

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah B'chukotai:*** Leviticus 26:3-13
 Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-21
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13

I will walk among you, and I will be your God - and you will be My People!
 [Leviticus 26:12]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 68:22-35;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* [the Petition for Redemption]

Im-b'chukotai teleichu – if/as/when/to the extent you walk in My directives ... ***v'et-mitzvotai tishmeru*** – and treasure/cherish/guard My lifestyle teachings ... ***va'asitem otam*** – and make/build them into a practical, visible, functional Kingdom reality ... ***v'natati gishmeichem b'itam*** – I will entrust abundant rain to you in its time Leviticus 26:3-4a.

The Holy One is the ultimate multi-tasker. He is a Creator, a Sustainer, a Nurturer, a Wise Ruler, a Benevolent Mentor, a Trustworthy Covenant Partner, a faithful Provider, a Brilliant Trouble-Shooter, a Rabbi highly-skilled in corrective discipline, a Redeemer, a Restorer, and a Way Maker – among a myriad of other things. He is proactive, not reactive. He does not over-react to conditions ‘on the ground’ or to ‘human error’. He operates pursuant to a grand, benevolent, trans-generational Plan. Whatever the current state of things ‘on earth’, or in our hearts, heads, houses, communities, and nations of residence may be, He has a vision for ‘fixing’ it. He intends His Creation to look like [*i.e.* the Garden of Eden], and a brilliant scheme to redeem its ‘bellwether’ species, mankind, bloodline-by-bloodline, returning its members to their original, intended Adamic state. What is most amazing is that He does not intend to accomplish this through the might of angelic armies. He has instead chosen the seed of one man – Avraham – and his natural and engrafted ‘seed’ - to serve as His supporting cast in the endeavor. No, He is neither delusional nor naïve. He knows exactly what He is getting us into by partnering with human beings. He has no illusions that any one of us – or for that matter any tribe or group – of us is or ever will be up to the task we are assigned. He is under no delusion that we as a collective will always be faithful. He’s been down this road before. He has seen a lot of ‘epic fails’. He remembers Adam and Chava in the Garden. He remembers Kayin going to the field with Hevel. He remembers Avram and Sarai birthing Yish'mael out of impatience. He remembers Rivkah frantically trying to manipulate Yitzchak's blessing. He remembers Ya'akov dressing up in Esav's clothing and putting a stumbling block before the eyes of his

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blind father. He remembers Rachel and Leah competing shamelessly for Ya'akov's affection. He remembers the vigilante bloodshed inflicted and the human trafficking engaged in by Yosef's brothers. He remembers Yehudah defrauding – then lying carnally with, then judging - Tamar. He remembers Aharon and his leading role in the calf god debacle. He remembers Moshe getting enraged and shattering the first set of Divinely inscribed tablets into a million pieces. He remembers him presumptuously ordering a genocide – and declaring that genocide to be in HIS HOLY NAME, no less. He was there. He saw it all. And when it was over, and human beings had done their worst – He paid the price, cleared away the rubble, rebooted the Plan, and redeemed it all.

It is exactly because He knows our penchant for folly and rebellion that He has, in the third and central book of Torah, laid out for us with painstaking specificity each element of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol He has in mind for us and our children and children's children to undergo each year. It is through these protocols of return, renewal, refreshing, re-centering, reformation, and restoration that He intends to transform us from the selfish, over-reactive, flesh-obsessed shrews we are when we come to Him into a shining bride-people that is holy in the ways He is holy, who loves people as He loves them, and who sees and responds to the seeds of redemption in every situation instead of resorting to sulking, offense, outrage, complaint, accusation, blame-casting, in-fighting, rebelling, and self-justification.

From the Micro to the Macro – and From the Plan for Individuals and Families to the Plan for the Community As a Whole

With the parsha known as *B'chukotai* the part of the process of Ultimate Divine Bridal Makeover that our Beloved has designed for each of us as individuals will come to an abrupt conclusion. The focus of the Makeover is about to turn from us *as individuals to the community as a collective entity*. Our camp is about to get a radical makeover corresponding in quality and depth to the amazing makeover we have been undergoing in our individual lives. However, the fact that the theme of the Holy One's revelation downloads is about to shift to the camp as a collective entity does not mean that the radical paradigm-shift for us as individuals is at an end. That transformation is designed to be *on going*. It will not conclude until we are truly function as bone of our Bridegroom-King's bone and flesh of His flesh - going only where He is going, doing what He is doing, feeling only the emotions He is feeling, and speaking into every situation and over every person only what He is speaking into it, him, or her. The shift in the focus of the narrative merely means that the time has come for all who have been *hearers* of the words describing the intimate fellowship the Holy One wants to have with each of us as a betrothed Bride-to-be to start to become *doers* thereof – in the context of very real interactions

with very real human beings. Torah is not designed to be a framework of theology. It is not intended to be a creed. Torah is a life force – a life force that we invite to take over our minds, wills, emotions, and spirits and totally re-wire the way we think, the way we speak, the way we perceive and approach life’s purpose, processes and stages, the way we deal with people, the way we react to irritations, aggravations, accusations, and challenges, and the way we act, so as to conform to our Bridegroom-King’s personality, character, brilliance, and essential goodness.

A new chapter of *Extreme Makeover* is being written every day – as we who are alive and in covenant with the Holy One meet Messiah in, and walk with Messiah through, the *transformative bride-training processes* the text of *Sefer Vayikra* describes.

So ... how is the process of *removing every spot, wrinkle and blemish from your heart, soul, mind and will* coming for you, Beloved?

The Torah Is Light – Are You Shining?

Each human being is a unique creative work of the Holy One - a new and magnificent ‘life form’ specifically designed to reflect His glory. He has a beautiful plan for each of us. Every single one of us is designed to ***become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.*** **Philippians 2:15-16.** But for the plan to work, the light with which we shine must be His Light – not our own. That is why He has given us the Torah. The *mitzvot* of Torah are designed to serve as *the reflective material that catch the rays of the Holy One’s divine Light, and make those rays visible on earth, to ordinary men.*

The Holy One provides the Light. That is His ‘part’. Each *mitzvah*, *mishpat*, and *chuk* of Torah, is a specially designed to serve as a *Divine light-reflecting panel.* All His redeemed have to do is to *reflect* that light into our particular earthly environment. The more *mitzvot* our lives incorporate, the more Divine light our lives reflect. And the process of doing that is through *asah*-ing the Holy One’s *mitzvot*. To *asah* the *mitzvot* of Torah is to build them into everything you do – to put reflective clothing on every inch of your body.

So, if/as we let the wonder and majesty of the Holy One’s plan for mankind and its redemption sink into our thick skulls, we joyfully yield our lives to our Divine Mission and to our very purpose for existing. We yield to the instructions of the Holy One like the *teivah* [ark] yielded to the floodwaters, and we gladly give up our personal agendas to become reflectors of His glory. And that is what Messiah

meant when He taught us ***You are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men that they will see your mitzvot and give glory to your Father in Heaven.***

We don't do *mitzvot* to get people to praise us, or to impress the Holy One, or earn righteousness – we do *mitzvot* so people will see the *wisdom* and the *goodness* and the *glory* of our God. That is our reward. But what will happen in and to our sphere of influence 'if' we actually choose to do what we are called and empowered to do and become what we are called and empowered to be? What will happen around us if, as, when and to the extent we put on the *mitzvot* as we are called to and begin reflecting Divine Light outward into our surroundings? The Holy One is about to blow our minds the way He blew Avram's mind so many years ago. He told Avram He was going to 'make [him] a blessing' and that 'in [him] all the families of the earth will be blessed.' He is about to get specific as to what the things He promised to Avram will look like in real time, in we will only heed the call to ***lech lecha*** [*i.e.* go out for/to find your true identity and destiny] the way our ancestor did.

Covenant Promises We Can Count On

As our final parsha of *Sefer Vayikra* begins, before we leave Sinai and head off into the desert toward our promised land, our Covenant Partner in Heaven gives these wonderful promises to all who will *yalak* His *chukot* and *sh'mar* and *asah* His *mitzvot*:

*... I will give **gishmeychem b'itam** [your rains in their season],
and **ha-aretz yevulah** [the land will yield its increase],
and **etz ha-sadeh yiten piryo** [the trees of the field will yield their fruit].*

Sounds good so far, doesn't it? But the Holy One is not finished.

*Your **threshing will extend to the time for the vintage,**
and the **vintage will extend to the time for sowing.**
And **you will eat your bread to the full,**
and **you will dwell in your land safely.**
I will grant **shalom b'aretz** [peace in the land]
so that **you will sleep without fear.***

Is it sinking in yet? Are you beginning to see what a Heavenly treasure chest of blessedness that the Holy One has designed to burst forth if, as, when, and to the extent we *yalak* and *sh'mar* and *asah* His instructions as to how to live a full, abundant, impactful life in real time? There is still much, much more:

*I will **rid the land of chayah ra'ah** [living things that cause harm],
and **cherev lo-ta'avov b'ar'tzechem** [the sword will not pass through your land].*

Uredaftem et-oyveichem [You will chase away your enemies]
and ***they will fall before your sword***
Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred,
and ***a hundred of you will defeat ten thousand,***
as ***your enemies fall before your sword.***

Are you overwhelmed with His stunning generosity yet? Believe it or not, He is still not through:

I will turn to you, making you fertile and numerous,
thus keeping My covenant with you.

You will continue eating the previous year's crops long after their time,
and you will eventually have to clear out the old crops because of the new.

I will keep Mishkani b'tocheichem [My dwelling in your midst],
and not grow tired of you.

Vehithalacti b'tocheichem [I will walk among you].

I will be a God to you,
and ***you will be a nation*** [dedicated] ***to Me.***

[Leviticus 26:4-13]

These promises, spoken as we are [unbeknownst to us] being prepared to leave the comfort and security of Sinai and head off into the desert, parallel the prophetic “*Arise, My love, and Come with Me*” of the Divine Suitor in Song of Songs 2.² The Holy One is telling us that the time to just sit under His shade and meditate on His instructions for living is drawing to a close, and that the time to put His instructions about relationships and justice and care for the poor *into practice*, in *real life situations*, is drawing near. The Holy One is about to kick us out of the nest [i.e. Sinai] like a mother eagle kicks her eaglets out of the nest. He is about to say over us the equivalent of:

*“Fly, my children! Rise Up and catch the Thermal Updrafts! Soar!
Be what and who I have created you to be!”*

And Now - the All-Important ‘If’

As we have noted however in our English translations the paragraph of promises we have been reading begins with the two-letter word “*if*”. The Hebrew word, which is *im* [alef, mem sofit], means more than just if – it means *if, as, when, and to the extent*. We have a significant part in determining how much of the blessing He

² See Song of Songs 2:8-13 – when the Divine Suitor comes in a new and powerful manifestation, and calls His Beloved one to “*Arise*” and “*Come with Me*”, calling upon her to leave the pleasant place in the shade where He has nurtured her with apples and raisin cakes, and walk with Him, doing what He does, following His lead. It is the call to get up from the banquet table, grab His arm, and *dance*.

has made available to us we will experience and enjoy. It will only be through walking in the Holy One's chukot and keeping His mitzvot and doing/building them in real-time that the wonderful array of blessings specified in Leviticus 26:3-13 will flow our way, overtake us, and carry us along in their wake.

Hmmmmn. We only experience the fullness of the Holy One's blessing upon our nation *if* we live *Torah-inspired* and *Torah-consistent* lives. Does this mean that what the Holy One is giving us in Torah is a system of 'works-based righteousness', as so many have taught? No Beloved. Not at all.

The Hebrew prefix which we find before the phrase ***b'chukotai*** in our text is *alef, mem*, which transliterates as *im*. This is a Hebraic prefix which conveys the picture of an on-going relationship, an ebb and flow, of life. The first letter of the prefix, *alef*, represents the Holy One. The *mem* is a hieroglyphic picture of a wave of water. The combination of *alef* and *mem* in this phrase does not form a word [unlike the English 'if'] but instead provides a Hebrew "cue" – much like a musical notation on a piece of sheet music describing the tempo at which the song is to be played. The cue made up of the letters *alef-mem* means to *put in motion – to animate and give life to – whatever is being discussed*. It means that whatever is under discussion is *constantly moving, like a wave of water*.

This pictograph means we are not talking about a "one-time" do or die matter, but about a *long-term series of events*. We are talking about a *directional flow*. *We are talking about surrendering to the flow and letting the river of life carry us to our destination*. So the Hebraic message conveyed by phrase '*im-b'chukotai*' would perhaps be better rendered something like "*in the course of our ongoing relationship, in the ebb and flow of life, as you are walking out my statutes, sh'mar my mitzvot, and asah them ...*" This means that the blessings of which our aliyah will speak do not come as *rewards for isolated incidents of Torah-consistent conduct - quid-pro-quo*, so to speak. We don't get 'brownie points' or 'gold stars'. Instead the Holy One is telling us that the blessings He describes in our aliyah *are the natural products of the Torah lifestyle - all of which come forth "in season"*.

Please note that this also means that the disciplines of which our aliyah will speak do not result from an isolated incident of conduct inconsistent with Torah, either, but from persistently refusing to *sh'ma* the Holy One, to walk with Him as the 'weaker partner' in the relationship, responding to His lead, to treasure and cherish and keep close watch over His *mitzvot*, or to build one's life upon them, and from persistently refusing to heed His calls to make *t'shuvah* as Torah instructs us.

But what if ...?

But ... what if ... ? *What if* we choose to disregard the new identity our Divine Bridegroom has given us by redeeming us, calling us His own, and prophetically speaking the *mitzvot* and *chukot* and *mishpatim* of Torah over us? *What if* we strip off the pure, linen reflective garments He has laid out for us to wear, the wings which He has given us to lift us above the world, and, like our ancestor Ya'akov, we put on *Esau's clothes*, and act like the popular Esau's of the world? *What if* after doing so we resist loving call after loving call, opportunity after opportunity, to make *t'shuvah* as Torah allows, and we persist in rejecting our new identities as the Holy One's betrothed in favor of our own ways, or those of the people and cultures around us.

What will happen *then*, in such a circumstance, pray tell? The Holy One does not leave us in suspense. Like a loving Father the Holy One spells out for us in advance *a series of progressive disciplines* He will lovingly apply to us, to wake us up, and bring us back to our senses, and lead us to make *teshuvah*. The phases of progressive discipline He lays out for us will be the subject of tomorrow's aliyah. Don't touch that dial!

Today's Aliyah As Taught by the Master

The message of today's aliyah was also the message of Yeshua of Natzret. At the conclusion of the so-called "Sermon on the Mount", after teaching Torah from the Holy One's perspective, Yeshua taught:

*"Everyone therefore who hears [i.e. sh'ma's] these words of mine,
and does [i.e. asah's] them, I will liken him to a wise man,
who **built** [asah-ed] his house on a rock.
The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house;
and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

*Everyone who **hears** these words of mine, and doesn't **do** [i.e. asah] them
will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.
The rain came down, the floods came,
and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell -- and great was its fall."*

[Matthew 7:24-27]

Sounds amazingly like Leviticus 26, doesn't it? So we might want to ask ourselves – "Was Y'shua a 'legalist'?" Was He putting all who do not follow the Torah in every particular, as He taught it, under a "curse" [a series of judgments in the form of rain, followed by floods, followed by strong winds, followed by beatings, and resulting in destruction]? No, Beloved. He was merely saying, as our aliyah for today proclaims, that the Holy One's Torah is *alive*, and *interactive*. He was teaching us that Torah is a pathway of life, where we find the Holy One walking, speaking, leading, encouraging, and blessing us - not a cold, dead "law" hanging over our heads, threatening us with punishment if we 'disobey'. He was teaching us that Torah is a mirror into which we gaze to see who we are. What is more it is

an “enchanted” mirror - in the sense that it has a voice inside it saying “*You are doing great!*”, or “*You are doing well, but you need a little adjustment right there*”, and, when appropriate, “*if you don’t make some changes, and soon, big trouble is coming!*”

Mazel Tov on the upcoming test, Beloved! Oh, did I mention that in the Holy One’s classes the test is always given *in the heat of the desert?*

Questions For Today’s Study

1. To get started look up in Strongs and Gesenius the word translated in our verses as “*statutes*” [the NIV translates it “*decrees*”] and write the Hebrew word, with Hebrew letters and vowel markings, its verb root, and a Hebraic conceptual definition.

2. In Leviticus 25:3-13 the Holy One prophesies and creatively releases blessings over His People - over us who are engrafted into Israel through Messiah Y’shua as well as natural Israel – **as** we do three things in relation to the wonderful words He spoke to us under the Chuppah at Sinai. The blessings the Holy One releases over us are stupendous and wonderful beyond belief. Read over them several times to let the magnitude of the Holy One’s covenant love for His People sink into your spirit. Nothing the world, or television, or any travel agency, or any career, or any church or synagogue, or even one’s own imagination can offer can compare to what the Holy One has laid up in store for those who love Him. Find yourself in these verses, and let His love pour over you.

[A] What are the three things we are to do to receive the blessings the Holy One prophesies and releases over us?

[B] List all the blessings you can see in these verses that the Holy One says will flow to us if we do these three things.

3. The haftarah reading for today is Yirmayahu 16:19-21. It reads as follows:

*O Holy One, my strength, and my stronghold, and my refuge in the day of affliction,
to you shall the nations come from the ends of the eretz, and shall say,
‘Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, [even] vanity
and things in which there is no profit. Shall a man make to himself gods,
which yet are no gods? Therefore, behold, I will cause them to know,
this once will I cause them to know my hand and my might;
and they shall know that my name is the Holy One*

In order to understand what brings the nations to the Holy One from the ends of the earth, we have to put this passage in context. Let’s do so by reading Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] 16:1-18, where Yirmayahu tells us:

*The word of the Holy One came also to me, saying, **You are not to take a wife,
Neither are you to have sons or daughters, in this place.***

*For the Holy One says concerning the sons and concerning the daughters
who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them,
and concerning their fathers who became the father of them in this land:
They will die grievous deaths: they will not be lamented,
neither shall they be buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground;
and they will be consumed by the sword, and by famine;
and their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky,
and for the animals of the eretz.*

*For the Holy One says, Don't enter into the house of mourning,
neither go to lament, neither bemoan them;
for I have taken away my shalom from this people, says the Holy One,
even lovingkindness and tender mercies.*

*Both great and will shall die in this land;
they will not be buried, neither shall men lament for them,
nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them;
neither will men break for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead;
neither will men give them the cup of consolation
to drink for their father or for their mother.*

You will not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and to drink.

For thus says the Holy One of Hosts, the God of Yisra'el:

*Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place,
before your eyes and in your days,
the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness,
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.*

*It will come to pass, when you will show this people all these words,
and they will tell you,*

*'Why has the Holy One pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity?
or what is our sin that we have committed against the Holy One our God?*

*Then you are to tell them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken me, says the Holy One,
and have walked after other gods, and have served them,*

*and have worshiped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my Torah;
and you have done evil more than your fathers;*

*for, behold, you walk every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart,
so that you don't sh'ma me. Therefore will I cast you forth out of this land
into the land that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers;
and there shall you serve other gods day and night; for I will show you no favor.*

*Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Holy One,
that it shall no more be said, As the Holy One lives,
who brought up the children of Yisra'el out of the land of Mitzrayim;
but, As the Holy One lives, who brought up the children of Yisra'el
from the land of the north,
and from all the countries where he had driven them.*

I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers.

*Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Holy One,
and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters,*

*and they shall hunt them from every mountain,
and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks.*

*For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my face,
neither is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.*

*First I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double,
because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable things,
and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.*

[A] At the time this prophesy was given by Yirmayahu were the people of Judah and Jerusalem under the prophetic blessings of Vayikra 26:3-13 or were they under the prophetic disciplines of Vayikra 26:14-39?

[B] What layer(s) of corrective disciplines were they about to come under?

[C] In today's Haftarah we see the prophet *Yirmayahu* praying again - like in the haftarah for *B'har*. What is he praying for now?

4. In I Peter 1:13 *Kefa* [Peter] gives 3 instructions for us as to how we should approach life in light of what has been said in verses 3-12.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober and set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Yshua the Messiah

[A] Go back and read I Peter 1:3-12. Summarize the "background" *Kefa* gives for the instruction of 1:13. [In other words what does the "therefore" at the beginning of verse 13 refer to?]

[B] List the three instructions *Kefa* gives on how we should approach life.

[C] In Strong's look up the Greek words our English Bibles translate as "prepare", "sober", "hope", "grace", and "revelation". Write the Greek words in Greek letters, and the definitions given for these words by Strong's.

[D] Search out the Hebrew words which *Kefa* would have used instead of these words. Write those Hebrew words in Hebrew letters, with appropriate vowels markings, and describe the Hebraic word picture of each such word.

*May the Holy One's people again hear His words
as a bride hears the voice of her bridegroom.
And may the abundant blessings of the Holy One's covenant
follow all His People wherever we go.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 68:22-35

*The Holy One said, "I will bring you again from Bashan,
I will bring you again from the depths of the sea;
That you may crush them, dipping your foot in blood,*

That the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies. "

*They have seen your processions, God,
Even the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,
In the midst of the ladies playing with timbrels,
**"Bless the Holy One in the called gatherings --
Even the Lord in the assembly of Yisra'el!"***

*There is little Binyamin, their ruler; the princes of Y'hudah, their council,
The princes of Zevulun, and the princes of Naftali.*

*Your God has commanded your strength.
Strengthen, O Holy One, that which you have done for us.*

Because of your temple at Y'rushalayim, kings will bring presents to you.

*Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples.
Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver.
Scatter the nations that delight in war.
Princes shall come out of Mitzrayim.
Kush shall hurry to stretch out her hands to the Holy One.*

*Sing to the Holy One, you kingdoms of the erez!
Sing praises to the Holy One! Selah.*

*To him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old;
Behold, he utters his voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe strength to the Holy One!
His excellency is over Yisra'el; His strength is in the skies.*

*You are awesome, O Holy One, in your sanctuaries.
The God of Yisra'el gives strength and power to his people.
Praise be to the Holy One!*