

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah B'midbar:*** Numbers 4:16-20
 Haftarah: Hosea 2:23
 B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 12:21 - 13:3

Do this for them - that they will live and not die.

[Numbers 4:19]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 135:13-21;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 5, *Rofei* - the Petition for Healing

Ufekudat El'azar ben-Aharon ha-kohen – And under the supervision of Elazar, son of Aharon the priest is to be ... ***shemen ha-ma'or*** – oil for the lamp ... ***uktoret ha-samim*** – and the fragrant incense ... ***uminchat ha-tamid*** – and the grain for the daily approach ... ***v'shemen ha-mishchah*** – and the oil of anointing Numbers 4:16a.

It has been *an eventful day* at *B'midbar Sinai*. After months of gazing Heavenward, responding to Heaven's Great Shofar, the focus of our attention has shifted from what was coming from the mountaintop [*i.e. Har Sinai*] to what is going on in the desert/barren wilderness below [*i.e. B'midbar Sinai*]. We are preparing to deal with the real-life, real-time challenges that loom before us on the next phase of our journey. In preparation for the day the Cloud finally moves again and we file out from this identity-shaping, destiny-defining encampment, by ranks the Camp has been dramatically rearranged. A new paradigm of social structure has been instituted. We are joyfully picking up *familial, clan-wide, tribe-wide and community-focused callings* ... and we are seriously mulling over in our minds *the responsibilities that go with each of them*. In the process, our sense of *who we are* and *why we are here* is undergoing a drastic upgrade. We have seen the pettiness and toxicity of self-absorption, and we want no part of it. We find ourselves transitioning from the immature swooning of an lovesick bride to the fierce, unshakable loyalty of a warrior to his King. And it is all courtesy of the most Relentless of Lovers - the Covenant-keeping God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov.

By virtue of what our Bridegroom-King has done for and in us at this Mountain, we are no longer a group of refugees running away from Egyptian bondage. We are now a *Betrothed Bride-to-be* looking forward to the home our Beloved Bridegroom is preparing for us. We are primed and ready to break camp and set out in search of a *promised abundant life* as well a blessed *promised land*. We are

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no longer the rag-tag, mixed multitude of traumatized victims that arrived here eleven months ago. Our identities and our mindsets are no longer defined by what we have been delivered *from*. We have responded to our Redeemer's invitation to 'lift up our heads'. As a result of lifting our heads in response to His Call we now have *a new perspective* and a *new focus* to go with our *new identities*.

Instead of looking back over our shoulders to the *West* - toward Egypt - in fear, we now find ourselves looking forward to the *East*, in excitement in anticipation, in expectation, and ... dare I say it ... in passionate yearning for the chambers of – and for intimate communion with – our Divine Bridegroom.

We are tuning in to a new drumbeat, to our *destiny* – and to *the life and the calling and the mission for which we have been set apart and Divinely empowered*. Saturated by the Overshadowing Presence of the Almighty and awash in His Empowering Words we have finally ceased trembling in fear at that thought that there are angry enemies standing between us and our destinies.

We are no longer the *prey of the nations*, cowering on the desert floor under the Holy One's shade whimpering to Moshe 'Why did you bring us out into the wilderness to die?' We now have begun to see ourselves differently – as a *predator* to be contended with – as a mighty *army awesome with banners*. We are beginning to understand that our calling is to be *a quiver of arrows* that the Great Warrior-King of Heaven intends to launch into the world. But we must not launch ourselves prematurely. It is *the Holy One's bidding* that we do – and it therefore must be *the Holy One's timing* we keep. The Divine Calendar under which we operate must not be rushed. We must await orders from above.

... Until You Receive Power from On High

And therefore we TARRY. Though our hearts are pounding and the camp is buzzing with excitement, with hope, and with a sense that our purpose and mission in life await us just beyond the horizon. We *tarry* ... until we receive the Divine empowerment to embark from On High. After all, the Cloud of the Holy One still sits quite stationary in its usual place atop the *Mish'kan*, over the mercy seat. The cloud has not lifted from its place to signal that it is time for us take our leave. The trumpet has not yet sounded the signal to sally forth. There are, you see, still *a few loose ends* the Holy One wants to tie up. And one of those loose ends is the rather sticky and sensitive issue of *who will lead us when we go ... and how*.

Who Will the Holy One Raise Up to Lead the Redeemed Community in the Coming Days?

As was stated in this week's Introductory Shiur, *Sefer B'midbar* is all about the

elevation – and sometimes epic failures - of *real characters* with whom we can readily identify. The characters we meet in this *sefer* are real, historic personas - but they represent familiar prophetic types. The Torah tells us their stories not so much for historical purposes as for inspiration and practical training. The Holy One wants us to see His instructions for living operate in real time, in the lives of real people. He is not a God who dwells in a realm of theory or principle or conceptual morality. He is a God who visits and walks with people like us. He wants us to understand that the wise and beautiful instructions for living He gave us at Sinai do not exist in a vacuum. They are not the fodder of intellectual debate. They are the stuff of real life. They are not based in ideology, ethics, or morality – they are based in real words, real acts, real interactions, and real relationships.

Those who seek to walk in the ways of the Holy One will not meditate in a monastery - they will walk in the midst of the angry multitudes in the heat of the day all through very real wildernesses of life. As they seek to implement the Kingdom Lifestyle of the Bridegroom- King they will come face to face – virtually daily - with very real human *arrogance*, with very real human *ambition*, with very real human *reasoning*, with very real human *selfishness*, with very real human *fear*, with very real human *lust*, and with very real human *stubbornness*.

The Holy One’s purpose in this part of the narrative of Torah is to show us how to survive, overcome, and transcend these obstacles and hindrances. In order for the lessons to sink in, the Holy One knows we need Him to put a name and a face on the characters He is going to use as object lessons. Behold, another character is walking up to the spotlight. His name is *Elazar ben Aharon*.

Elazar Ben Aharon, Front and Center!

In the first verse of today’s aliyah a special charge or responsibility is given to Aharon’s son *Elazar*² [KJV ‘Eleazar’]. We know the man already. He the eldest of the two surviving brothers of Nadav and Avihu. As you will recall, his brothers died when they tried to present ‘strange fire’ at the *Mish’kan* the very day holy fire fell from Heaven³. On an extremely challenging day for their mishpachah (family), they understandably stumbled a bit themselves. See **Leviticus 10:12-18 for details**. But that was then, and this is now. A lot has happened since then. And we are about to get to know Elazar a whole lot better. The Holy One tells us:

***Under the direction of Elazar, son of Aharon the priest, shall be:
the illuminating oil, the perfumed incense,
the minchah [grain] for the daily korbanot⁴, and the anointing oil.
[He shall also be in] charge of the entire Mish’kan,***

² Elazar is *alef, lamed, ayin, zayin, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #499, it is pronounced *el-aw-zawr’*.

³ The story is set forth in detail Leviticus 10.

⁴ See Exodus 29:40, Numbers 28:5.

and all its sacred furniture and utensils.

[Numbers 4:16]

Elazar was the third-born son of Aharon and his wife Elisheva. Elazar is the priestly family's eldest living son. His name literally means "*God is my Help*", or "*God comes alongside of me.*"

As the aliyah begins Elazar's father Aharon is still alive and serving as *Kohen Gadol* [High Priest]. Elazar is his father's principal assistant. Elazar co-labors daily in the *Mish'kan* with his brother Itamar. He is married and he and his wife have a grown son named Pinechas [Pinchas], whom he is training in priestly duties as well. As we discussed earlier this week, the Covenant is all about fathers and sons.

Beginning today however Elazar is going to be called to lift up his head, and receive a new role. Today a significant part of Aharon's administrative duties in and around the *Mish'kan* are going to be permanently delegated to Elazar.

The substance of Elazar's initial Divine assignment may seem to us pretty mundane. He is to serve - at least during the wilderness wandering - as something like a *comptroller* or CPA for the spiritual supply line of the Camp of the Redeemed. He is to *keep up with inventories* of all things related to the *Mish'kan* and *monitor everything having to do with the use, storage, packaging, and movement of same.*

What Elazar does not yet know is that he is going to be assigned many other, even more serious duties. But that will have to wait for another day. We all have to start somewhere. Life with the Holy One is a journey, and there must be a point of departure. As, when, and to the extent Elazar proves faithful in this role - even as he juggles the simultaneous responsibilities of being a son to Aharon, a husband to his wife, a brother to Itamar, a father to young Pinchas, and a priest to the men of every tribe, the Holy One will advance him into higher roles⁵. After all, that is the way the Kingdom works. The Holy One knows that ***Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.*** Luke 16:10.

The Holy One wants to trust us with so much. But He knows all too well the dangers - to us and all those around us - of giving us too much responsibility too soon. Think of the Holy One's experience with Adam. Consider Ya'akov's experience with Yosef and his brothers. Give thought to Moshe's experience with Aharon. The Holy One is all about *process before promotion*. It is not that we need

⁵ See for instance Numbers 19:1-10, where Elazar is given responsibility over the protocols involving the red heifer.

to earn His trust, or that we could do anything to deserve or merit a position or title. Those are *chol* concepts. The point is that the Holy One wants to mentor us personally so as to mature gracefully into the kind of person who can hold up under and remain humble, submitted, and teachable in each of the roles He desires to assign to us.

The Grooming And Development Process – He is the Master Artisan, We are the Apprentice

Elazar probably does not realize it, but he is being groomed by the Holy One to be the high priest that leads the people into the land. See **Numbers 27, Deuteronomy 10:6, and Joshua 19:51**. The Holy One knows the potential He has deposited in Elazar – even if Elazar does not. The present assignment the Holy One is just part of his training. How well Elazar handles - and how passionately he embraces - the menial tasks he is being assigned now will determine when he is ready for more Kingdom responsibility.

It is the same for us. The Holy One knows the amazing, world-changing potential he placed in us – and what it is going to take to nurture that potential along at a healthy pace and bring it forth in real time. He is in no hurry. He makes everything beautiful ... *in time*. **Ecclesiastes 3:11**. So never despise the day of small things⁶. In the Kingdom what seem like small things often turn out to be much, much greater than we could possibly sense or think.

Moreover, when one considers the centrality of the five things the Holy One assigns Elazar to oversee, one must realize that the announcement of the addition of these responsibilities to Elazar's already full plate [*i.e.* son, husband, brother, father, kohen, etc.] had to at first seem foreign, unwelcome and overwhelming to him. There was no pay raise. There was no new title or office. He was just called forward and told he now had the responsibility to oversee the collection, storage, and use of the fragrant incense, the pure olive oil for the lamps, the oil of anointing for consecration, all the grain used in making showbread, first fruit presentations, and *minchah*, and each and every structural component of the *Mish'kan*.

I am sure this new assignment seemed daunting. Assignments from Heaven always do. We do not often seek – or feel qualified for - the specific assignments He chooses to give us. And we often initially feel totally unprepared for, unenthused about, and overwhelmed by them. Think of Moshe's initial response to the Holy One at the burning bush! That sense of overwhelm is part of the Holy One's plan. He wants us to know we absolutely cannot do what He appoints us to do without His help. He wants to build dependence – and trust – into our lifestyle. He wants

⁶ See Zechariah 4:10.

us to *co-labor with Him*, in the yoke with him, not to perform for Him.

Note however, that the “pay” Elazar was to receive for doing this important job was exactly the same as the pay that the Holy One offered everyone else – a *daily ration of manna in the morning* and *all the water you can drink throughout the day*. Assignments in the army of the Kingdom are about much more important matters than money, prestige, fringe benefit packages and golden parachutes.

This is actually very significant. Elazar’s marching orders are just the first fruits of the Divine Command. Elazar is actually the first member of the second generation to receive his marching orders from On High. In his calling lies the seeds of all subsequent ones – including yours and mine.

We will all receive our orders from On-High soon. We all have *important roles* to fill, *critical watches in the night* to be responsible for, and *strategic battle stations* to man.

Each of Us is Called to Serve As the ‘Last Man Standing’ for Someone

Perhaps you have noticed as you considered the structure of the Divine Bridegroom’s radical rearrangement of the camp that we now all find ourselves strategically positioned as the absolute ‘last-man-standing’ between the enemy and the ones we love most in the world. If we do not *assume and carefully fulfill all our assigned responsibilities*; if we do not *diligently keep our assigned watches*; if we do not *prepare our hearts to fight the battles ahead with level-headed skill as well as unswerving devotion to mission ... well Beloved, it is our families who will suffer the consequences*.

We are not just in this for ourselves anymore. This is not just about us as individuals getting a pass for R & R in the World to Come. Our wives/husbands, children/parents, brothers/sisters and dearest kin are *depending upon us*. We are their last line of defense against the enemies of our souls and the Kingdom of our Bridegroom.

Lift up your heads indeed! Meanwhile another set of orders have just arrived from the Divine Command. Who could these orders be for? It turns out that the second set of orders we receive from Divine Command Headquarters are for Aharon’s other surviving son, *Itamar*⁷ [Itamar]⁸. *Itamar* was Aharon’s youngest. His name

⁷ Itamar’s name is *alef, yod, tav, mem, resh*, Strong’s Hebrew word #385, pronounced *eet-aw-mawr*’. The name means “*place of palm trees*” – a nomad’s description of an *oasis*.

⁸ As Elazar’s assigned task was to supervise the clan of the *K’hat’im*, Itamar’s designated task was to supervise the other two clans of Levi’im - the *Gershonim* [Numbers 4:28] and the *Merarim* [Numbers 4:33]. Since the responsibility of these two clans of Levi’im were the care and carriage of the *Mish’kan*’s

means “*place of palm trees*” – and corresponds to a nomad’s description of an *oasis*. Itamar’s name, like Elazar’s, provides a perfect picture from a Hebraic perspective of true “spiritual authority” as designed for us by the Divine Bridegroom. Let’s look a little closer, shall we?

A Radical Outlook on “Spiritual Authority” – Torah Style

What do Elazar and Itamar’s names have to do with ‘spiritual authority’ you ask? Bear with me for a moment. The name *Elazar* – God is my help – speaks of absolute *humility* – and *gives all honor and glory to the Holy One*, claiming no right, power, or authority in one’s self. The name *Itamar* – oasis – speaks of the function of one the Holy One places in our midst to teach us or lead us. Such a one is not a “ruler” over us, but *a source of living water* (palms only grow where there is water), *of food* (palms, in the Middle East, produce one of the sweetest fruits known to man – the date), and *of rest and restoration*.

But how do these concepts relate to spiritual authority? Consider this. When one wandering in the desert sees a palm oasis on the horizon, he knows that he has found a source of water, food, and rest.

Similarly, when the Holy One - instead of man or man’s organizations - truly places a person in our midst to lead us, the person so placed will act in *humility* and in *graciousness* and be *helped by the Holy One* [back to Elazar, again]. Hence, there will be no need for him to “wield power over” or to “lord it over” those in their care. Those within the care of persons to whom the Holy One truly entrusts spiritual authority will *not serve them as slaves*, but will, as they walk alongside them, draw from them living water, and eat of their nourishing fruit. Like Elazar and Itamar.

The ‘More Excellent Way’ of Spiritual Authority – As Exemplified by Elazar and Itamar

Torah’s concept of “spiritual authority” is thus clearly vastly different from that of the typical religious organization or assembly of today, where positions of “power” and “lordship” are assigned to those designated (usually by popular election, executive appointment, or process of elimination) to leadership positions, which positions are themselves modeled after those one might see in secular businesses and political organizations. There is a *more excellent way*.

The community of the Redeemed is not a governmental entity, a corporation, or a political party. The goal of the Kingdom is not to make – or even collect – money.

framework and its curtains/coverings, respectively, this placed Itamar in charge of the physical structure of the *Mish’kan*, just as Elazar was in charge of its furnishings and stores.

It is not to garner or wield power. Nor is it to promote any corporate label, footprint, or agenda. Nor is it to perpetuate our organization. We are not in competition with anyone. We are all about a Great King, His Great Love for Humanity, and His Great Plan of Redemption for Creation. Our only mission statement is to be “***May His Kingdom come, and may His Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven***”. The true leaders of the Holy One should be clearly distinguishable from elected officials, appointed bureaucrats, hireling CEOs and sales managers. The Holy One ‘helps’ those He intends to serve as leaders. He empowers them with *wisdom, insight, understanding* and - perhaps most importantly - *a heart to serve*. Note that I did not say a ‘will to rule’. I said a ‘*heart to serve*’. Note that I did not say a ‘position of special honor and privilege’; I said a ‘*heart to serve*’. Note that I did not say a ‘pathological desire to be in control’; I said a ‘*heart to serve*’.

The difference between the world’s view of authority and our Bridegroom’s plan for His Kingdom is ... well, like the difference between *night* and *day*. The world’s idea of authority is DARKNESS; the Holy One’s plan for His Kingdom is LIGHT.

Do you want a picture of what true ‘spiritual authority’ the way the Divine Bridegroom designed it for us *looks like*? Imagine a person the Holy One has truly endowed with spiritual authority going to the fountain of life every morning with a huge pitcher. Imagine him/her filling that huge *pitcher to the brim with living water*. Imagine that person now carrying that huge pitcher of living water on top of their heads, looking for thirsty people for which he/she can pour out a cup of water. I am not talking about selling living water. I am talking about *giving it away, seeking nothing in return*. That is true spiritual authority - *Kingdom style*.

Embracing True Spiritual Authority

In the earliest part of our walk through this life the Holy One will have us cross paths with a variety of people who are carrying the Living Water of the Kingdom. Whenever He causes our path to cross with such people their ‘orders’ from on High are to hold out to our dry, parched mouths, as many cup-fuls of the living water He has given them that He tells them to hold out, in order that we may drink, be refreshed, and learn how and where to find living water for ourselves. As we drink deeply from the cup of living water these people offer, they are to offer such words of counsel as the Holy One prompts them to in order to help us understand from whence we have come, where we really are at present, and where we are supposed to go next. We are to rest for a short while in their shade.

But that is all true ‘spiritual authorities’ given by the Holy One are there for. We are to *be grateful* for them, and are to act *respectfully* towards them, and are to *give*

them due honor, but we are under no circumstances to worship or *serve* them, nor enter into any kind of covenant with them. We can, if we are led by the *Ruach* of the Holy One to do so, bless them with an unsolicited gift or meal or temporary place to rest, but we are not to put these people on either *pedestals* or *salaries* – much less *crosses*.

We are not supposed to build altars or buildings around the people the Divine Bridegroom sends our way to pour living water in our cups. And we are most definitely not to become codependent upon them. Heaven forbid – do you not see? Becoming dependent upon these people would *defeat the entire purpose of spiritual authority*. We are simply to *receive with gratitude* [to the Holy One] *what they have been authorized to give us*, thank them, and then *move on*. Yes, I said move on. We are to move on in complete confidence that our Divine Bridegroom will place such other similarly empowered and appointed people at the next strategic point in our journey of faith - just as He has placed physical oases in the desert at strategic intervals, designed to become checkpoints along our journey.

It is not good for us or for anyone else in the Kingdom for us to dwell at such oases for extended periods of time – that would constitute a *compromise of our purpose and our destiny* and foster co-dependent relationships which would *slowly poison both the ‘spiritual authority’, ourselves* and the family members, friends, and entire sphere of influence over which we are called to walk in spiritual authority. And for this reason we are wise to question whether anyone who represents himself – or is represented by others - to be a ‘spiritual authority’ is *truly from the Holy One* or is merely appointed by man and man’s organizations. Learning to tell the difference between the two is *an essential part of spiritual maturity*. We are not to value true ‘spiritual authorities’ too little; that would *dishonor the Holy One*. We are however not to rely too much upon even true ‘spiritual authorities’; that is *dangerous* – indeed, *toxic*. And we are absolutely not to become enamored with, and consent to *serve*, ‘spiritual authorities’ – true or false; that is *nothing short of idolatry*.

Dealing With the Past and Moving On

I know that some of us – indeed probably *most of us* in the toxic spiritual environment in which we find ourselves – have made mistakes in this regard. Some of us have made idols – or martyrs – out of ‘spiritual leaders’. Most of us have built at least one or two *golden calf altars for men* and *established buildings [if not denominations] around men* and erected *Towers of Babel glorifying men’s ministries* along the way.

Meanwhile some of us who have in our vain imaginations and foolish self-

absorption considered ourselves ‘spiritual leaders’ have as often as not poured into the cups of the thirsty toxic waste from our own diseased flesh instead of living water. Content to fleece the flock instead of feeding the sheep, many have demanded for themselves adoration and adulation that belongs only to the Divine Bridegroom Himself. They have demanded salaries and stipends, homage and blind obedience, and every variety of special treatment. This is not ‘leadership’; this is occult manipulation.

Okay - *it happened*. It was sin, but it was not the unforgiveable sin. It does not change *who we are* or *why we are here*. Our job – what the Divine Bridegroom wants from us before we carry the baggage of our past hurts into His Bridal Chamber - is to *repent of the part we played* in each such experience, *forgive the part everyone else played* in each such experience, get FREE of both the woundedness and the offense of it, and then *get on with life and the great walk of Love*. He does not want – and we most definitely do not need - the shadow of any Pharaoh or Egyptian taskmaster who took advantage of us or hurt us or a member of our family following us into either the Wilderness of testing that looms before us or the Promised Land that calls us to our destiny.

Let’s *get over it* and *move on*. We are in an army. We have to shed every bit of excess baggage, because *we have a war to fight*. Others are depending on us. We simply don’t have time to cry, to sulk, or to be mad at our fellow soldiers any more. We are bought with a great price – gloriously redeemed and chosen for a great redemptive mission. We no longer have the RIGHT to feel emotions concerning ourselves or other people which conflict with our Divine Bridegroom’s emotions concerning either ourselves or them. Our time for playing the blame game and the victim game and the accusation game amongst ourselves is *over*. We have more than enough to deal with in this new configuration of the camp without having to constantly dodge ‘friendly fire.’

The ‘Gift’ [Spiritual Manifestation] of Administration – In Torah Seed Form

We do not often think about the “gift of administration”, or “governing” as being something Torah would address. But look at what Torah tells us Elazar and Itamar were to spend their lives [at least until Aharon died] doing, and there it is. And when you think about it, why not? This same supernatural enabling was previously resident in *Yosef* (Joseph) as well. The question arises, however, why was not someone else in the priestly family - or Aharon himself - given the grave responsibilities here assigned to Elazar and Itamar? Why *these guys*? Because it was *the will of the Holy One*. They were not just “available” to “fill a slot”. They were not just ‘willing’. They were not in search or need of a ‘title’. They were *born*

to discharge these responsibilities.

The responsibilities mentioned were a part of the reason Elazar and Itamar were created. They were a significant part of the reason these two lives were strategically placed by the Holy One into the home of Aharon and Elisheva. Part of their purpose in life (which also included the responsibility to father and train up according to Torah sons who would serve as priests after them) was these responsibilities that might seem to the casual 21st Century American observer as mundane, boring, or “unspiritual”.

First of all, to the Hebraic mindset there is nothing “mundane” or “boring”. To consider anything in the Holy One’s wonderful creation “dull” - or to be “bored” by it - is a product of the Western mindset. To the Hebrew mindset all of Creation – indeed all of life – is infused with wonder, with awe, and with holiness. As it is written, *“The whole earth is filled with His Glory”*.

Boredom can only come with the *arrogance of a cold heart*. To be bored one must be *totally self-absorbed*. To feel boredom, you see, one must *intentionally shut himself off from all the creativity and wonder of whatever surrounding or situation he or she is in, and choose to see the situation or surrounding only as something interfering with his or her pleasure*. The Hebraic mindset on the other hand *sees every situation life may yield as an opportunity to interact with, and learn from, the Holy One – to sh’ma Him, and to asah [i.e. build, make tangible and visible to the world] that which Torah instructs*. To the Hebraic mindset therefore *boredom is a horrible disease* - the product of a confused, corrupted, pagan-influenced mind.

Secondly, to the Hebraic mindset no task which the Holy One could assign is, or could ever be, “unspiritual”. The Holy One’s words – every one of His instructions – are “Spirit breathed”. The Torah is the brainchild of the Spirit of God. Every word out of the Holy One’s mouth is *pregnant with His Spirit*. So if the Holy One says we are to do something, or entrusts to us a task or responsibility, the Hebrew mind says that there – not in some activity that will give us goose bumps, win us favor in the sight of men, or pacify our flesh - is our opportunity to engage and most effectively interact with His Spirit. What is *spiritual* is to do it His Way – as Messiah described it, to do *“only what we see the Father doing”*.

What is “unspiritual” to a Hebrew is to expend energy and time in religious-appearing activities in which the Holy One has not instructed one to engage – i.e., forming religious organizations, holding religious meetings/services, engaging in religious activities, and celebrating religious “holidays” - which are *divorced from the Torah which His Spirit breathed out upon mankind as our instruction manual*

for all things Spiritual.

Each of the members of the Redeemed Community not only has his or her *unique inheritance*, but also has his or her *pre-ordained function* and his or her *specially designed supernatural enablings* in the Holy One's holy nation – just like Elazar and Itamar had theirs.

The psalmist says we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*”. Each of us is unique, like each snowflake is unique. So never envy anyone else's position or try to emulate anyone else's “ministry”. And never think you are less – or more – important than anyone else, however high or low their profile may be.

The Secret to Elazar's and Itamar's 'Anointing'

Please realize that *having the Creator of the Universe's Manifest Presence dwelling in the camp meant danger as well as blessing*. The death of Nadav and Avihu had already placed Aharon and his sons on notice that the sacred furnishings of the *Mish'kan*, and the instruments used therein, could bring death if the instructions given by the Holy One were not followed. Since the *K'hat'im* were going to be performing duties with the sacred vessels and furnishings of the *Mish'kan*, they must be taught the Torah and its precise instructions on how to deal with the sacred vessels and furnishings very carefully, and supervised very directly, lest they encounter the same fate as Nadav and Avihu. The teaching and shepherding that Aharon, Elazar and Itamar were to do were to be done [1] in the *reverent fear of the Holy One*, and [2] in *unselfish love* - for the Holy One and for the *K'hatim*.

In today's concluding aliyah from the apostolic scripture readings this week Shaul will say:

*I may speak in the tongues of men, even angels;
but if I lack love, I have become merely blaring brass, or a clanging cymbal.
I may have the gift of prophecy, I may fathom all mysteries, know all things,
have all faith - enough to move mountains; but if I lack love, I gain nothing.*

There is not much room in the Holy One's kingdom for flashy superstars. There is not much to be gained in the Holy One's kingdom for self-promotion or social climbing. Flattery and patronization will get you nowhere with the Master. Drawing attention to one's self or one's giftings will net you nothing in the Father's House. Ah, but a humble, submitted, servant – a servant with ears that *sh'ma* the Holy One's voice and a heart willing to lay down his life if necessary to do the Divine Bridegroom's bidding – such a servant will *open the windows of heaven* just about every time.

But ... Why Elazar?

Ah, but we were speaking of Elazar, weren't we. Elazar, the comptroller. Elazar, the "bean-counter". The fellow with the job we considered "mundane". Whatever became of him, anyway? Surely he faded away into oblivion or died of boredom or something, right? Hardly. We will discover as we read on into Sefer *B'midbar* that this "bean-counter" will in a few years become *Kohen Gadol* [High Priest] in Aharon's place. He will be the one who serves as High Priest when the Redeemed Community enters and takes possession of the Promised Land. Was this because Elazar was *trained in administration*? Was it because he was *educated* or *naturally skilled* as a comptroller? No, Dear Reader. One does not *train* to become high priest. So what qualified Elazar? Why was he selected? His name says it all - *El-azar* (*God is my help!*) Elazar had an identity different than those around him could see. He had an inheritance different even than Aharon, his father (who expected Nadav, the firstborn, or at least Avihu, the second born, to succeed him as high priest) had seen. He was not chosen for his natural ability nor for his training, but *despite his obvious lack of it* - to show the Holy One's glory.

The Holy One would be Elazar's help. The Holy One would supernaturally enable him first to administrate, and later to officiate over all the agreed-upon Betrothal period interactions between the Holy One, as Divine Bridegroom, and the Redeemed Community, as Bride-in-training. He would become – and serve well as - the Friend of the Bride in the Holy One's Divine Romance.

May you, and all within your households, and all the Holy One's people everywhere, accept your unique callings, and begin to flow in your unique supernatural enablings, as did Elazar! *May the Holy One be your help!* And may He lead you, *oasis by oasis*, to your promised land.

Questions For Today's Study

1. According to today's aliyah:

[A] What four substances was Elazar to have responsibility over?

[B] What other things was Elazar to have responsibility over besides these four substances?

2. As this week's parsha closes Aharon and his sons were told to personally and physically supervise every aspect of the labor of the *K'hat'im* [Kohathites].

***The Holy One spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying,
Don't cut off the tribe of the families of the K'hati from among the Levites;
but thus do to them, that they may live, and not die,
when they approach to the most holy things:
Aharon and his sons are to go in,***

*and appoint them everyone to his service and to his burden.
But they are not to go in to see the sanctuary
even for a moment, lest they die.*

[Numbers 4:17-20]

[A] Which of the Holy One's supernatural enablings do you think Aharon possessed?

[B] The instructions the Holy One gives were also given to Aharon's sons. Why do you think this was?

[C] If you were Aharon, what would be your "teaching plan" for training the K'hat'im for their service?

[D] The *K'hat'im* were not, as a group, "cut off" from the Levi'im, at least during the lives of Aharon and his sons. Read about them in 2 Chr. 20:19, 2 Chr. 29:12, and 2 Chr. 34:12. What was this clan spiritually enabled to do besides carry heavy and delicate objects from the *Mish'kan*?

[E] The one sin having to do with the clan of the *K'hat'im* referenced in Torah is contained in Numbers 16. What was the problem? Why do you think this occurred?

3. The concluding aliyah of parsha *B'midbar* is an instruction as to the duties [and a report of the numbers] of the various clans of the Levi'im other than the *K'hat'im*. We are told with regard to the *Gershoni* clan:

*They are to carry the curtains of the tabernacle,
and the Tent of Meeting, its covering,
and the covering of sealskin that is above on it,
and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the hangings of the court,
and the screen for the door of the gate of the court,
which is by the tabernacle and around the altar, and their cords,
and all the instruments of their service, and whatever shall be done with them.
Therein are they to serve.*

We are then told with regard to the Merari clan:

*This is the charge of their burden,
according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting:
the tabernacle's boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets,
and the pillars of the court around it, and their sockets
and their pins, and their cords,
with all their instruments, and with all their service*

[A] What was the assigned task of the clan of Gershon?

[B] What spiritual "giftings" do you think the *Gershonim* were given by the Holy One?

[C] What was the assigned task of the clan of Merari?

[D] What spiritual "giftings" do you think the *Merarim* were given by the Holy One?

4. Technically this week's prescribed Haftarah ended with Hosea 2:20, the prophetic "betrothal" of Israel to the Holy One in the last day. I have continued our reading through the end of the chapter because I want to emphasize what the Holy One has said about the end-times, after Israel is restored to covenant status. Verse 23, which we focus on today, reads as follows:

*I will sow her to me in the eretz;
And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy;
And I will tell those who were not my people, 'You are my people;'
And they will say, 'My God!'*

[A] Describe in your own words what the Holy One says will be the end-time status and circumstances of the seed of Avraham. Compare this with the covenant made by the Holy One with Avraham in Genesis 15:4-5; with the blessings of *Rivkah* [KJV 'Rebekah'] in Genesis 24:59-60 and 25:23; with the covenant the Holy One made with *Yitzchak* [KJV 'Isaac'] in Genesis 26:2-5; and with the covenant the Holy One made with Ya'akov [KJV 'Jacob'] in Genesis 28:13-15.

[B] What does it mean for a group of people to be "*the Holy One's People*"? (How does this affect the lives of the people - what changes does this bring about?)

[C] What does it mean to say that the Holy One is that peoples' God?

5. In today's conclusion to the B'rit Chadasha reading for the week Shaul of Tarsus gives instructions to those people, Jew and Gentile, in the city of Corinth, who have received Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel and the nations, concerning the exercise of supernatural enablings. His point has been to remind them that their supernatural enablings are distributed by the Holy One as He sees fit, not based upon merit, and thus that they are not to be either overemphasized or allowed to become a source of pride, jealousy, or competition.

*The eye can't tell the hand, "I have no need for you,"
or again the head to the feet, "I have no need for you."*

No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

*Those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable,
on those we bestow more abundant honor;
and our unpresentable parts have more abundant propriety;
whereas our presentable parts have no such need.*

*But God composed the body together,
giving more abundant honor to the inferior part,
that there should be no division in the body,
but that the members should have the same care for one another.*

*When one member suffers all the members suffer with it.
Or when one member is honored all the members rejoice with it.*

Now you are the body of Messiah, and members individually.

*God has set some in the assembly:
first apostles, second prophets, third teachers,
then miracle workers, then gifts of healings, helps,
governments, and various kinds of languages.*

*Are all apostles? Are all prophets?
Are all teachers? Are all miracle workers? Do all have gifts of healings?
Do all speak with various languages? Do all interpret?
But earnestly desire the best gifts.*

*Moreover, I show a most excellent way to you.
If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but don't have love,
I have become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.*

*If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing.
If I dole out all my goods to feed the poor,
and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, it profits me nothing.*

[A] The movements and function of a person's eyes, hands, head, and feet, are all controlled by impulses from the brain. We also know that it takes the same exact time for the brain to send an impulse or message to the foot, or hand, or eye, or ear, or knee - no matter where the body part is, it is equally in contact with the brain. Write an essay applying this analogy to the different members of the "body" of Messiah Yeshua.

[B] Shaul lists some of the supernatural enablings that the Holy One has poured out on different people. List the various supernatural enablings Shaul mentions.

[C] Much has been made over the years of the fact that the Greek word translated into English 'love' in the above passage – indeed in all of I Corinthians 13 - is 'agape'. What would be the Hebrew word that Shaul, the self-described *Hebrew of Hebrews*, probably had in mind?

*May each of the Holy One's people learn, in their wilderness,
to depend solely upon The Holy One, to love Him,
to recognize and accept their specific inheritances and specific enablings,
and to recognize and respect, without coveting, the inheritances and specific enablings of others.
Shabbat Shalom, Beloved. May you delight to enter His rest!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 135:13-21

***Your name, O Holy One, endures forever;
Your renown, O Holy One, throughout all generations.
For the Holy One will judge his people, and will have compassion on his servants.***

*The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they can't speak;
They have eyes, but they can't see. They have ears, but they can't hear;
Neither is there any breath in their mouths.
Those who make them will be like them, Yes, everyone who trusts in them.*

*House of Yisra'el, praise the Holy One!
House of Aharon, praise the Holy One!
House of Levi, praise the Holy One!
You who fear the Holy One, praise the Holy One!
Blessed be the Holy One from Tziyon, Who dwells at Y'rushalayim.
Praise the Holy One!*