully guard His Sabbaths. That is one of the most essential elements of our ‘reasonable service’ of the One Who redeemed us from bondage to this world and its ways.

### ***Respecting and Cherishing our Bridegroom-King’s Holy Things***

Where is your treasure, Beloved? Of what does your treasure – and your delight-consist? Is your treasure found in the realm of the *chol* [*i.e.* common, man-focused, man-centric] – or is it found in the realm of the *kadosh* [*i.e.* holy; God-ordained, God-centric]? Are your delights found in the realm of the *tamei* [*i.e.* that which fragments the human heart and soul, and brings base human appetites and emotions, as well as conflicting loyalties, into play] – or are they found in the realm of the *tahor* [*i.e.* that which brings wholeness and shalom]? Do you even know what our Bridegroom-King’s ‘holy’ things are? The first ‘holy thing’ referenced in Scripture is the 7<sup>th</sup> day Shabbat. Elohim blessed that day and *made it kadosh*. **Genesis 2:3**. The next thing Scripture calls ‘holy’ is *the firstborn and firstfruits*.

*The Holy One Himself* is holy, of course. His *Word* is holy. His *mo’edim* are holy. The *land of Israel* is holy. The *courts, furnishings, priests, surrogates of approach of the Mish’kan* are holy. The Covenant People, who *sh’ma* His Voice, *sh’mar* His Covenant, and *asah* His life-instructions, are holy.

As part of our reasonable service, the Holy One expects us whom He has redeemed to know and respect the difference between His holy things and man-made things – especially things that look spiritual on the outside but which are not deemed holy by the Holy One Himself. It is indeed time, Dear Reader. Let’s adopt our King’s



priorities. Let's conform to His Thoughts. Let's start walking in His Ways. This 'every man doing what is right in his own eyes' thing is not working out well at all.

### ***Questions For Today's Study***

1. The opening verses of today's aliyah deal with the situation where a son or daughter of the covenant sells himself as a servant or slave to a gentile. What potential difficulties and challenges with regard to Torah observance do you see arising from a son or daughter of the covenant becoming a servant to a gentile?

2. The rest of the aliyah is about our responsibilities, under the covenant, and in light of the mercies the Holy One has shown us, to self-identify and function as servants of our Bridegroom-King.

[A] What do you see as the nature of the service we are to do for Him?

[B] What do you see as the five or six most important duties involved in our service of Him?

[C] Why is the making, honoring, bowing to, worshipping, and serving of 'false gods' incompatible with being servants of the Holy One? [Consider the interesting request of Na'aman the Syrian in II Kings 5:16-18]

[D] Why is the making, honoring, bowing to, worshipping and serving of 'sacred pillars' and/or 'sacred stones' incompatible with being servants of the Holy One? [Consider Numbers 25:1-4]

3. The assigned haftarah reading for today is Jeremiah 32:24-27. Yirmayahu the prophet is praying for the nation of Judah. The passage starts with these words:

*Look, the siege mounds! They have come to the city to take it;  
and the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it,  
because of the sword and famine and pestilence.  
What You have spoken has happened; there You see it.  
And You have said to me, O Holy One Elohim,  
"Buy the field for money, and take witnesses!"  
Yet the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.'*

[A] What was happening to Jerusalem as Yirmayahu prayed his prayer?

[B] What was the point being made by Yirmayahu purchasing/redeeming a tract of land just outside Jerusalem as it was about to be taken over by foreigners who would not recognize Yirmayahu's deed?

[C] In Jeremiah 32:27 the Holy One gives the following response to Yirmayahu's prayer.

***Hineh ani Adonai Elohei kol-basar***  
*Behold, I am the Holy One, God of all flesh.*  
***ha-mimeini yipalei kol-davar***  
*Is there anything too difficult for me?*

[A] What response does the Holy One give to Yirmayahu?

[B] The word our English Bibles translate as “hard” in verse 27 is *pala'*, Strong's Hebrew word #6381 (pronounced *paw-law'*). In Strong's and Gesenius, look up this word, and write it in Hebrew consonants, with appropriate vowel markings. Then [i] read Genesis 18:14 (the first instance of the use of this word in Torah), as well as Micah 7:15, and Zechariah 8:6 (the last instance of the use of this word in the TaNaKh), and [ii] describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around this word.

[C] What was the Holy One impliedly promising to do for *the land* and for *Yirmayahu's descendants*?

4. In today's reading from the apostolic writings we continue to read about the immediate aftermath of the miraculous *Shavuot* in the year of Yeshua's resurrection, when *Ruach HaQodesh* [Holy Spirit] was poured out on all those who had come to Y'rushalayim for the final Divine Appointment on the Holy One's Spring calendar. Very quickly persecution broke out against the fledgling group of Jewish followers of Yeshua. But the persecution was met by prayer. Lukas, the writer of the Book of Acts, tells us:

*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken;  
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul;  
neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own,  
but they had all things in common.*

*And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua.*

*And great grace was upon them all; nor was there anyone among them who lacked;  
for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them,  
and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet;  
and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*

*And Yosi, who was also named Bar-Nabba by the apostles  
(which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,  
having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

[Acts 4:31-37]

[A] From which tribe of Israel was *Yosi Bar-Nabba* descended?

[B] What did Torah have to say about persons from this tribe owning fields?

[C] What did Torah have to say about the effect of a sale of lands by persons from *Yosi Bar-Nabba's* tribe?

[D] Assuming the tract of land the writer of Acts is talking about was in Israel, as opposed to Cyprus where Bar-Nabba was from, what rights in regard to a field was *Yosi Bar-Nabba* rightfully able to sell?

*May you know Your Redeemer lives Beloved;  
And May you stand with Him upon the Eretz upon that day.*

***The Rabbi's son***

***Meditation for Today's Study***

Psalm 67:6-7

***The eretz has yielded its increase.***

***The Holy One, even our own God, will bless us.***

***The Holy One will bless us.***

***All the ends of the eretz will fear him.***