

the role of Bridegroom-King, act like spoiled children, and demand that He do for us what we want Him to do, feed us, support us, give us shiny trinkets, make us look good and feel important, and follow us around to clean up our messes? Or are we ready to take on a humble, bridal role, letting Him prepare the agenda and take the lead, and just following whithersoever He leads. Are we ready to quit saying whatever pops into our heads, and say only what He tells us to say – then back up our testimonials with inspiring demonstrations of meekness, kindness, mercy, patience, gentleness, and humble service? Are we ready to stop rushing to do whatever feels ‘right’ or ‘good’ or ‘moral’ in our own eyes, and dedicate our lives to doing only what we see Him doing? Are we willing to become living stones in His Great Kingdom, fitly joined by His Hand with other people we may not even like, for the sake of His Ways, His Timing, His Direction, and His Purposes? Or are we too caught up in the toxicity of own selfish, prideful and self-righteous agendas, offenses, mindsets, predispositions, opinions, creeds, fleshly appetites, soul-ties, and approaches to life?

Do we hunger and thirst for the Kingdom of Heaven, with its infusion of Kedusha Energy, come to earth in real time in *our* lives, in *our* marriages, in *our* homes, in *our* extended families, in *our* conversations, in *our* neighborhoods, in all *our* marketplace interactions, and in our cities and nations? Or would we really prefer just to act like Pharisees in the gates, presiding and pronouncing judgments and decrees over domains of our own design? Would we rather see His Will done – or would we really prefer getting our own way, promoting our favorite causes, pet doctrines, and self-serving opinions?

The Holy One knows what is in the heart of each man. He has a wealth of both Divine Wisdom and personal experience with men. He knows the glorious things of which men are capable when they simply subject their will and agenda to His. But He also is acutely aware of the significant challenges all men face since the Fall. He has, after all, watched generation after generation of fallen man release the toxic uncleanness that emanates from the fruit of the tree of knowledge into every place to which he has traveled. But the Holy One does not despair. He is full of joy and anticipation, as well as love, concerning all His Creation – including fallen mankind. He has unshakable confidence in His ability to awaken the sparks of greatness in men’s spirits and impart the healing that is so desperately needed to men’s hearts. He is an expert at shifting the atmosphere of our consciousness and raising the water level of our thoughts, words and actions. He knows how to meet human beings at burning bushes, how to set their hearts afire with wonder, and how to radically change them with His love. He knows how to inspire those who have cut covenant with Him to press into realms of significance, service, kindness, and impact beyond their imagination. He knows how to motivate and animate

those who allow themselves to be propelled by the great love with which they have been called into the ever-deepening experiences of His Kingdom.

***Home Improvement the Kingdom of Heaven's Way;
Behold: The Master At Work!***

What is the Holy One's next project? He wants to *make all things new in our homes*. We are called to be a people of lovely tents. And to have lovely tents, we need the wisdom – and the touch, of the Master's Hand. So, as we turned the page of Torah from Leviticus 27 to Numbers 1, a *radical shift in the spiritual atmosphere* was noticeable. A *new wind* started blowing from Heaven. Our spirits started to soar. The sense that a major transition is imminent – and that a great new adventure awaits us - began to grip our hearts.

When our Divine Bridegroom instructed Moshe to *se'u et rosh kol-adat* – i.e. *lift up the heads of the whole witness throng* – something immediately began to happen inside of us. The lifter of our heads began to birth in us a vision for something much bigger and far more grand than this mountain. We began to feel *hungry for home*. We began to sense that the time for us to leave the Sinaitic *chuppah* of betrothal and head off toward the Bridal Chamber – and the ultimate destiny that He has prepared for us - is near. And yesterday after gazing long into the Pillar of Cloud representing the *Manifestation of our Divine Bridegroom's Presence* one-by-one and coming to a revelation of who we really were in His eyes, suddenly we are okay with leaving Sinai today if that is what He says we should do. In fact, we are getting a little bit giddy at just the thought of it. He is our Bridegroom. Where He goes we will go. Where He lodges we will lodge.

Wilderness, watch out - ready or not – here we come!

Er ... Not So Fast!

This new sense of *hunger for home* and a *heart swelling with enthusiasm to begin to walk in the Bridegroom's calling* are important first steps, but they are not sufficient of themselves to prepare us for the amazing journey that lies ahead. So today the Divine Bridegroom will implement step two of His radical plan to prepare us for the great paradigm-shifting Wilderness experience that awaits us. What does step two consist of? It consists of *transforming our camp from a bunch of sentimental wedding revelers into a glorious army majestic with banners*. After all, when the pillar of cloud finally lifts and we set off into the wilderness, what we will shout is not supposed to be *'Here comes the Bride!'* but is instead to be ***Let the Holy One arise, and let His enemies be scattered!*** Numbers 10:35. The difference between the two declarations is vast.

Learning to Flow With the Holy One In Multiple Paradigms,

According to His Purposes and According to His Timing

If we are going to function as the Covenant Partner and Co-Regent of the Creator of the Universe we are going to have to become *people who can flow comfortably between multiple paradigms*. We need to learn to multi-task even as our Bridegroom multi-tasks. The Holy One is not just our doting Divine Bridegroom, you see; He is also a great and glorious Warrior-King³. And He has ordained that we are to be more than just star-struck lovers dancing in the Sinaitic moonlight in bridal regalia. He has destined us to become the Great Warrior-King's mighty army. Today's aliyah therefore begins with the Voice of the Holy One prophesying over us once again. Here is what the King of the Universe says:

Ish al-diglo v'otot l'veit avotam

Every man with his own banner, under the standard of his father's household,

yachanu B'nei Yisra'el

are the descendants of Israel to pitch their tents.

m'neged saviv l'ohel-mo'ed yachanu

around, and at a prescribed distance from, the tabernacle of the congregation are they to pitch their tents."

[Numbers 2:2]

Even as the Holy One was saying these things, they began to happen. The entire camp suddenly came alive with activity. The whole mountain seemed to be in motion. Colorful flags and banners were suddenly moving to and fro, flying in the wind. Songs of hope and praise filled the air. It was hello's, handshakes, and hugs all around, as joyful family reunions broke out everywhere. And before we knew it the camp of the Redeemed had been totally rearranged - placed in Divine order. Well, Divine *marching order*. that is!

Tribes, Clans, Households – and the Foundation of A Nation of 'Lovely Tents'

The Holy One did not by any means intend for us to leave Sinai the way we came. He intended to totally restructure not only the way we see *Him* but also the way we see *ourselves and each other*. Hence the Holy One said ***Ish al-diglo*** [*Each man with his own banner*]. Each man was called upon to take his wife and children if he had any, as well as his tent and whatever animals, carts and belongings he had brought out of Egypt, and move⁴.

Ish al-diglo [*Each man with his own banner*] – i.e. every man over the age of 20 was called upon to leave his “buds” and “homeys”, go to the part of the camp ***al-ot***

³ See Exodus 15:3; see also Psalm 68 and Revelation 19:11.

⁴ Yeshua would later express much the same concept as: ***Take up your cross and follow me.***

l'veyt avotam [at/around the banner of his father's household] – *i.e.* that place in the camp specifically assigned by the Holy One to his ancestral or adopted tribe, and *start a new life*. Each man's first task was to *find his tribe*. Each tribe had its own *banner*, with its own colors and images, to which its members were instructed to rally.

Finding one's tribal banner however was by no means the end of the odyssey. Once he had located the banner of his tribe, each man was then required to seek out his specific *clan* within that tribe. It was at that point that the head of each household was to adopt and erect a "*standard*" around which its members could rally. Then finally, once a man located his family's standard he was then to pitch his tent 'in his father's house' – *i.e.* alongside the tent of his father and mother [if living], and the tents of his brothers, his cousins, his aunts, his uncles, or whichever family members then living were most closely related to him.

All of this activity occurred around and in a prescribed proximity to the Tent of Meeting, which formed a stationary island in a sea of orchestrated movement. What a wonderful scene this procession must have presented to the angels who watched over the camp! But this was much, much more than just an exciting procession. What happened in response to this Word of the Holy One that day was designed to change us *on the inside* much more than it changed us on the *outside*.

Focusing On *Destiny and Inheritance* Instead of Mere *Survival*

Why the mass relocation? Why did every father take his wife and children, pull up tent stakes that had been in place for months, pack up belongings, and move a few thousand feet at most? It was a sublime act of *faith*. The Holy One had decreed that the land flowing with milk and honey which He was giving to His People as an inheritance would be allocated *to tribes*, and *among the clans and families within those tribes*. Not only that, He had indicated that the right to occupy the land would for all time be a heritage of *the tribe, clan, and family* to which one belonged. In order to claim one's inheritance and portion in the land one did not have to - and indeed could not - perform any service or give anything of monetary worth to the treasury, or excel at any individual or community activity.

There also was to be no Oklahoma-style "land rush" once we reached the Land of Promise. The key to claiming one's inheritance was going to be one thing and one thing alone – acknowledging - and then becoming - *who we were created to be*. Family ties had to be acknowledged and strengthened because it was through family-centered devotion to the Holy One, in the celebration of the *Shabbat* [Sabbath] and the *Mo'edim* [Divine Appointments He Established for Us] as well as in the

tending of the Land of Promise, that the Holy One's people were to become *a light to the nations*.⁵

Family members living in close proximity? Hmmmmn. Considering the sordid history of family-member interactions in the world – starting with the Kayin and Hevel fiasco, and including the sin of Cham [Ham] against his father Noach, the irreconcilable differences between Yish'mael and Yitzchak, the all-out feud between Ya'akov and Esav from the time they shared their mother's womb, the fierce rivalry between Rachel and her sister Leah over Ya'akov's affections, and the whole mess involving the dreamer Yosef and his brothers - is this *family togetherness plan* the Holy One has called forth a formula for *shalom* in the camp of the Redeemed – or is it a blueprint for *disaster*?

Is *family restoration* really that important to the Holy One? Yes, it is. Let's face it - if our relationship with Him is not strong enough to survive inter-family squabbles, sibling rivalries, and generation gaps – it is never going to be strong enough to provide light to a hostile and suspicious world. On the other hand, if our relationship with the Holy One and our immersion in His Torah somehow manages to transform the way we treat those who live with us, night and day, week-in, week-out – where the rubber meets the road, so to speak ... to the point that our family interactions – pleasant and unpleasant - bring honor and glory to the Holy One ... well if that happens *everyone on the planet will know that the light of Heaven is shining in and through us*.

*Thus the children of Yisra'el did; according to all that the Holy One instructed Moshe.
So they encamped by their standards,
and so they set out, everyone by their families⁶, according to their fathers' houses.
[Numbers 2:34]*

The Original “Roadmap” to Peace in the Middle East

The newly configured camp as the Holy One Divinely restructured it was a huge square. The Tent of Meeting sat in the exact center and was *the hub of all activity*. This was because the Holy One's *Radiant Cloud of Presence* rested in the *Mish'kan*. The focal point of the camp was thus not the *Mish'kan*, or the priests, or Moshe, or even the Torah - but was *the Holy One Himself*.

Camping, marching, and living around the Tent of Meeting were the four clans of

⁵This is because of the Holy One's covenant with Avraham Avinu. As the Holy One stated in Genesis 18:18-19: *Avraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the eretz will be blessed in him. For I have made myself known by him, and he will teach his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that the Holy One may bring on Avraham that which he has spoken of him.*

⁶ The Hebrew word for family is *mishpacha*, *mem*, *shin*, *peh*, *chet*, *hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #4940, pronounced *meesh-paw-khaw'*.

Levi'im [Levites]. One clan of *Levi'im* was assigned to each of the compass sides of the *Mish'kan* [Tent of Meeting].

Just outside the “ring” of the camps of the *Levi'im* clans was an outer “ring” consisting of the camps of the other 12 tribes [the descendants of the two sons of Yosef (Joseph), Efrayim and Menashe, each having a tribe, along with the tribes of each of Yosef's 10 brothers other than Levi]. Three tribes were stationed along each of the sides of the square.

The positioning was pre-arranged and God-ordained. It could neither be “earned” nor negotiated. There was no reason for competition, no “jockeying” for position. Each position was of equal value. No position was more important than any other.

The Holy One dwelt equally with each family, wherever they were situated. Everyone was in his/her place. The center of everything was the Holy One. He was the “heart” - each person in the community was a part of His Body. Each was connected to Him, in a designed way, so that He could send impulses to them, and they could move when He moved, like the human brain sends impulses to hands, arms, fingers, and organs.

The City of Our Great King

This new positioning would create a vast moving “city” of the Holy One. For the next 38 years of wilderness wondering the families of the redeemed would camp, march, eat, sleep, fight, and if decreed, die, in this “formation” - each in his assigned place, beside his loved ones, looking forward to his inheritance, living out his destiny, moving in response to the God whose Presence was the heart of the camp.

The Redeemed Community was thusly reconstituted as *a city set in the wilderness*. B'nei Yisrael – and the mixed multitude that had been engrafted into them – were no longer a rag-tag mob of escaped slaves or an amalgamation of refugees. They had become a city - the Great *city of God*. And songs rang out. The Beloved Bridegroom, Who is also a Great Warrior-King sang:

***You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem,
awesome as an army displaying its banners.***

[Song of Songs 6:4]

And the Bride, who is also destined to become a mighty army, responded:

***Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave;
Its flames are flames of fire, a flame of the Holy One.***

Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.

*If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised.*

[Song of Songs 8:6-7]

Questions For Today's Study

1. Make a “map” of the camp of the Israelites, showing the location of the Tabernacle, the Levites, and each of the tribes with their banners.

[A] Which side was the “strongest” in numbers of men of an age for war?

[B] Which was “weakest” in that regard?

[C] When B'nei Yisrael broke camp, which tribe was to move first?

[D] What was the total number of non-Levite men over the age of 20 that were in this vast moving city?

2. Now let's look at today's Haftarah. Approximately 600 years after the events at Sinai about which we studied in today's Torah aliyah, the children of Gomer (allegorically representing the people of Israel) are told to rebuke their “mother”.

Why? Because “mother” Israel is denying that she is the Holy One's “wife” in the exact same way Gomer was denying that she was Hoshea's wife. Israel is acting as if she was not “married” to the Holy One - as if Sinai never happened - just as Gomer is acting as if she were not married to Hoshea – as if she had not stood under the *chuppah* [i.e. a wedding canopy] with Hoshea and pledged her troth to him.

***Contend with your mother! Contend, for she is not my wife,
Neither am I her husband;***

***And let her put away her prostitution from her face,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;***

***Lest I strip her naked and make her bare as in the day that she was born,
and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and kill her with thirst.***

***Indeed, on her children I will have no mercy;
for they are children of unfaithfulness;
for their mother has played the prostitute.***

***She who conceived them has done shamefully;
for she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'***

***Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns,
and I will build a wall against her, that she can't find her way.***

***She will follow after her lovers, But she won't overtake them;
and she will seek them, But won't find them.***

***Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband;
for then was it better with me than now.'***

***For she did not know that I gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil,
and multiplied to her silver and gold which they used for Ba'al.***

*Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my new wine in its season,
and will pluck away my wool and my flax, which should have covered her nakedness.*

*Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers,
and no one will deliver her out of my hand.*

*I will also cause all her celebrations to cease:
her feasts, her new moons, her Shabbatot, and all her solemn assemblies.*

*I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
about which she has said, 'These are my wages that my lovers have given me;
and I will make them a forest, and the animals of the field shall eat them.*

*I will visit on her the days of the Ba`alim, to which she burned incense,
when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels,
and went after her lovers, and forgot me," says the Holy One.*

[Hosea 2:2-13]

Israel was not living in a manner consistent with her true identity - just as Gomer was not living in a manner consistent with her true identity. Israel, like Gomer, had a twisted self-image, according to which she saw herself as dependent on, and offered herself as a slave to, the rich and powerful of the world in which she lived. Meanwhile, she had disconnected completely from the source of all *true* wealth and power.

Alas Beloved, the Holy One's people today are much the same! May Hoshea's rebuke of Gomer break *our hearts* as well!

[A] In verse 2 Hoshea is told to instruct his children to join together and rebuke their mother, saying, on his behalf "*you are not my wife; and I am not your husband*". Hoshea, of course, was identifying with the Holy One, and was identifying Gomer with Israel. What do you think the Holy One was saying to Israel by using these words? [Hint: no divorce had taken place or would take place; both the rest of the book of Hoshea and the rest of the Bible make this clear - so it is not "divorce" these words were referring to.]

[B] What did the Holy One call upon Israel to remove from her "face"? What do you think this represents, spiritually?

[C] What did the Holy One call upon Israel to remove from "between her breasts"? What do you think this represents, spiritually?

[D] List the things the Holy One says [in verses 3-13] He will do to Israel if she does not remove these things from her "face" and from "between her breasts"?

[E] What was the Holy One's purpose in doing the things you just listed? [Hint: the statement of the Holy One's purpose is found in verse 7].

[F] What does the Holy One mean when He says, in verse 11, that He will put a stop to Israel's celebrations, Sabbaths, New moons, and appointed festivals? Do you think whatever this means was to be permanent, or only temporary? [Before answering, read Isaiah 56 and 58, and Zechariah 14:16-18].

3. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha Shaul of Tarsus explains the functions performed by various members of the Redeemed Community of Messiah Yeshua in terms of *the spiritual identity and divine placement of individuals in the Community by the Holy One*.

*For as the body is one, and has many members,
and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Messiah.*

*For in one Spirit we all made mikveh as one body,
whether Y'hudim [Jew] or Yevanim [Greek], whether bond or free;
and were all given to drink into one Spirit.
For the body is not one member, but many.*

Just as in the Redeemed Community *b'midbar* [in the wilderness] one's *function* was determined by one's *spiritual identity* and *inheritance* (and not the other way around, as the world and all too often the organized church and synagogue arrange things), so in the Redeemed Community of Messiah *one's function is determined by the spiritual identity and inheritance* - and placement in the camp - ordained for him or her by the Ruach HaQodesh [Holy Spirit]. Neither one's inheritance in the Holy One nor His placement or importance in the Body is based upon what gifts or manifestations he or she can demonstrate - what he or she can "do".

There is no "stratification of holiness". In the Kingdom of heaven a person *functions* because of *who he is* – he is not *who he is* because of *how he functions!*

[A] Into what have we all made *mikveh* [been immersed]? How and when did this occur?

[B] Who officiated this *mikveh* ["immersion"]?

[C] Was there a separate manner or means of *mikveh* ["immersion"] for Jew than from Gentile?

[D] What were we all given to "drink"?

[E] What were the Israelites given to drink in the wilderness?

[F] Write a summary of what you think Shaul is talking about in these verses.

*May each member of His Redeemed Community lift up his family standard,
and encamp under the banner of His tribe and receive his placement in the City of God.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 47:5-9

*God has gone up with a shout –
the Holy One with the sound of a shofar.
Sing praise to the Holy One, sing praises.
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.*

*For God is the King of all the eretz. Sing praises with understanding.
The Holy One reigns over the nations. The Holy One sits on his holy throne.
The princes of the peoples are gathered together,
The people of the God of Avraham.
For the shields of the eretz belong to the Holy One. He is greatly exalted!*