

Parsha # 32: B'har¹

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

Parsha #33: B'chukotai

READINGS: *Torah:* Leviticus 26:3 – 27:34
Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19 -17:14
B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13-15; John 14:19-21



And the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill

[Leviticus 25:19]

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

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

Our annual journey through the *Book of Bridal Calling* is nearing its conclusion. The season of sitting in our Beloved's shade, letting Him feed us raisin cakes, is almost at its end. It will soon be time for us to pack up the Tabernacle and its furnishings, get our families into position, and head East, toward the sunrise. It is time to seek an even *greater, more permanent, kind of shalom* than we have experienced on the mountain of the thorn bush. A new wind is blowing. Now it is time to turn our focus to the promised land – and our calling to tend and keep it in

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real ways and real time instead of just talking about it in hushed tones as some kind of hazy dream.

Standing On Our First Mountaintop, Gazing Longingly Toward 'Home'

The next phase of the Kingdom of Heaven's 'Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover' protocol calls to us. The Holy One knows – even if we do not - that for the next phase of the Makeover to have its intended level of transformative effect, we are going to need a paradigm shift. We are going to need to learn to consider Israel our only home and Jerusalem our chief joy and eternal capital. He knows that it is time for us not just to pray for, but to connect with and begin to draw upon, the sweet *shalom* of the City of our King. He knows as well that what awaits us in the near future is not an idealist, utopian, honeymooner's kind of *shalom* like unto that we have experienced at Sinai; it is instead a very practical, very real, Face-the-Fury-of-Hell-And-Know-That-We-Will-Persevere-and-Overcome kind of *shalom*.

So, with the stunning object lesson of the *Blasphemer Narrative*² the Holy One has brought the truths of the *Kedusha Discourse* into sharp contrast with our present state of being. Our pleasant season of basking in *Kingdom shalom* was rudely shattered by one of our own acting out horribly – starting arguments, screaming curses, and blaspheming the Holy One. One day we will experience the beautiful *kedusha*, *atmosphere-shifting love*, and sweet *shalom* of 'on earth as it is in Heaven' again; for the time being, however, we need to come to grips with the fact that we still dwell in the midst of a people of fractured, fragmented souls; of debased minds that obsess over abstractions; of overstimulated appetites; of overactive pseudo-intellecets; of out-of-control emotions; and of unclean lips. A big part of our ultimate extreme bridal transformation is going to involve learning to cope with and respond in Kingdom-advancing ways to self-obsessed, argumentative, foul-mouthed, and irreverent human beings. It is time to move on to the next level. It is time to seek an even *greater, more permanent, kind of shalom* than we have experienced on the mountain of the thorn bush. The next phase of the Kingdom of Heaven's 'Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover' protocol calls to us: Awake, My Children ... and turn your hearts toward HOME!

Preparing for a Season of Major Transition

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

ARISE!

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

ARISE!
ARISE!

Take up your bed ... and WALK!

Ah, Beloved ones – we are standing at a threshold. Soon we will move on to a whole new *sefer Torah* [i.e. book of Torah]. As we approach this milestone however you should be aware that we are on the brink of something very, very big. The new prophetic season we are about to enter will be inaugurated by world-shaking changes. Our time of focusing on Divine Betrothal, and sitting under the shade of our Bridegroom’s ‘apple tree’, has been *absolutely wonderful*. But alas, the time for such things is *drawing rapidly to a close*. The Bridegroom of Heaven wants – and deserves - much, much *MORE* from His betrothed Bride-to-be than this. Soon we will move on to a whole new *sefer Torah* [i.e. book of Torah]. A *new wind* is blowing. A major transition is imminent. One of the primary goals of the commentaries this week will therefore be to *prepare all of us for the dramatic season of transition that is looming on our horizon*.²⁰ We are going to need to become DESTINY and DESTINATION FOCUSED. We are going to have to reconnect with the Patriarchal Dream of a beautiful, supernatural, Divinely chosen Homeland. We are going to need to start considering *Israel* our home, *Jerusalem* our chief joy, and every other geographical location in the world is just another good place from which to *make aliyah*. He knows that it is time for us not just to pray for, but to tie all our highest and best aspirations to the land where Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, and Ya’akov and Leah all walked and talked with the Holy One. The shores of the Mediterranean; the coastal plains; the stunning vistas of Hermon, Meron, Carmel, Tabor, Gilboa, Ebal, Gerizim, Scopus, Olivet, Tziyon, Moriyah, Hod Akev, Ramon, and Ardon; the Judean and Negev wildernesses; the sprawling heights of the Golan; and stark beauty of the Jordan Rift Valley - these are all to become to us as our own personal/national Garden of Eden. The peace of Jerusalem is to become our North Star. We are to draw from that sanctified source a level of *shalom* unlike that known by any other people - a very practical, very real, very substantive, Face-the-Fury-of-Hell-And-Know-That-We-Will-Persevere-and-Overcome kind of *shalom* that will permeate every fiber of our bodies, every synapse of our nervous systems, and aspect of our lives.

With a major season of transition being imminent, one of the primary goals of the commentaries this week will therefore be to *prepare all of us for the dramatic season of transition that is looming on our horizon*. Our allotted set of moon cycles spent sitting under the shade of our Bridegroom’s ‘apple tree’ is *drawing rapidly to a close*. Our season of radical transformation is about to lead us into a *season of radical impact*. The Bridegroom of Heaven wants – and deserves - much, much *MORE* from His betrothed Bride-to-be than this. The ‘Ultimate

Extreme Bridal Makeover’ that began at Sinai will not end here. The Holy One has a Grand Redemptive Plan that requires us to be a Blessing to Every Family on the Face of the Earth – and that plan is just about ready to launch.

What The Divine Bridegroom Really Wants For Us and From Us

What the Holy One has in mind for us is not only far more than Goshen could offer – it is even light years beyond what our Sinaitic betrothal venue provided! What? More than *Matan Torah*? More than words of life pouring like rain from *Moshe’s shining countenance*? More than the sweet *season of Divine Habitation and Communion* that accompanied the inauguration of the *Mish’kan*? Yes, Beloved - more than any/all of those things. ***Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things that the Holy One has prepared for those who love Him!*** See I Corinthians 2:9 (Shaul’s drash on Isaiah 64:4)

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

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

***Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love.
His left hand is under my head. His right hand embraces me.***
[Song of Songs 2:3-5, HNV]

This is comparable to what newly married couples used to experience as a ‘honeymoon’. There will, in this case, inevitably be a second honeymoon, and a third honeymoon, and probably many, many more. Our new Covenant lifestyle will start out in youthful passion and emotion, and then just keep getting better and better. There will be some really difficult times; but as each challenge is faced and overcome in union with our King, we will find ourselves falling head-over-heels in love with Him over and over again. It will begin to sink in at some point: we have the tremendous privilege of participating in an intimate, interactive, constantly deepening and maturing covenant relationship with the Creator of the Universe! Some of us were *born* into that privileged status [i.e. some are physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov/Yisrael]; others who read these *shiurim* have been *engrafted into the covenant relationship*, despite the fact that they were not born Hebrew³. In Messiah, these two groups of people share equally in the

³ Of course, the *privilege* of being born into the Covenant Community and *enjoyment* of covenant relationship are two different things. Many of those born into the privilege of covenant relationship with the Holy One, as well as many of those who have been engrafted into it, have, for one reason or another,

privilege of covenant relationship. The covenant responsibilities of modeling Kingdom righteousness and justice to the world and faithfully stewarding the land of Israel still rests with the physical seed of Avraham; but the wisdom of the *Torah*, and the blessings and the sweet fellowship with the Holy One that flows from the lifestyle Torah calls forth from humanity, is for Hebrews and foreigners alike. **Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:16, 29.**

The Torah-based covenant relationship with the Creator starts with what I call ‘the *intertwining*’ phase – *i.e.* the stage during which the Holy One intervenes in the life of, introduces Himself to, awakens the soul of, and cuts covenant with an individual. But cutting covenant with the Holy One is *just the beginning*. From the *point of intertwining* forward, our covenant relationship with the Holy One is intended to be *an on-going adventure of the highest magnitude*. The moment of intertwining initiates a *process of ascent* that involves the following steps/phases: [a] *detoxification*, [b] *infusion/infilling*, [c] *apprenticeship training* (frequently called ‘*discipling*’), [d] *co-laboring*, [e] *assignment of territory(ies) of ambassadorial representation*, [g] *fruitfulness/bearing much fruit* and [h] *releasing Kingdom blessings over, and being a bright light of inspiration to, the people and places around you*. It is the greatest privilege – and joy - a person can know in life to walk arm-in-arm with the Bridegroom-King through the steps/phases of this *great adventure of ascent*. But each of us has to choose, at each step in the process, how much of ourselves to surrender, and how much we would rather keep. The Bridegroom-King will not force us. But the less of ourselves we surrender, the less transformation, the less joy, and the less fruitfulness we will experience.

Relationship Status: It’s Complicated

In the context of *human-to-human relationships* we understand that things – and the relationship - are constantly changing. After all, the parties to the relationship are mortal human beings, and are thus in a more or less constant state of flux. Human relationships therefore change dramatically as time goes by. Issues of health and hard knocks arise. Conflicting loyalties of family, faith, and finance present themselves. Environmental, attitudinal, sentimental, emotional, and other distinctly ‘human’ factors require adjustments to the relationship along the way. Relationships are, by definition, *dynamic*. Relationships do not stand still. Relationships ebb and flow. They deepen and solidify, or stagnate, or deteriorate,

failed to appreciate, exercise, and walk in that privilege in its fullest intended sense. Hence, some physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov have rejected the Messiah Who embodies and gives substance to the covenant in favor of something else - a *form of organized Jewish religion* and/or humanistic social activism - while some engrafted non-Jews have, in an equally-misguided manner, while accepting the Messiah *in name*, rejected the Torah lifestyle of the Holy One which is the substantive essence of Messiah, in favor of a *form of institutionalized Christian religion* and/or a humanistic social gospel.

based upon any number of environmental as well as ‘human’ factors. At any given moment every relationship a human being can have is either *maturing* – or *disintegrating*. Like molecules of H₂O that transition, depending upon their environment, between a gaseous state [vapor], a liquid state [water], and a solid state [ice], relationships are sometimes ethereal and sometimes mundane, sometimes delicate and sometimes determined. Relationships necessarily consist of alternating periods of highs and lows - and multiple levels in between. Relationship statuses are, therefore, always ‘complicated’.

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

Understanding the Steps/Phases of Maturing ‘Divine Romance’

The fact that one party to the Torah-based covenant relationship is not a mortal, but is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, gives our relationship with Him much more stability than any other relationship we will ever have. However, since we – the weaker partner to the covenant relationship - are human, the basic principle that relationships are dynamic rather than static nevertheless remains true. The Holy One *does not change*; we, on the other hand, most definitely *do*. We go through things - and either grow in love while increasing in humility and thankfulness, or shrink back into Egyptian cesspools of self-promotion and ethnicity-obsession and their associated defense-mechanisms – rewriting history, reframing every narrative to suit one’s own agenda, dehumanizing others by use of derogatory labels, insults, and allegations of ‘privilege’ and shaming, projecting one’s own bad motives onto one’s adversaries, culture-canceling, virtue-signaling, whining, murmuring, complaining, mock outrage, and ultimately justifying theft and violence under the guise of ‘social justice’. We either mature in kedusha and Kingdom goodness – or start talking trash about others and behaving like animals. We either advance in the ways of *tzedekah* and *mishpat* – or start insisting on getting the piece of every pie we presume to deserve and giving nothing in exchange but a piece of our fallen and dysfunctional mind. While we are constantly morphing, He always stays the same. Without even a shadow of turning, He walks us patiently through our growth phases – and calls us back from the edge of our over-reaction and self-destruction phrases. Why does He not just ‘judge’ us, and be done with it? Because He knew what He was getting into before even called Avram – much less before He called the likes of us. He therefore designed the *Divine Romance* to involve a whole lot more than an introduction or a season of infatuation. The Holy One is all-in. He is prepared for this relationship to have its ups and downs – and has His sights on a great endgame.

Arise, My Love – and Come Away!

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

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

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

B'har – On A Mountain

The name of the week’s first parsha, *B'har*, is taken from the Hebrew text of the opening verse, which transliterates as follows:

*V'yedaber Adonai el-Moshe
And the Holy One spoke to Moshe
B'har Sineh ...
On Har Sineh [Mount Sinai] ...
[Leviticus 25:1]*

The phrase *b'har* thus describes the setting in which the prophetic oracles we will study this week were released into the world. The phrase means ‘*in*’ or ‘*on*’ a mountain. *What mountain*, you ask? The identity of the “mountain” in question is

specifically stated – it is (of course) the very special mountain the Hebrew text of Torah calls *Sineh*. The standard English relabeling of this mountain is ‘*Sinai*’. Initially, this detail seems superfluous – after all, EVERYTHING in Sefer *Vayikra* occurred while the Redeemed Community was encamped at *Har Sineh*. But every word of Torah is filled with meaning. There is a message for us in this phrase – and a reason the Holy One wants to remind us, before giving us the next set of instructions, that the revelation was given by Him to Moshe “*on/in Har Sineh*”. Let us look for clues to the message the Holy One is sending by beginning our parsha with the seemingly redundant Hebrew phrase “*b’har Sineh*”. The “b” sound at the beginning of the phrase is the Hebrew letter *beit*. Linguistically, in context, it is a one-letter preposition, meaning “in” or “on”. But let’s look at the Hebrew letter itself, and see its hieroglyphic word picture.

The picture inherent in the opening letter, *beit*, is that of a house (actually, a *nomad’s tent*), representing a *household* or *kingdom*. So whatever follows is something that involves the household of the Holy One. What follows? The word “*har*” – composed of a *hey* (the “h” sound) and a *resh* (the “r” sound), and then, finally, the word *Sineh* – composed of a *samech* (the “s” sound), a *nun* (the “n” sound), and a *yod* (in this case, the *eh*, or *ey*, sound). The *hey* pictures a window of revelation – a place of seeing the Holy One, and in connection with that revelation, seeing ones-self as he or she truly is, from the Holy One’s viewpoint. The *resh* pictures a man venturing forth from the household or kingdom – *i.e.* off the pathway, or the foundation. The *samech* with which the word *Sineh* begins pictures a cycle, or rising, then falling, then rising again (*i.e.* birth, death, and resurrection). The *nun* pictures a servant, son, or heir. Finally, the *yod* pictures a Divine Manifestation, a revelation of the Hand of the Holy One.

Putting this all together, we see in the phrase “*b’har Sineh*” an amazing hieroglyphic mural: The household of the Holy One (*beit*), has received a revelation of the Holy One as He Is, and of itself as the Holy One sees it (*hey*), and the members of the household, while separated from the home/tent (*resh*) [*i.e.* at this juncture, Sinai; later, Eretz Yisrael], has sunk low, then been raised up/resurrected (*samech*), and is returning to the Holy One, to function as His servant (*nun*), to reveal the Hand of God (*yod*) to the world. That hieroglyphic provides a perfect picture of what is about to happen, as we leave “*b’har Sineh*” en route to Eretz Yisrael, doesn’t it? It also provides a prophetic picture of what has happened ever since – the destiny of the Redeemed Community of the Holy One, to rise up, and then to fall, to be separated from the Presence of the Holy One, and then to return to it, to be the servant [but not the *nun sofit*, or Messiah], and, as the Holy One’s servant, to reveal His Hand to the world. This is the essence of the destiny and calling of the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov – and of all those the Holy One sees fit to join to them.

What Does Any of This Have To Do With Us?

Is all this relevant today, for you, for me, and for our families? Indeed it is. As go the earthly representatives of the Holy One in the assigned weekly Torah portions, so always go the current representatives of the Holy One in real time. So we need to be ready for our own season of dramatic transition. *Houston, we have intertwining.* Next phase – *detoxification! T-minus 3 chapters ... and counting.* What will our season of detoxification look like? How well – or badly - will we handle it? That depends on how thoroughly we have intertwined our souls with our Bridegroom-King – and the extent to which we have, while in the initial intertwining phase of the relationship, truly been *sh'ma*-ing His Words, *sh'mar*-ing His Covenant, and catching His Vision. The time for *asah*-ing the things we have been taught – making them practical and functional, as we will need to do in the Bridal Chamber of *Eretz Yisrael*, to which He is taking us - is at hand.

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

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

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

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

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

middle of a desert, sitting under a *Radiant Cloud*. So, in anticipation of the transition the Holy One gives us⁴ parshot *B'har* and *B'chukotai* - the last two parshot of Sefer *Vayikra*. Through the messages He gives us in these concluding passages the Holy One is preparing us to leave Sinai - and actually begin to put to the test in the desert heat the things He has taught us under His *Chuppah*.

A Vast Uncharted Wilderness Awaits Us

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

A Travelogue for Parshot B'har and B'chukotai

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

A. The Stages of our Journey

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

The first thing the Holy One wants us to know about the glorious Homeland He has prepared for us is that *the Land will be just as happy to see us as we are to see*

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

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

it! The Land has endured quite enough innocent blood and perversion under the Kena'ani since our forefathers headed South to Egypt to reunite with Yosef. The land is groaning with eager expectation for the coming of the sons of Avraham – and for the Sabbath it will enjoy when we return!

1. A Prophetic Expansion of Our Calling to Introduce Shabbat-ing to the World

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

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

2. Introducing the Yovel [Jubilee]

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

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

3. The Next Phase of Supernatural Provision

Since leaving Egypt we have been living in phase I of our Divine Bridegroom's supernatural provision. Manna falls from Heaven. Water flows from a Rock. But this phase of Supernatural Provision is not designed to last forever. When we reach the Holy Land, the manna will stop falling, and the water will stop flowing. How

will we feed our families then? Will we do so solely by the ‘sweat of our brow’, the way other nations do?

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

4. Faithful Stewardship of and Tending and Keeping' Accountability For the Land

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

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

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

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

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

6. ***Our Dealings With the Goyim***

The Holy One will conclude parsha *B’har* with a discussion concerning dealings and transactions with those outside the covenant community. The Holy One did not prohibit such dealings, nor did he suggest we try to avoid them. To the contrary His instruction was that in connection with dealings involving persons outside the covenant, we are *never to surrender our unique covenant identities*. We are *never to look, speak, eat, drink, behave, react, worship God, or ‘do family’ like the gentile(s)* with whom we are dealing. We are instead to continue in *derech Adonai* – the way of the Holy One – namely, His Torah.

Our journey through *Sefer Vayikra* will then conclude with the adventures of parsha *B’chukotai*. In the opening verses of this final parsha of Leviticus the Holy One will both inspire our hearts and prepare our minds for the next stages of our journey – the stages which form the narrative of *Sefer Bamidbar* [i.e. the Book of Numbers]. He will do this by clearly laying out before to us the two pathways of life between which we and our households will have to choose.

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

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

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

8. *The Price & Protocol of Redemption*

The section of promises and warnings will then give way to a discourse in which the Holy One announces principles according to which values are to be assigned to things which some of us will voluntarily pledge and vow to give to Him to be used in the ministry and maintenance of the *Mish'kan*. Now, with that brief overview completed, let's get started, shall we?

A Quick Look at the Haftarat for the Week

Jeremiah 32:6-27; Jeremiah 16:19 – 17:14

We will spend some quality time this week visiting with the prophet *Yirmayahu* [Jeremiah]. At the time of the writing of this part of the story of the Hebrew people, Babylon's army, under Nebuchadnezzar, was besieging the Holy City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem and the surrounding area was under Divine Judgment for generations of flagrant breaches of the Covenant. Yirmayahu was in prison in Jerusalem much of this time. He had not committed any crime. He had just offended Zedekiah, the sitting king of Judah. How had he offended the king? He had dared to prophesy that instead of weathering the storm and/or being supernaturally delivered, Jerusalem was about to fall to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and suffer horrible devastation – all as part of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov's plan of reasonably necessary redemptive discipline.

The Babylonian captivity was about to begin – and there was absolutely nothing Yirmayahu could do about it. Right before the once glorious city succumbed to the siege however Yirmayahu, who was of the family of the *kohanim*, received a prophetic directive from the Holy One that he was to purchase his kinsman Chanamil's tract of land in the city of Anatot as a prophetic sign to the covenant people. What's the big deal? Anatot - a Levitical city was only about three miles from the city walls of Jerusalem. As soon as the army of Nebuchadnezzar approached Jerusalem the residents of areas surrounding Jerusalem, including Anatot, had to flee their homes. The whole region was threatened with holocaust, so the towns around the fortress city of Jerusalem were virtually – if not totally – deserted. It was almost a certainty that that the Babylonians would ravage the village looking for any food or supplies that might have been left behind, then burn all its houses, orchards, and fields and leave it completely desolate.

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

Holy One saw men arising who would repair the breaches, restore the ancient walls, and bring back the sweet sound of the laughter of the Bridegroom and Bride to the ancient streets.

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

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

Do you have a vision for this ‘end-game’ prophecy?

A Glance at the Apostolic Scripture Readings for the Week

I Peter 1:13-15; John 14:19-21; Luke 4:16-21; Acts 4:31-37;

We will tread four short passages from the B’rit Chadasha this week. First we will read from the first epistle written by *Kefa* [Peter]. Then we will study a passage from *Yochanan*’s [John’s] gospel account of the ‘Upper Room Discourse’. In that passage, the Master will say to His talmidim:

***A little while longer and the world will see Me no more,
but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.
"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.
"He who has My mitzvot and sh’mars them, it is he who loves Me.
And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father,
and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.***

[John 14:19-21]

We will then take a look at the gospel account of *Lukas* [Luke], where Lukas will chronicle for us what happened the first time Yeshua went to the synagogue in his hometown of *Natzret* [i.e. ‘Nazareth’] after receiving *mikveh* in the Jordan River under the supervision of Yochanan the Immerser. Handed the scroll of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah], Yeshua read the passage we know as Isaiah 61:1-2, which spoke of the great year of ***Yovel*** – the year of the Holy One’s favor - that was to come. He then stopped abruptly without completing the verse⁶, gave the scroll back to the attendant, *sat down* and stunned everyone present by saying: ***Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*** Luke 4:21.

We will then move on in our study to the Book of Acts, where the same author will tell us about how, in the immediate aftermath of the great outpouring of the *Ruach HaQodesh* at the Festival of ***Shavuot*** in the year of Yeshua’s passion, a

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

Levi from the isle of Cyprus who had come into the city for the Festival sold a tract of Levitical land he owned and laid the proceeds of the sale at the feet of Yeshua's apostles.

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

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

Petition # 4, Ga'al [the Petition for Redemption].

Re'eh v'onyeinu, v'rivah riveinu

Behold our troubles, and carry away our sorrows

u'goleinu m'hera l'ma'an Shemeicha

and redeem us quickly, for the sake of Your Name

ki go'el chazak atah

for You are a fierce Redeemer

Baruch Atah Adonai Go'el Yisrael

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Israel's Kinsman-Redeemer