

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Naso:** **Numbers 4:21-49**
 Haftarah: **Judges 13:2-5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 21:17-20[a]**

*They were numbered by Moshe,
every one according to his service, and according to his burden.*
[Numbers 4:49]

Today's Meditation is **Habakkuk 3:10-13[a]**;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is **Petition #6, B'racha** [The Petition For Blessing]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor - And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ... **Naso et-rosh b'nei Gershon gam-hem** – Lift up the head, sons of Gershon also ... **l'veit avotam l'mishpeichotam** – by their father's houses, family by family **Numbers 4:21-22.**

The Camp of the Redeemed has been re-arranged. The marching order for the great journey from Har Sinai to the Land of Milk and Honey has been established. All but one of the tribes – Levi - has found and settled into its new assigned place in the camp. Every tribe, every clan, every father's house, is on board with the part they been called to play in the Holy One's Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind as a species and for the restoration of Creation to its intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom. Every individual is conscious of – and humbly grateful for – the grand trilogy of mercies/blessings the Holy One has poured out for them: *i.e.* 1. Stunning, undeserved deliverance from the house of bondage; 2. stunning, undeserved invitation – with personal training - to serve as courtiers in the King's Chambers; and 3. Stunning, undeserved appointment as Royal Ambassadors to all peoples, ethnicities, cultures, and geographical regions of the earth. There is no selfishness. There is no internal strife. There is no dissension in the ranks. There is no envy, jealousy, or covetousness. There is no lusting after the ways or the mammon of the world. There is no offense. There is no hate. There is no fear. There is no class-warfare incitement. There is no gender-blaming. There is no race-baiting. There is no culture-cancelling. There is no virtue-signaling. There is no derogatory label-casting. There is no cynicism. There is no sarcasm. There is no profanity, no lewdness, no coarse talk, and no *lashon hara*. There is no judgmentalism, nor vigilantism, nor vengeance-seeking. There are no inferiority or superiority complexes. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is ... for brothers to dwell together in unity!

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Welcome to THE BASELINE. Welcome to the ‘Great Nation’ model to which we are always to aspire and pursue.

Look to the East

On the side of the Camp facing the rising sun Kalev has the members of the tribe of Y’hudah are established as our advance guard. 74,600 strong, the men of that tribe, together with their families, constitute the anchor the forward flank. The *Yedudim* are supported on the right by the tribe of Yissakhar, consisting of 54,400 men and their families. To the left of the Y’hudim are the 57,400 men of Zevulun and their families.

Look to the West . . .

The rear guard of the camp is almost as strong. Y’hoshua and all his kinsmen of the tribe of *Efrayim* form the anchor of this flank. The Efrayami number 40,500 men, plus women and children. The Efrayimi are flanked by *Menashe*, consisting of 32,200 men and their families, and by *Benyamin*, consisting of 35,400 men and their families.

Look to the North . . .

The Northern side of the *Mish’kan* is anchored by *Dan* [62,700 men plus women and children]. The Dani are flanked by *Asher* [41,500 men and their families] and *Naftali* [53,400 men and their families].

Look to the South . . .

The Southern side of the *Camp* is strong and fortified as well. This flank is anchored by the families of **Reuven** [46,500 men and their families]. On either side of Reuven’s ranks stand the households of **Sh’mon** [59,300 men, plus women and children] and **Gad** [45,650 men and their families].

The camp of the redeemed is not a refugee camp anymore; it is a 600,000-man army, dressed for battle, ready for war. Each tribe, clan, and household has its assigned place and part to play in the drama of war now – don’t they?

What About Levi?

There is still uncertainty in one group of people - the *Levi’im* [*descendants of Levi*]. Two of the three clans of this tribe are still at a loss to explain their purpose and destiny. In today’s aliyah of Torah the Holy One is going to instruct Moshe on the life-mission of the two clans of Levi’s tribe that were left in limbo by parsha *B’midbar*. One of the clans whose destiny will be announced will consist of the families descended from Levi’s son *Gershon*. The other clan whose purpose and position in the Camp will be declared by Heaven consists of the families descended from Gershon’s brother *Merari*.

Remember that Levi, the third son [by Leah] of our ancestor Ya'akov, had three sons². The first son of Levi we studied in *Sefer B'midbar* was *K'hat*,³ from whose lineage came Moshe, Aharon, and Miryam. The nearest 'distant relatives' of Aharon the high priest, the *K'hati* clan was counted first and studied in some detail in parsha *B'midbar*⁴.

Getting to Know the 'Gershon' in Us All

*Gershon*⁵, the name Levi chose for one of his sons, is *gimel, resh, shin, vav, nun sofit*. Strong's Concordance translates this word as 'exile'. The Hebrew verb root of the noun *Gershon* is *garash*⁶. Linguistically this word is usually equated with *driving away, exiling, casting out, divorcing, putting away, or plucking up*. Please note the *judgmental rejection quality* that is inherent in all those synonyms. Let's see if that judgmental rejection quality carries forth as powerful into Biblical usages of the verb *garash*. The first usage of this verb root in Torah is found in Genesis 3:24. In that verse, the verb *garash* is what is employed by the *Ruach* to describe what the Holy One did to Adam after the sin with the forbidden fruit. Torah tells us:

Vayegaresh et-ha-Adam

And He garash-ed – i.e. drove out - the man

Whoa! *Garash* is a powerful verb indeed, isn't it? What on earth could Levi have been *thinking* when he named his son by the noun-derivative of that powerful, negative, almost *frightening* verb? Who on earth would name their child something that means 'driven out one' or 'exiled one? *What kind of prophetic message was this intended to proclaim?* Ah Beloved – that is it, isn't it. The name *Gershon* is indeed prophetic. Many, many generations of the Holy One's people have literally been *Gershon'im* [driven out ones/exiled ones]. Millions of us *still are* today. We are living our lives and raising our families *in exile* in foreign lands [much as Levi's son *Gershon* did, by the way, in Egypt].

Perhaps the Holy One's declaration of the life-mission of the *Gershon'im* – the clan prophetically declared to be 'exiled ones' – is more relevant to us than we previously suspected. We will come to understand this better in time. Before further considering the prophetic implications of *Gershon's name* and *life-mission* for us today however, let us see what Torah has to tell us about the members of his

² See Genesis 46:11.

³ *K'hat* is Strong's Hebrew word #6955. Spelled *qof, hey, tav*, this word is pronounced *keh-hawt'*. It is the noun form of a Hebrew verb root meaning *to ally oneself with someone else*.

⁴ For more information on the clan of *K'hat*, see the Rabbi's son's *Shiur L'Yom Chamishi* for the week of parsha *B'midbar*.

⁵ *Gershon* is *gimel, resh, shin, vav, nun sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word #1648, it is pronounced *geh-reh-shone'*.

⁶ *Garash* is *gimel, resh, shin*. Strong's Hebrew word #1644, it is pronounced *gaw-rawsh'*.

clan. For as we start today's aliyah it is the Divinely ordained time for all members clan of *Gershon* to *sh'ma* Moshe's *naso et-rosh* [lift up the head!] call, by appearing one-by-one before Moshe, and by receiving a prophetic declaration of *identity* and mission.

The Gershon'im: The Keepers of the Things that Tremble

Once the *Gershon'im* "mustered" before Moshe and one-by-one declared their heritage, and had their heads counted, they received from the Holy One a prophetic declaration of their allotted task in life. What was to be their task? Their special assignment in the camp was that they and their sons, and their sons' sons, would have charge over and would carry, assemble, disassemble, and maintain the curtains and coverings of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. Here are the Holy One's directives:

Zot avodat mishpechot ha-Gershuni l'avod ul'masa

The Gershonite family is to serve by maintaining and carrying as follows:

V'nase'u et-yeri'ot ha-Mishkan

They are to lift up the Tabernacle's tapestries,

v'et-Ohel Mo'ed michsehu

the Communion Tent's roof,

umichseh ha-tachash asher-alav milmalah

the over-roof of blue processed skins that is above it,

v'et-masach petach Ohel Mo'ed

the drape at the Communion Tent entrance,

V'et kal'ei hechatzer v'et-masach petach sha'ar hechatzer

the enclosure's hangings, the drape at the entrance to the enclosure

asher al ha-Mishkan v'al ha-mizbe'ach saviv

around the Tabernacle and altar,

v'et meytreyhem v'et-kol-k'lei avodatam

the guy-ropes, all their appropriate tools,

v'et kol-asher ye'aseh lahem v'avadu

and everything necessary for their maintenance.

[Numbers 4:24-26]

The specific *avodah* [service] assigned to all *Gershon'im* is thus the care, maintenance, storage, transportation, and arranging of something the Hebrew text calls *yeri'ot ha-Mish'kan* – literally, the parts of the *Mish'kan* that *tremble*. Physically this included:

1. the four layers of different fabrics with which the *Mish'kan* was covered,
2. "the way", also known as the "door of the sheep" [the 'gate' of the

- Mish'kan* through which anyone who desired to enter had to pass],
3. the 'veil' – the finely-woven linen curtain which separated the *Holy Place* of the *Mish'kan* from the *Holy of Holies*; and
 4. the 'guy' ropes and pegs that kept the structure from sagging or collapsing.

Why are these things called *yeri'ot* – things that *tremble*? Because with every breeze, with every shaking of the earth, the fabric coverings and dividers of the *Mish'kan*, along with their guy wires, would indeed 'tremble'. To the *Gershon'im* was entrusted the guarding of such things – and making sure that though they might tremble and shake and sway in the breeze, they would not fall.

That Which is to be Seen – and Not Seen

The clan of *Gershon* was thus given stewardship responsibility over the things that would be seen – and not seen – by both the tribes of Israel and by gentile visitors to and spies upon the camp of the Redeemed. It was, you see, the *Gershon'im* function to keep the “outward appearances” in line with the Holy One’s directions. The *Gershonim* were charged with the responsibility to assure that what all people who looked upon or visited the camp of the Redeemed saw exactly what the Holy One willed for them to see – and, just as importantly, to assure that they did not see what the Holy One ordained that they should *not see*. They were in charge of some *external, outer chamber observances*; but they were also in charge of some *internal, inner chamber* responsibilities. Anything that was susceptible to trembling or shaking – they were to keep in place.

Do you see any spiritual implications for this? What about the outward observance of things like the Holy One’s *Shabbat*, the Holy One’s *Mo'edim*, and *the Leviticus 11 instructions relative to what is and is not to be considered food*, for example? Are those of us in exile – we who are very literally *Gershon'im* – not charged with maintaining the *outward appearance* of these things? Do not these things all tremble in the face of the foreign cultures and mindsets we encounter in exile? Does not an evil, threatening wind blow against these things? In the power of Messiah we must not let these things that tremble *fall* – nor even let them be displaced.

And what about the *internal, inner chamber matters* such as love of the Holy One with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength, loving our neighbor as ourselves, setting the instructions of Torah upon our hearts, binding them as a sign before our eyes and on our hands, meditating on them, speaking of them as we lie down, as we rise up, as we sit at meat, and as we walk by the way, and teaching them to our children? Do not these things as well tremble in the face of the competing demands of the cultures and religions of the nations in which we are

exiled? Does not a variable hurricane of secularism and materialism and institutional religion rage against these things? In the power of Messiah we must also not let these things that tremble either *fall* or be displaced.

But what does this have to do with the *Mish'kan*, you ask? Remember that the *Mish'kan* was not a religious shrine. It was nothing like the great cathedrals of Christianity; nor was it like any pagan temple. It bore no resemblance whatever to the Taj Mahal of Hinduism, the 'Temple of the Dawn' of Buddhism, the Kaaba of Islam, or the Bab of Bahai. The *Mish'kan* provided something absolutely *unique in all of the world*. It was an actual "scale model", built on earth, of something supernatural and eternal which the Holy One had shown Moshe in Heaven. It was designed to house the manifest Presence of the Holy One – to testify that *He dwelt in our midst*.

The *Mish'kan* was only to be the "outer garment" for the manifestation of the Holy One amongst His People. Neither Israel nor the goyim were to be "wowed" by either the garment or by those who tended it. They were, as we are, to look behind the garment, and the flurry of activity around it, and see the Holy One, in all His radiance. The Holy One and He alone is to be the center of attention of our camp and the world. From Him emanates light, and love, and blessing; *to* Him belongs all glory and honor and praise. And today, in the post-Pentecost world in which we live, are not each of us a *Mish'kan* of the Holy One? Does He not dwell in every one of us in Messiah?

So if you are an exiled one - a prophetic descendant of Gershon - *lift up your head!* You have a *purpose in life* – a *Divine calling and mission*. ***V'nasei'u et-yeri'ot*** - *lift up the things that tremble*.

Concerning the Other Son of Levi – The One Called "Merari"

3,200 of the males between the ages of 30 to 50 who came forward in response to Moshe's call were descendants of Levi's son *Merari*. We have learned that the names Levi gave to his sons were at least in one sense prophetic names – names that would describe and typify whole generations of the Holy One's people. *K'hat*, we learned last week, means an *ally* – i.e. a participant in a pact or alliance. *Gershon*, we learned earlier today, means *exiled one*. What about *Merari*? *The name Merari is made up of the Hebrew consonants mem, resh, resh yod, and is pronounced mer-ah-ree'*. It is the 1st person possessive noun form of a Hebrew verb root *marar*, meaning to *distill* – i.e. to bring about a separation of a liquid's essential elements by a process involving extreme heat. *This process often leaves a liquid with a bitter taste, hence names drawn from this verb root, like Merari and*

Miryam [Mary], are often translated into English as 'bitter'. Literally, however, the Hebrew name **Merari** means 'my distilling'. In naming his son **Merari** Levi appears to have been prophetically acknowledging that the Holy One was going to distill his progeny – i.e., separate out the essential elements of their life through a process involving extreme heat. Is your life undergoing such a process, Beloved? Perhaps you have more in common with Levi's third son and his descendants than you realized. Perhaps you are being distilled even now.

The First Phase of the Life Mission of the Merarim

The Holy One gave Moshe the following instructions as to what the life-mission of the descendants of *Merari* was to be:

Vezot mish'meret masa'am l'chol-avodatam b'Ohel Mo'ed

And these they are to care for and carry out of all that makes up the Mish'kan;

karshei ha-Mishkan uvrivav v'amudav v'adanav

the beams, crossbars, pillars and bases of the Tabernacle;

V'amudei hechatzer saviv

the pillars of the surrounding enclosure,

v'adneihem viteidotam umeytreihem

their bases, stakes and guy-ropes,

l'chol-kleyhem ul'chol avodatam

all their tools, and all their maintenance equipment.

uv'shemot tifkeidu et-klei mish'meret masa'am

Appoint them by name to carry all the articles with which they are entrusted.

[Numbers 4:31-32]

The *Merarim* were thus assigned the task of carrying and preserving the structural elements of the **Mish'kan** – things like the shittim-wood boards and beams and bases, crossbars, the silver bases, and the stakes and guy ropes that anchored these things in position.

The things over which the **Merarim** had charge were *not things that could be seen*, but they were things that were absolutely necessary to give shape and form and stability to that which was seen. They provided the *skeleton*; the coverings and curtains carried by the Gershon'im provided the *sinews* and *skin*. The prophetic image is striking, is it not? Bones, coming together bone unto bone. Sinews connecting the bones. Flesh covering the sinews. Is not this the exact end-times image the Holy One showed Ezekiel?

The Beautiful Dance the Holy One Has Choreographed For Each Time the Cloud Lifts

With this revelation we can now not only understand the *division of labor* but also the *sequence of events* which had to transpire each time the camp of the Redeemed moved in the Wilderness – and perhaps what must transpire each time the Spirit of the Holy One moves through us in our worlds. Though these instructions were given while our ancestors were still at Sinai, the Holy One wanted us each to know our place and our assigned task once He sent us on our way toward the Promised Land. The sequence of assigned tasks as He has revealed them to Moshe is as follows:

Every time the pillar of fire and cloud would lift and begin to move from its resting place above the mercy seat the first thing that would happen would be that the sons of Aharon – *Elazar* and *Itamar* - would run to cover the furnishings of the *Mish'kan*. Then, as soon as Elazar and Itamar were through they would call the *K'hat'im*, who would enter the *Mish'kan* and carry out the furnishings the *kohanim* had just covered in the prescribed manner. Next the *Gershon'im* would take down and pack away the curtains and coverings. Then the *Merarim* were to go to work. Their task was to 'break down' the *Mish'kan's* structural components, pack them up, put them on wagons or carts, and oversee their transportation to the next assigned 'station' in the desert. Only then could the rest of the camp proceed.

When, after the march, the pillar of fire and cloud rested again, signifying that a new 'station' in the desert had been reached, the *Merar'im* were the first to go to work. They had to unpack and re-assemble the structural elements of the *Mish'kan*. The *Gershonim* would come behind them and would put the curtains and coverings in place. The *K'hat'im* would then follow, putting the furnishings and vessels of the *Mish'kan* where they belonged. Finally Aharon and his sons would then complete the process by uncovering the furnishings and preparing them for use.

Looking Deeper

This is all very interesting - it *really* is - but what, you may ask, does this revelation about the sequencing for the movements of the *Mish'kan* have to do with the price of tea in China? Inquiring minds want to know, right? On the surface, you see, the information imparted by today's aliyah appears about as meaningless to our lives in 21st Century America as it gets. I mean, what does it matter to us today how many *Gershon'im* and *Merar'im* there were at Sinai back on the 1st day of the second month of the year following the Exodus? And, since

the *mish'kan* was only carried from place to place for 38 1/2 years⁷ and is now long missing anyway what difference does it make to anyone today which clan of Levi'im was responsible for dis-assembling, carrying, maintaining, and re-assembling which of the *Mish'kan's* component parts, or in what order those component parts were designed to be dis-assembled and re-assembled?

Once the *mish'kan* was made a permanent structure in *Y'rushalayim*⁸ – the *Beit HaMikdash* [Temple] - didn't all this stuff become irrelevant? I pose the question not to suggest its legitimacy, of course, but to spur you to think, and question, and cry out to the Holy One for 'more' than the text directly reveals. Why do *you* think the Holy One directed Moshe to put these details into the Torah? The Torah is an amazingly concise document. It does not waste words. One thing we can be assured of - the information we read in today's aliyah is *not superfluous information*.

The Holy One is definitely trying to tell us *something*. His words are always creative and prophetic. So what truths lie just behind the thin veil of the story of the numbers and service of the *K'hat'im*, the *Gershon'im*, and the *Merar'im* clans?

I do not pretend to have all the answers. What follows is merely a possible partial explanation. Take it for what it is worth. Write me and tell me your thoughts, if you'd like. But here goes. As stated above the names that Levi gave to his three sons – *K'hat*, *Gershon*, and *Merari* - are very interesting. In fact, outside the books of Hoshea [Hosea] and Ruth I cannot think of any incident of naming children more striking. Hosea, of course, was told to call his prostitute wife's offspring *Yizre'el* [scattered by God], *Lo-Ruchamah* [not my loved one], and *Lo-Ammi* [not my people]. The first name, *Yizre'el* was subsequently re-interpreted as *God sows/plants*, and the latter names were prophetically changed to *Ruchamah* [my loved one], and *Ammi* [my people], signifying an end-time restoration, following *teshuvah* by their 'mother' – a prophetic figure of Israel. Also in the book of Ruth, the exiled Hebrew woman Naomi named her two ill-fated sons by the prophetic names *Machlon*

⁷ Prior to entry into the Promised Land, at least. Thereafter, it was still moved a few times – from the Yarden to Gilgal; from Gilgal to Yericho; from Yericho to Ai; and from Ai to several places, finally coming to rest at Shiloh, where it appears to have been destroyed – or abandoned - when the ark was captured by the Ph'lishtim. The *mish'kan* – at least the one built after the pattern shown to Moshe on Sinai – has never been rebuilt. David eventually erected a tent of sorts around the ark on Mount Tzion, but he did not do so according to Torah's instructions, nor did he do so in response to The Holy One's directions. He did so of his own will, pursuant to his own plan, and, it appears, for his own glory. The Holy One allowed it, but did not manifest His Presence there.

⁸ Of course, the Temple Shlomo built and which the returning exiles rebuilt under Zerubbabel both differed from the *mish'kan* [and thus constituted departure from Torah] in many respects. Nevertheless, since the Temple contained the same basic furnishings and vessels, in a sense it can be likened to the *mish'kan* made permanent.

[sickly one] and *Kilyon* [annihilated one].

But back to Levi. He whose own name means ‘my joinder’ named his sons Gershon, K’hat, and Merari. *Gershon* means exile, or castaway. *K’hat* means one who forms alliances [i.e. a compromiser or assimilator]. *Merari* means *my distilling* [or my heat-induced separation of elements, leaving a bitter taste or residue]. Wow, what *names!*

Why does Torah record these unusual, clearly prophetic names, assign specific numbers to those names [Gershon = 2,630, K’hat = 2,750, and Merari = 3,200], and then specify the purpose and function which each serves in relation to the *mish’kan*? Why does Torah make it clear that one follows another in a specific sequence, in the service of the Holy One’s Divine plan of taking us from where He redeemed us to where we inherit what He has prepared for us? [The sequence, you will recall, is *K’hat, Gershon, Merari*, movement and coming to rest of the *Presence*, then *Merari, Gershon, K’hat.*] Is it possible the Holy One is saying that His plan of redemption necessarily involves a measured period of years of *compromise and assimilation* [the meaning of the name K’hat], followed by a measured period of years of *exile* [the meaning of the name Gershon], followed by a measured period of years of ‘distilling’, and separation of essential from non-essential elements, through intense *suffering, bereavement and bitterness* [the latter possibly culminating in the Shoah, or Holocaust – or even the ‘*time of Jacob’s trouble*’]? Is it possible that after these things have all occurred and been experienced in their prescribed order, time, and measured quantities, the Holy One will cause a great movement of His *Ruach* to occur, will rest again in Y’rushalayim, and will begin to reverse the process step by step – that the suffering, bereavement and distilling of elements will be ‘unpacked’, and turned into joy, and fruitfulness? Is it possible that following on the heels of this the exiles will come home? Is it possible that as the exiles are being gathered in the tendencies toward assimilation and compromise will cease, and we will finally choose to ally ourselves only with the Holy One; and that on the heels of this we will truly function as the holy priesthood He called and recreated us to be?

I cannot say, of course, that this is exactly what the Holy One is trying to tell us by including these details in Torah. But it is interesting to think about, to say the least. If you have a better idea, or more revelation, please let me know.

In the Meantime, Don’t Forget - Lift Up Your Heads!

In the meantime, let me encourage you to stop whatever you are doing and draw closer to the *Manifest Presence of the Holy One*. Step away from Pharaoh’s kingdom of storehouses and his smorgasbord of smelly leeks and onions for a few moments. Put aside for a little while all the functions and responsibilities and talents and abilities that you think – or have been told by men - define who you are. Stand before His glory, and gaze into it.

Lift up your head! Get a *vertical perspective* on life. Take advantage of the opportunity. When He calls you forward, ask Him to reveal to you your *Hebrew name*, of what Hebrew letters it consists, what Hebraic picture it presents, and what it means. Ask Him who, in His eyes, was your father, and who was, in His eyes, your father's father, and who was, in His eyes, his father before him, all the way back to your connection with Avraham. Ask Him to reveal to you who *you* really are. Ask Him how and why you got to be where you are. And ask Him to reveal to you of what your specific purpose on earth at such a time as this is, and of what your inheritance really consists. Wait for Him. Surrender all you are or hope to be to Him. Let Him be God. ***Sh'ma*** what He says. And may it be said of you, as it was said of the descendants of K'hat, Gershon, and Merari:

Al-pi Adonai pakad otam b'yad-Moshe

At the Holy One's bidding they were thus counted by Moshe,

ish ish al-avodato

each man according to his service,

v'al-masa'o ufkudav

and what he would carry, and his appointed task

asher-tzivah Adonai et-Moshe

as the Holy One had directed Moshe.

[Numbers 4:49]

Questions For Today's Study

1. With regard to the instructions the Holy One gave to Moshe concerning the *Gershon'im* and *Merar'im* in today's aliyah:

[A] What age groups of *Gershon'im* and *Merar'im* were "numbered" in the "census" taken in today's aliyah?

[B] What was the particular function or assigned task of the members of the *Gershon'im*?

[C] Look back at Exodus 26:1-14 (where the instructions were given to Moshe concerning the curtains of the *Mish'kan*). What symbolic messages of truth can you find in the way the curtains and coverings were to be set in place?

[D] How many *Gershon'im* did Moshe count?

[E] What was the particular function or assigned task of the *Merar'im*?

[F] How many *Merar'im* did Moshe count?

[G] What was the particular function or assigned task of the *K'hat'im*?

[H] How many *K'hat'im* did Moshe count?

2. This week's Haftarah is from the book of *Shoftim* [Judges]. *Shoftim*, of course, deals with the history of the People of the Holy One after the Redeemed

Community has entered into and settled in the Land of Promise under Y'hoshua [Joshua], but before the first king, Shaul [Saul], was enthroned. Our Haftarah will deal with a portion of the life of one of the “judges”, or “deliverers” who led the Israelites during those years. The narrative begins with an angelic “annunciation”:

*There was a certain man of Tzor`ah, of the family of the Dani,
whose name was Manoach; and his wife **akarah v'lo yaladah**
[was barren, and didn't bear].*

***Mal'ach Adonai** [the angel of the Holy One] *appeared to the woman,
and said to her, “See now, you are barren, and don't bear;
v'harit v'yaladet ben [but you shall conceive, and bear a son].**

***Now therefore please beware/take care that you
al-tishti yayin v'shechar v'al-tochli kol-tamei.**
[drink no wine nor strong drink, and don't eat any unclean thing]:
**for, behold, you shall conceive, and bear a son;
and no razor shall come on his head;***

***ki-nezir Elohim yihyeh hana'ar min-ha-baten**
[for the child shall be a Nazir to God from the womb]:
and he shall begin to save Yisra'el out of the hand of the Ph'lishtim.⁹”*

The Hebrew name of this “judge”, or “deliverer” we will discover this week, is *Shimshon* [pronounced *Sheem - shone*]; English-speaking people have come to know him as “Samson”. As you will see, *Shimshon* the deliverer was born not to priests, Levi'im [Levites], or ‘leaders’ of any kind, but to a simple family from the undistinguished tribe of Dan. This simple couple was not “special” in the eyes of the people of Israel or of the surrounding nations. But they were faithful to the Holy One in a time when “the Israelites (including, of course, the priests, Levites, and elders) *did ra* [i.e. lived selfish, destructive, toxic lifestyles] in the eyes of the Holy One”. **Judges 13:1**. And they were faithful despite the lack of personal or national blessing. The woman had long been barren and childless (the ultimate disgrace for a woman of that time and culture). The family, as well as all of Israel, was dominated by the *Ph'lishtim* [Philistines]. But when the Holy One spoke, they *sh'ma-d* [listened, and then arranged their household according to His Word, and let their lives be changed by it, believing it would happen as He said]. From such as them will always come forth the Deliverer!

[A] In Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon look up the word “judge” and write the Hebrew word. Write a definition that describes what that word means in this context.

[B] Look up “Samson” in Strong's and Gesenius, and write what the name means. [Hint: the Hebrew word is Strong's # 8123; the root word is Strong's #8121].

⁹ The Hebrew phrase reads: “*v'hu yachel l'hoshia et-Yisra'el miyad Ph'lishtim.*”

[C] Read Judges 12:1 - - 13:1 to get some background. What was the state of the nation of Israel when the events of this week's Haftarah occurred?

[D] From what tribe was this new judge to come?

[E] How was his birth announced?

[F] What was miraculous about his birth?

[G] What was to be "special" about this person?

[H] What does verse 5 say this person would do?

3. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for this week (*Naso* - meaning "come forward, elevate, cause to arise", etc., remember?), Shaul of Tarsus is "brought forward", by a "front and center" call of the Holy One - to the elders at *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem].

When we had come to Y'rushalayim, *the brothers received us gladly.*

*The day following, Sha'ul went in with us to Ya`akov;
and all the Zakenim were present.*

*When he had greeted them, he reported one by one
the things that God had worked among the Goyim through his ministry.*

They, when they heard it, glorified God.

[Acts 21:17-320[a]]

The timing of the events of this reading is very interesting - they surround the Feast of *Shavuot* [Pentecost]. The events of this reading (of *Shavuot* in the last year of Shaul's freedom) are also of tremendous importance, as they will directly result in Shaul's arrest, his imprisonment, his transport to Rome (shipwreck and all), his trial before Caesar, his prison writings, and his ultimate death.

To get a feeling for the sense of destiny which gripped Shaul as these events unfolded, [and to confirm what was said earlier about these events taking place at *Shavuot*] please take a few moments and read Acts 20:16-25 and 21:7-15. Read also Acts 9:15-16 to remind yourself what Shaul's destiny and inheritance was. Try to enter into the thought processes and emotions of Shaul as we begin this week's reading. Be prepared for a very moving experience.

[A] Where do we find Shaul in this week's B'rit Chadasha verses?

[B] With whom does Shaul meet in these verses?

[C] What does Shaul talk about?

[D] Read Acts 13-20. List some of the things you think Shaul talked about in this meeting

[E] Considering the things which Jews were to bring with them to *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem] on *Shavuot* (Leviticus 23:15-21), why do you think Shaul took gentile converts with him?

4. In Acts 21:20[a] how do the leaders among the Believers in Jerusalem respond to the news of what the Holy One has done among the *goyim* [gentiles] in the course of Shaul's journeys?

*May we, and all the Holy One's People, love and sh'ma His Torah,
and trust in His Deliverer and the deliverance He brings.*

The Rabbi's Son

Meditation for Today's Study

Habakkuk 3:10-13[a]

*The mountains saw you and were afraid.
The tempest of waters passed by.
The deep roared and lifted up its hands on high.
The sun and moon stood still in the sky,
At the light of your arrows as they went,
At the shining of your glittering spear.
You marched through the land in wrath.
You threshed the nations in anger.
You went forth for the salvation of your people,
For the salvation of your anointed.*