

# *Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi<sup>1</sup>*

[Tuesday's Study]

**READINGS:**     **Torah Naso:**                     **Numbers 5:1-31**  
                  **Haftarah:**                                 **Judges 13:6-7**  
                  **B'rit Chadasha:**                   **Acts 21:20[b]-22**

*Send them outside the camp ....*

[Numbers 5:3a]

**Today's Meditation is Habakkuk 3:13-19;**

**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 ... **Tzav et-B'nei Yisra'el vishalchu min-ha-machaneh kol-tzarua** – enjoin B'nei Yisrael to send out of the camp all who with tzara'at ... **v'chol-zav** – and he who has a toxic discharge ... **v'chol tamei l'nafesh** – and he of unclean soul. Numbers 5:1-2.*

The '4<sup>th</sup> Sefer' epoch is 'on' – and the camp of the Redeemed is experiencing a dramatic transformation. The rag-tag mob of refugees that fled Pharaoh's wrath exists no more. In its place is a 'new creation' of the Holy One – a mighty host, organized around the portal that connects the realm of hashamayim (the Heavens) with the realm of *haaretz* (the Earth); equipped with the highest level tactical gear possible – *sh'kinah* (the abiding, indwelling Presence of the Holy One, including His Breath, His Words of life, and the Light of His Countenance); *kedusha* (the energy and enthusiasm that fuels the 4 living creatures, the 24 elders, the chefubim, the serafim, and the angelic hosts of *hashamayim*); *kavod* (the gravitas to inspire/strike awe in human beings and animals alike); *chochmah* (the practical skill necessary to accomplish all assigned tasks), and *kippurim* (the invisible 'spiritual Kevlar' covering that nurtures the neshama). What was once just a refugee camp now looks, feels like, and functions like an army, complete with banners, standards and ensigns.

*Who is this coming up from the wilderness?* one might ask. The world had never seen anything like it.

## ***The Camp – Mah Tovv Ohaleicha Ya'akov<sup>2</sup>***

It has been said above that as reconfigured the camp of the Redeemed is now a *mighty army*. This is true, but not for the reasons you might think. And it is not a mighty army that looks, behaves, or operates like the mighty armies of the nation of

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew quote means 'How lovely/good are your tents, O Ya'akov [Jacob]'. This is the opening line of The Holy One's blessing of Israel through the unwitting prophet Bila'am [Balaam], who had been 'hired' by Balak of Moav to curse Israel for him. See **Numbers 24:5 ff.**

the world system. What makes the camp of the Redeemed a mighty army is not its great numbers. Nor is it a mighty army because of the skill of its archers, the discipline of its foot soldiers, the brilliance of its leaders, or the advanced technology of its intelligence network. It is not mighty because of any technology it possesses or any talent or training its people manifest. The reason this camp is a mighty army is because *at the center of the camp – at its heart – sits a special tent, in which sits a special ark, containing special tablets of stone, and over which sits a special cover, sprinkled with blood.* B'nei Yisrael is mighty because the Radiant Cloud of the Holy One's Manifest Presence hovers over it like the mountains surround Jerusalem. It is mighty because the Creator of the Heavens and the earth has taken up His rest at the center of the camp and reconstituted the people in the camp as merely an extension of His Majesty, His Power, and His Glory.

### ***Alas, We Do Have an 'Achilles Heel'***

How can such a camp become vulnerable to destructive influences? The Serpent knows the secret well. Here it is: You do not have to mount a full-on frontal assault against the Camp of the Redeemed. That just draws them closer together - with the Holy One and with each other. All you have to do *is sow a little fleshly dissatisfaction.* If you can either *[a] distract the individual members of the Redeemed Community from their own personal intimate communion with the Holy One or [b] get them to forget for a little while about the importance of their shared calling, mission, and destiny, the people in the camp will quickly start to criticize and judge each other – and will ultimately turn on each other with a vengeance.* As Messiah taught: ***Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.*** Matthew 12:25. Hence the first two priorities of everyone in the camp must be *to safeguard and preserve [a] his/her own personal intimacy with the Bridegroom-King and [b] stay focused on the tasks assigned to them – i.e. saying and doing what the Bridegroom-King is saying and doing.*

In today's aliyah we will discuss three things that the Holy One wants us to know will, if not dealt with, disrupt the peace and security of life in the newly re-arranged living "City of the Holy One". The first is the failure to understand, appreciate, and preserve the distinction between that which is *tamei* and that which is *tahor*. The second is the commission of offenses by members of the camp against each other. The third is the suspicion of unfaithfulness between husbands and wives. Let's look at these 'pressure points' of vulnerability one by one, shall we?

### ***Pressure Point of Vulnerability #1: The Tamei/Tahor Distinction Really Is That Important!!!***

The first and most serious and immediate threat to the God-centeredness of the Camp is the violation of the *mitzvot* [i.e. the wise and loving instructions by the Master Craftsman for His Apprentices] concerning who and what is *tamei*<sup>3</sup> and who and what is *tahor*. That’s right. It really *is* that important – to the Holy One, and to our *collective mission* as well as *our individual level of readiness for battle*. The camp of the Redeemed is, you see, subject to a *delicate spiritual balance*. Because the *Radiant Presence of the Holy One* dwells in the midst of the camp *business as usual* no longer applies. Our lives must not revert to ‘ordinary’ – we are supercharged with an atmosphere of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge, of reverence for the Holy One. We are being constantly infused from On High with overwhelming downpours of supernatural favor, compassion, health, and love. Our Camp is designed and equipped in every way to function as *an island of holiness* on the orb of earth. We are an earthly embassy of the kingdom of our Glorious Bridegroom in Heaven. Yet the *tamei* realm – the realm of destructive thoughts, words, animals, conditions, and spirits is all around us. We must influence it, not the other way around. The Holy One has made it absolutely clear to the Redeemed Community that anything or anyone who is in a *tamei* state poses *a clear and present danger to the sanctity and mission of the Camp*. And now, before we head off into the Wilderness and its challenges, He warns us that the infiltration of anything or anyone that indulges *tumah* [uncleanness] poses a grave danger to the *shalom* [i.e. health, peace, wholeness, well-being] of the Camp that absolutely *must be confronted and dealt with swiftly and appropriately*.

Alas, the unity of the Holy One and the Camp of the Redeemed is only as strong as the unity between the Holy One and each individual member residing in the camp. Thus we read that the Holy One told Moshe to instruct the Redeemed Community:

***V’shalchu min ha-machaneh kol-tzarua***

*Let go outside the camp all who have tzara’at*<sup>4</sup>,

***v’chol-zav***

*and all who have an issue/discharge*<sup>5</sup>

***v’chol tamei l’nafesh***

*and all whose soul is tamei.*

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<sup>3</sup> Please see Monday’s Shiur from parsha *Tazria* for a detailed discussion of the status of *tamei* and how it differs from a status of *tahor*.

<sup>4</sup> English Bibles translate this as “leper”, but the disease/condition in question is not what we know today by the name “leprosy” [more accurately called “Hanson’s disease”]. Please see Tuesday’s Shiur from parsha *Tazria* for a detailed discussion of the skin condition referred to in the Torah as *tzara’at*.

<sup>5</sup> The identification of what constitutes one as a *zav* is found in Leviticus 15. For a discussion of the *zuvim* [toxic bodily issues/discharges], and the instructions of the Holy One regarding them, please see the Rabbi’s son’s aliyot for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of parsha *Metzora*.

***T'shaleichu el-michutz l'machaneh***

*You are to let them go out of the camp*

***t'shalechum v'lo yetam'u et-machaneyhem***

*you are indeed to let them go - that they not make tamei the camp,*

***asher ani shochen b'tocham***

*where I dwell among them.*

[Numbers 5:2-4]

As we have discussed previously in these studies, the Holy One has designed the earth to contain offsetting realms that He has placed in a strategic but delicate state of balance. The realm of Light perfectly offsets the realm of Darkness. Day perfectly offsets Night. **Genesis 1:3**. The realm of 'waters above' perfectly offset the realm of the 'waters below'. **Genesis 1:7**. The realm of *eretz* [dry land] perfectly offsets the realm of *yamim* [seas]. **Genesis 1:9**. The realm of Heavenly bodies in constant motion above perfectly offsets the realm of the revolving orb of earth below. **Genesis 1:14-18**. The realm of aquatic creatures in the *yamim* [salt and fresh water basins on the surface of the earth] perfectly offset the realm of winged creatures in the skies. **Genesis 1:20-21**. The realm of creatures of the *eretz* perfectly offsets the realm of humankind. **Genesis 1:24-27**.

Within the latter offsetting realms of living creatures having the breath of physical life [*nefesh*] and of humanity having the breath of spiritual life [*neshama*] the Holy One has established other offsetting realms. The competing realms within mankind and the animal kingdom that we are dealing with at this point of Torah are the offsetting, perfectly balanced realms of the *tamei* and of the *tahor*. As we have learned, *tamei*<sup>6</sup> [often mistranslated into English as 'unclean'] is *tet, mem, alef*. The verb root of the word describes what the Kena'ani prince Shechem effectively did to Ya'akov's daughter Dinah by raping her. We usually translate this as 'defile'. Shechem, by forcing himself upon and into Dinah, made her *tamei*. Hebraically, this means what we might consider in English *fragmented*, or *incapable of perfect completion*. She was not sinful, or dirty – but she could never - absent Divine intervention, of course - reach her full potential or purpose in life because of what Shechem did. He violated her, and made himself one with her spiritually – when she was designed and destined to be one with someone else. He injected himself into the relationship between Dinah and her intended spouse. He will always stand between them, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. In Divine Mathematics, one plus one will always equal *three* – when it was intended to equal *one*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Tamei is Strong's Hebrew word #2930. It is pronounced *taw-may*'.

<sup>7</sup> Because in the Divine Mathematics of the marriage relationship the two are to become 'one flesh', inextricably joined together in heart, soul, and spirit – as Adam and Chava were joined together 'bone of my bone', 'flesh of my flesh'.

Now perhaps you get the picture. The Holy One is the intended spouse. You and I are Dinah. We are walking in Torah, becoming what our intended spouse, the Holy One<sup>8</sup>, has prophetically empowered us to become. Then someone - or something – comes along and not only diverts us from our purpose and goal, but actually threatens our capacity to give ourselves fully [heart, soul and strength] to the Holy One. That someone or something is *tamei*. If we do not go on high spiritual alert, and focus exclusively on the vertical relationship [the relationship with the Holy One], we will become *tamei* – *fragmented*, and *incapable of perfect completion*.

*Tamei* is therefore improperly translated as ‘unclean’. It refers instead to a state of *fragmentation, incompleteness*, and inability to reflect the Holy One’s *echad* [i.e. His unity, completeness, and wholeness]. It is the state Humpty Dumpty was in after he had the great fall. Remember? *All the king's horses, and all the king's men .... ?*

The realm which the Holy One has established to offset the *tamei* realm in both the animal kingdom and humanity is the realm of the *tahor*. *Tahor*<sup>9</sup> is *tet, hey, vav, resh*. This word means whole – not fragmented – or ‘made whole’ by the Holy One by having one’s fragmentations fixed. Picture Humpty Dumpty if the Holy One touched and restored him. That is what it means to be *tahor*.

In the context of an individual inside the camp of the Redeemed Community, the description of one as *tamei* means one who the Holy One says is to be *set aside, temporarily, for a prescribed time alone with the Holy One, away from one’s newly assigned place and function in the camp*.<sup>10</sup> The physical circumstances that trigger a period of *tamei* for one of our number have nothing to do (at least directly) with any sin the person has committed. If a woman had a baby, or if a person attended a funeral [came in close contact with the realm of death], or inadvertently ingested pork or shellfish, for example, that person became *tamei*. They were not hated by the Holy One – to the contrary, it was His love for them – and His desire to see them made

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<sup>8</sup> This is of course a metaphor only. But it is a metaphor based upon Scripture, and a metaphor that reflects spiritual reality in a way we can understand. Some argue ‘God cannot marry’; I respond that ‘marriage – human marriage - is only a metaphor of the relationship The Holy One has created us to enjoy with Him’. If marriage is looked at through human eyes, based upon human experience, no, The Holy One cannot ‘marry’ a human. But we are called – and empowered – to see things from a spiritual perspective, not a human perspective. From a spiritual perspective, human marriage exists only to give us a picture of the relationship and unity The Holy One intended for mankind to have with Him. Adam was created male and female; the Holy One chose to separate his maleness from his femaleness to portray a spiritual truth to Creation.

<sup>9</sup> *Tahor* is Strong’s Hebrew word #2889. It is pronounced *tuh-hore*’.

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the *tamei/tahor* distinction please see Wednesday’s Study from parsha *Sh’mini*.

*tahor* – that motivated Him to call for them to be separated from ordinary affairs of life.

### ***Where Exactly is ‘Outside the Camp?’***

The Holy One instructs us that as and when we head off, away from Sinai, into the vast wilderness beyond, any individual in the camp who takes on a significant insult of *tumah* along the way is to go ‘outside the camp’. Specifically, the Bridegroom-King says: ***T’shaleichu el-michutz l’machaneh*** [i.e. you are to let them go out of the camp] ***t’shalechum v’lo yetam’u et-machaneyhem*** [i.e. you are indeed to let them go, that they not release/emit/spread *tumah* (i.e. uncleanness) in the camp]. **Numbers 5:3.**

Outside the camp? What does that mean exactly? The Hebrew phrase our English Bibles translate as outside the camp is *michutz l’machaneh*. This phrase is first encountered in Exodus 33:7, where we are told that, after the golden calf incident, but before the *Mish’kan* was constructed, Moshe took his tent and pitched it *michutz l’machaneh* – i.e. outside the camp. What happened in that tent while it was outside the camp is legendary and wonderful – i.e. *whenever Moshe entered the tent, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the entrance to the tent, and the Holy One talked with Moshe. Exodus 33:9.* Being *michutz l’machaneh* does not, therefore, indicate any level of either Divine disfavor or Divine punishment. It is not a separation from the Bridegroom-King, Who is everywhere. It is just a temporary status of separation *from the activities going on in the center of the camp.*

But, that said, what exactly is the Holy One referring to as ‘the camp’? What would spending time ‘outside’ the camp look like and consist of in real time? The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘camp’ is *machaneh*, from the verb root *chanah* [*chet, nun, hey*]. The verb root means to *bend down, to incline one’s self*. It appears to refer to the act of bending down to set up a tent or to enter an enclosure. A *machaneh* is therefore the area in which each individual ‘bends’ to the greater good, and conforms to the expectations, cultural norms and ‘group think’ of his or her family or community.

What the Holy One called upon those who were confirmed by the *kohen*, after inspection that followed self-reporting, as being *infected with tzara’at*, as well as all who had a *genital discharge* [which obviously had to be self-diagnosed and reported], and all who were toxically impacted by the affairs of life, to do was to get out of the status quo, recharge their relationship with the Holy One, and let Him work with them to get their hearts, minds, bodies, priorities and situations straightened out. The tyranny of the urgent – as well as the routine and comfortable - had to be overcome and transcended. The status quo had to change - or else the affected person would never be healed and restored. The Holy One’s redemptive plan involved each such seriously impacted person taking time away from normal family

and/or cultural duties, relationships, and interactions, getting alone with Him, and - with a little help from a selfless *kohen* willing to spend the time, exert the effort, and risk becoming *tamei* himself by reason of the interaction - ‘process through’ the experience[s] that brought on the high level of *tumah* the person was carrying.

The period of time to be spent ‘outside the camp’ was not designed by the Holy One to be punitive. It was, instead, designed to be beneficial in purpose - for the individual involved as well as the camp. What the individual in question needed most at such a time was not business as usual, and more of the same old same old routine. Nor did they need the comfort of friends and family – with the associated problems. What he or she needed most was a one-on-one encounter with the Holy One. What he or she needed most was a healing Touch from the Master’s Hand, a restorative Word directly from the Father’s Throne, and an empowering breath from the Creator’s Mouth. This was the priority. This was ‘job one’; and absolutely nothing else could be allowed to override it.

The message is this: the vertical relationship [the relationship between the individual and the Holy One] takes precedence over all horizontal relationships [relationships between people]. That is why Messiah taught that the ‘most important mitzvah’ of Torah is **‘Love the Holy One your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind’**, and the second in importance is **‘Love your neighbor as you yourself have been loved.’**<sup>11</sup>

This high calling to vertical relationship at times requires us to make some rather difficult choices.

### ***Making Flesh-Denying Choices***

As alluded to above, most conditions/circumstances which the Holy One told us in Leviticus would make one *tamei* are not matters of which the public would have any reason to know. Most involve only the person affected [e.g. a nocturnal emission] or at most that person and his/her spouse. The initial “diagnosis” of a condition that the Holy One declared would make one *tamei*, therefore, would almost always have to be a *self*-diagnosis. There were not [or at least were not supposed to be] any “*tamei police*” walking around the camp, or spying on people’s private lives, shouting “*unclean, unclean*”, and strong-arming *tamei* persons out of the camp. The camp operated primarily on the “honor system”. It was a test of one’s priorities. Those who love the Holy One with all their heart, soul, and strength want to do His Will – and they want nothing *tamei* to hinder them or put any kind of blemish on their relationship with Him. They do not love *tamei* things – or people - more than they

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<sup>11</sup> This fascinating Hebraic teaching of Messiah is found in Matthew 22:34-40, and Mark 12:28-31.

love the Bridegroom-King. They surrender voluntarily and fully to His protocols of cleansing. See e.g. **John 13:4-9**.

### ***No Room for Cover-Ups or Excuses***

So, if a person, for instance, had a “discharge”, only he/she and the Holy One – and possibly his/her spouse – knew about it. The person therefore had a choice to make – *should I acknowledge the event or circumstance that makes me have a toxic level of tumah according to Torah, OR should I keep quiet, and act like nothing happened?* No one will ever know – so why interrupt my life and “ministry”?

I can imagine the excuses and rationalizations that must have come forth, can’t you? One might say: “I just can’t take “time out” right now – what I am doing is too important to the community! People *need* me! Another, seeking Scriptural justification, might say: “I don’t want anyone to think I am “*forsaking the assembling*!”” A teacher might rationalize: “If I don’t teach these children/adults/youth, who will?” An elder might ask: “What will people think?” or, “How will this affect my “leadership position”?”

The issue is whether one lives, moves, and has his/her being by the Holy One’s Word [*i.e.* if one *sh’ma*’s] or not. And at an even more basic level, the issue is whether one trusts the Holy One to be right, and to know best, or not. Here is a statement worth meditating on:

*By giving up the community and its activities, and getting alone with the Holy One “outside the camp”, just because the Holy One said to, a person acknowledges that the Holy One is more important than anything or anyone else in his or her life; if, on the other hand, one refuses to give up community life and responsibilities, he or she really does not love the Holy One, or value His Word, but prefers the comfort and companionship of the community, and the feeling of self-esteem he or she gets from “being needed”, to the Holy One and His ways.*

### ***Shelach ami - Let My People Go!***

It should also be noted that the Hebrew verb our English Bibles usually translate as “*put out*” in this passage, describing the process by which *tamei* persons are to leave ‘the camp’ of the Redeemed temporarily, is *t’shalach*, a form of the verb root *shalach*<sup>12</sup>. This verb is translated throughout Exodus not as ‘*put out*’, but as “*let go*”. What the Holy One had Moshe say to Pharaoh over and over again was “***Shelach ami!***” [*Let my people go*]. If that translation was correct in Exodus, it is correct here. The instruction of the Holy One would therefore not be to “put out”, or “send out”

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<sup>12</sup> Shalach is *shin, lamed, chet*. Strong’s Hebrew word #7971, it is pronounced *shaw-lawkh*’.

people in a *tamei* state from the camp, but to “*let them go*” – i.e. not hold on to them – not to *beg* or *coerce* them to stay, and not to *shame them into staying*. It recognizes that the people in the camp will have human emotions – and selfish motivations – that will make them want to hold on to the person called ‘outside the camp’. ‘*We need you*’, they will whine! ‘*You need us*’, they will declare. “*It is not right to deprive the camp of your talents/gifts*”, they will pontificate. But the real issue, of course, is CONTROL. So the Holy One is saying to those who will be affected by the absence from our lives of the *tamei* person – to the husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends of the ones He has called apart: “*Do not be selfish, Beloved! Do not depend upon men or women - even your own wives and mothers and husbands and friends - for your joy or your sustenance! Let them go!*” That presents perhaps the biggest challenge of these verses: will *we let them go*? Will we allow the Holy One to work and do in them what He desires to do? Or will we be like Pharaoh to them - and hold on to their services for dear life, all the while resenting the Holy One - and/or the person(s) in question - for interfering with our nice little worlds?

### ***When One Person Wrongs Another***

The second threat to the newly arranged City of the Holy One was a lack of respect for the personal ‘space’, dignity, reputation, relationships, and property of others. The Holy One takes offenses we commit against each other very, very seriously. Here is what He has to say about them:

***ish o-ishah ki ya'asu mikol-chatot ha-adam***

*If a man sins against his fellow man*

***lim'ol ma'al b'Adonai***

*And thus commits an offense against the Holy One,*

***v'ashmah ha-nefesh hahi***

*and takes guilt upon his soul,*

***V'hitvadu<sup>13</sup> et-chatatam asher asu***

*He is to confess the sin that he has committed.*

***V'heshiv et-ashamo b'rosho v'chamishito yosef alav***

*He is [then] to make restitution of the value taken plus 20%,*

***V'natan la'asher***

*and give it to the victim.*

**[Numbers 5:5-6]**

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<sup>13</sup> This Hebrew verb is a form of the verb root *yada*, meaning to know intimately. It would probably be better translated here as ‘acknowledge’ – admit to oneself not only the deed, but its motivations, why it was wrong, and what its effects were on the person wronged, on the one sinning, and on the camp/community as a whole.

If you want to make an enemy out of your neighbor it is easy - just treat his property as if it were yours or cause him or his property harm without making him whole. Even more importantly however, since all property belongs to the Holy One and He entrusts it to whom He wills, for anyone to take or use something the Holy One has entrusted to someone else's use without permission - or even to covet such a thing - is an act of *defiant rebellion* against the Holy One. Likewise, failing to timely return something one has borrowed, refusing to timely pay a debt one has agreed to pay, and refusing to make restitution for the damages one has caused - even if accidentally - are *sins against the Holy One* as much as against the affected person.

The Holy One wants us to know, however, that as serious as such deeds are, the covenant relationship He has established is *strong enough to survive them*. Such deeds do not therefore automatically result in *karat* [being cut off (i.e. ostracized) from the camp or stoned upon order of the Sanhedrin]. The Holy One wants us to understand that He is fully aware that because His covenant is with people who are fully human such deeds will from time to time happen *even in His Torah community*. The Holy One specifically therefore provides as an essential part of his covenant a *procedure for such sins to be rectified*. What is the procedure? First the covenant breaker must *acknowledge his or her wrongful deed publicly*. As Torah puts it: ***V'hitvadu et-chatatam asher asu*** [He is to confess the breach of covenant that he has committed.]

I didn't say it would be easy, Beloved. But who said it should be?

Then, after public acknowledgment, he or she who has sinned against his/her brother and against the Holy One must *make rectification* of the wrong to the victim and to the Holy One according to a Torah-prescribed formula. Torah tells us:

***V'heshiv et-ashamo b'rosho v'chamishito yosef alav***  
*He is [then] to make restitution of the principle plus a 20% surcharge,*

***V'natan la'asher***  
*and give it to the victim of his crime.*

If the guilty party does both of these things, even though he/she has sinned, he/she is forgiven – *i.e. released from further punishment*. If the guilty party does not do these Torah-prescribed things however, and is found guilty of the offense according to Torah's rules of due process [i.e. upon the testimony of two or more qualified witnesses, etc.], the punishments provided by Torah for the offense in question are to be applied to him *by the Community*.

As was seen first in our study of parsha *Mishpatim* [particularly regarding Exodus 22] in order that the “City of the Holy One” which has just been reconstituted not be destroyed from within, the Holy One has established a system of *restitution* -

making things 'right', and healing the breach of covenant. He acknowledges the "sin problem" of mankind - even of redeemed mankind. He wants His redeemed community to deal with the sin problem in a different and more effective way than the world does.

## ***Some Thoughts on Yeshua's Infamous Encounter With 'Zaccheus'***

Just about everyone who ever attended a church or Vacation Bible School knows the story of Zaccheus<sup>14</sup>, the 'wee little man' of the Sycamore tree. The story is as follows. As Yeshua went up to Jerusalem for His final *Pesach* pilgrimage, He passed through the ancient village of *Yericho* [Jericho]. The chief tax collector of that cursed city, a man small in stature but who had become very rich by collaborating with the Romans and extracting extra taxes from his countrymen, climbed up into a Sycamore tree so he could see the famous stranger over the heads of his taller countrymen. At that point, the chronicler tells us:

*When Yeshua came to the place, he looked up and saw him,  
and said to him, "Zakkai, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."*

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*Zakkai stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor.*

*If I have wrongfully exacted anything of anyone, I restore four times as much."*

*Yeshua said to him, "Today, salvation<sup>15</sup> has come to this house,  
because he also is a son of Avraham.*

[Luke 19:1-4]

What just happened? Can we believe our eyes? Did Yeshua just equate Zakkai's willingness to pay back 'fourfold' anything he had taken wrongfully as the sign that 'salvation has come to this house' and as the basis for declaring Zakkai a 'son of Avraham', the friend of God?

Where did Zakkai's 'restore fourfold' idea come from? Was it just a generous gesture – or an attempt to 'purchase' salvation from a perverse human instinct? No, Zakkai was following the principles of Torah, particularly verses like Exodus 22:1, which says:

*If a man steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it;  
he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.*

[Exodus 22:1]

Apparently Zakkai extracted his taxes against sheep [oxen were far less common]. And, apparently, he was acknowledging that he had not just taken the sheep *inadvertently* [in which case a 20% surcharge would have been the Torah-prescribed amount of restitution], but had *knowingly* taken sheep which he knew were not rightfully his to take for taxes, and had killed or sold them – hence making the fourfold restitution provision of Exodus 22:1 for stolen sheep applicable. Why did not Yeshua say "No, Zakkai, that is 'Old Testament' – all you have to do now that I am here is to say the sinner's prayer, ask for forgiveness, and ask Me to come into your heart and be your personal savior!" The reason Yeshua did not do such a thing is because Yeshua and Zakkai understood what most modern Christian theologians do not –

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<sup>14</sup> Hebraically, this name would be rendered *Zakkai*.

<sup>15</sup> Remember, the name *Yeshua* means intervention/salvation/deliverance/rescue/redemption.

that the reason Yeshua came was not to replace the Torah with a new ‘law of forgiveness’, but *to make the Torah full and meaningful again, and to encourage and empower people to live according to the eternal spiritual principles and guidelines which Torah spells out for humankind*. Yeshua, Zakkai, and all those present in Yericho that day understood that one does not follow Torah to *get* salvation – but that one who is saved by faith in Yeshua will hunger to follow Torah *because salvation has come to his or her house, and made him or her a new creation*, of which Torah is the spiritual DNA.

### ***The Sotah*** [i.e. *the Woman Accused of Adultery*]

A third subject covered by today’s verses is what is often called the “ordeal of jealousy”. It deals with what is to be done in the case of a *sotah* – a woman accused of adultery. Adultery – even *in the camp of the Redeemed*? Say it isn’t so! But the Holy One knows it sometimes is so. And He knows that sometimes even if it is not so in fact, personal issues and relational problems between parties to a marriage will strain trust to the point that one person may come to *believe* it is so.

With His prior instructions regarding ‘letting go’ of the *tamei* person, regarding acknowledgement of sin and of making restitution therefore the Holy One made it clear that the most critical key to the success of the City of God - the community of the Redeemed He has raised up - is *knowing and being responsive to the Holy One*. Once this factor is established, however, the second most critical key to the City of God is shown to be *the unity of the family*. Husbands and wives, parents and children - these are the building blocks the Holy One employs in the building of a redeemed society. If the bond between husband and wife, or between parents and children, is broken, a redeemed society simply cannot function the way the Holy One intended. And yet the “breach of covenant problem” persists. What then are we to do when jealousy or adultery threatens the covenant bond between a husband and a wife – and between both and the Bridegroom-King?

First of all, our fallen, misguided sense of “justice” cries out to know who is “right” and who is “wrong”. Remember, of course, that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are not the issue to the Holy One - He knows the sins of each of the parties that have led to the schism, and what will be necessary for the schism to be healed. The fixation over ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is a problem for our fallen mind - not His Perfect One.

Secondly, we cry out for a resolution of the problem - and the Holy One agrees. Is the resolution procedure “fair”? No. Who said it should be? Who said it could be? Who cares? The situation is not “fair”. Fairness has – can - have absolutely nothing to do with it. Remember, it was a breach of covenant that started the problem - and neither the husband nor the wife is probably without some contribution to the

situation. And once a covenant-breaking spirit enters a relationship, it always takes a heavy toll. Perfect solutions do not exist. Only effective ones matter.

It is not the Holy One's way – nor His people's place - to choose sides. Nor is it His Way – or our place – to condemn either party. After all, as holy as we would like to think we are, the truth is that there, *but for the grace of the Holy One*, goes you or I! Hence the Holy One directs us to follow another route entirely besides the blame and judgment game. He calls us to a much more effective route than the world's usual approach of wagging the tongue and judging by the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears. Here is what the Creator of man and woman directs:

***ish ish ki-tisteh ishto uma'alah vo ma'al***

*if a man's wife is suspected of adultery and being false to her husband . . .*

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***V'hevi ha-ish et-ishto el ha-kohen***

*the man must bring [his wife] to the priest.*

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***V'lakach ha-kohen mayim k'doshim bichli-charesh***

*The priest shall take sanctified water in a clay bowl.*

***umin-he'afar as her yihyeh bekarka ha-Mishkan***

*He shall [also] take some earth from the Tabernacle floor*

***yikach ha-kohen v'natan el ha-mayim***

*and place it in the water.*

***V'he'emid ha-kohen et ha-ishah l'fnei Adonai***

*The priest shall stand the woman before the Holy One*

***ufara et-rosh ha-ishah***

*and uncover her hair.*

If what in the KJV is called the 'spirit of jealousy' comes upon a man it needs to be dealt with privately, with as little fanfare as possible. But what is a 'spirit of jealousy'? In Hebrew the term our English Bibles translate as 'spirit of jealousy' in this passage is *ruach qinah*. *Ruach* means 'breath', 'scent', or 'spirit'. *Qinah* is usually translated as 'envy' – but it can also include the *product* or second-phase of envy, which is *jealousy*. *Envy* is the seed; *jealousy* is the root; and *accusation* is the fruit.

I have a question for you: Do you think a spirit of jealousy is a *tahor* spirit [i.e. do you think it is of the *tahor* realm, focused on and leading to life, health, wholeness, and peace]? Or do you think it is a *tamei* spirit [i.e. do you think it is of the *tamei* realm, focused on and leading to death, infirmity, fragmentation, and destruction]?

As you can see, in the verses above the Holy One outlines a two-step procedure to be followed anytime a married woman is accused of adultery by her husband. If the

husband wants to take that dangerous route, he is not to make insinuations or accusations in the general populace. He is to go to the *kohen* and formally – and personally - accuse his chosen mate of adultery. His suspicions are not to *be made known* publicly. It is a matter to be kept totally between the man, his wife, the priest, and the Holy One. The rest of the world is never supposed to know. There is, after all, never to be the slightest hint of trashy tabloid talk in the Camp of the Redeemed. How is the matter to be settled? It is NOT to be settled on the basis of ‘he said, she said’ statements. Instead the Holy One lays out a somewhat mystical-sounding, and very private, ordeal.

### ***The Trial of the Sotah by Mayim K’doshim***

Please note that the Holy One insists that any man who wishes to accuse his wife of adultery must not appear before the priest empty-handed. Instead, he must ‘bring an offering’ [Hebrew *k’rav*, meaning surrogate of approach]. Specifically, the man is to bring to the priest before whom he wishes to accuse his wife of adultery exactly *one-tenth of an ephah of barley flour*. That means a little less than a gallon. It was not much. Perhaps the Holy One wanted the man to know that *accusations come cheap*. Inflammatory rhetoric comes cheap. *Emotionally charged rants come cheap*.

If upon the trial by *mayim k’doshim* [literally holy waters] the accused woman really was guilty of adultery as charged, please note that the Holy One does not say she should be stoned by the Community. Instead Torah said that she would be *stricken barren by the Holy One*. Meanwhile, if upon the trial by ordeal the woman accused by her husband is determined to be *not guilty* of adultery Torah says that she will be compensated for the indignity by being supernaturally blessed with multiple children. Can you imagine that? She will wind up bearing multiple children to the very man who accused her of adultery. Each one will testify to the power of the Holy One to heal and restore relationships. In that way the totally ‘unfair’ trial by ordeal procedure will actually become a vehicle or launching pad by which the Holy One will introduce untold joy and fulfillment into both lives – and generations to come.

As you read the Holy One’s instructions pertaining to the *sotah*, however, it is good to consider that there is not a single instance in all of the TaNaKh [the so-called ‘Old Testament’] of a Hebrew woman being subjected to the trial of the *Sotah*. The sages say it never happened – not even once. It was just a deterrent – just a declaration of the redemptive nature of the thought-processes of the Holy One. So why would the Holy One – Who foreknew this and everything else – put instructions concerning the ‘trial of the Sotah’ in the Torah? Why ‘waste’ the space? Why would the Holy One teach us something that He knows, by omniscience, will turn out to be *superfluous* and *irrelevant*? Let’s talk about that, shall we?

## ***Recognizing the Sotah For Who She Is***

Ah Beloved, perhaps we – those He has redeemed to be His Bride – are the *Sotah*! Perhaps the Holy One is the wronged husband. Perhaps Messiah is the *kohen* before whom we – the true *Sotah* - will be brought. Perhaps drinking deeply of the Torah, with both its blessings and its curses, and of the Name of the Holy One, is the essence of the *Sotah* trial by ordeal. Perhaps that is what Yeshua meant when He stood and proclaimed, at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the midst of the water-pouring ceremony:

***If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.  
He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,  
out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.***

**[John 7:37-38]**

Perhaps the waters to which Yeshua is referring in this passage are the same waters to which He was referring in His conversation with the woman at the well – the prototypical *sotah* – when He said to her:

***If you knew the gift of the Holy One,  
and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,'  
you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."  
... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.  
But the water that I shall give him will become in him  
a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."***

**[John 4:10, 14]**

And perhaps – just perhaps – if we drink the waters Yeshua gives us to drink, the priest of Heaven will declare us ‘not guilty’, and the blessing, joy, and fulfillment of supernatural fruitfulness will be ours<sup>16</sup>. Perhaps all barriers to trust between us and our Divine Bridegroom will be fully and finally removed.

Go ahead - drink the water. Do not be afraid. When you walk through the water, He will be there.

### ***Questions For Today's Study***

**1.** As you read and meditate on today's aliyah do a “heart check” on yourself. Which is more important to you? Is it really the Holy One that is more important to you - or do you say it is the Holy One that is more important to you, but *act as if you really prefer the prestige and fellowship and feelings of self-esteem you get from participating in the community?*

[A] List the three things mentioned in today's aliyah that required that a person spend time alone with the Holy One “outside the camp”.

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<sup>16</sup> I speak, of course, of *Israel* - the natural and engrafted sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. If the concept intrigues you, read Isaiah 54.

[B] Why did the Holy One say such persons were to go outside the camp?

[C] How do you think one who refused to go outside the camp for prescribed “time alone” with the Holy One would “contaminate” the camp?

2. The second threat to the newly arranged City of the Holy One was a lack of respect for the personal property of others.

[A] Look up “restitution” in your English dictionary and write the definition.

[B] To find out what the word is and means in Hebrew, look up “recompense” in your Strong’s Concordance and in Gesenius. Write the Hebrew word and describe in your own words the Hebraic word picture that word presents as it is used in verse 6.

[C] How does the Holy One say we are to “make restitution” for something we have taken without permission from someone else or for something of someone else’s which we have damaged in some way?

[D] If somehow we cannot make restitution to the person we have injured, what should we do? [*i.e.* now that there is no Tabernacle, Temple, or priest on earth?]

3. A third subject covered by today’s verses is the so-called “ordeal of jealousy”

[A] Look up the word “jealousy” in your English dictionary and write the definition that applies to the situation being discussed.

[B] One of the most dangerous emotions a human being can feel is “jealousy”. How do you think harboring jealousy affects a person’s relationship with the Holy One?

[C] The Holy One provides a radical way to have the “jealousy” problem dealt with. Describe in your own words the procedure the Holy One directs.

[D] If a woman is indeed guilty of adultery, our English translations inaccurately say that when she drinks the “holy water” her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away. Literally, the Hebrew says that the Holy One will array Himself as an army against her womb and she will have a spiritual hysterectomy - - her uterus will “waste away”. Can you find a hint in the passage that it is not the “thigh” which “wastes away”? Explain.

4. In the Haftarah reading for today we see that a great opportunity for jealousy arises between Manoah the *Dani* of Tzorah and his wife. Specifically, a “man of God” [NIV] comes between them. Hence, the relationship between Manoah and his wife, who has been chosen to be Shimshon’s mother, is tested before Shimshon is ever even conceived, much less born. This is not at all unlike what happened with *Avraham* and *Sarai*, with *Rivkah* [Rebecca] and *Yitzchak* [Isaac], with Hannah and Elkanah, and with *Miryam* [Mary] and *Yosef* [Joseph].

Why did not the Holy One (and/or his angel) appear to both partners in the marriages I have just referenced *at the same time* in order to avoid the temptation of suspicion?

I think it was because He wanted the couple to work through both the situation and the jealousy problem before they had to deal with the actual supernatural events. The strength of the marriage was, and still is, critical to the ways and workings of the Holy One.

[A] What two things did the angel tell Manoah's wife not to do?

[B] Why do you think the angel tell Manoah's wife not to do these things when it was Shimshon who was to be a Nazarite? What difference did it make what his mother did?

5. In Acts 21:20-22 the leaders among the Believers in Jerusalem respond to the report given by Shaul of Tarsus [Paul] of the amazing and widespread workings of the Holy One among the *goyim* [gentiles].

[A] How do they personally react to the news of what the Holy One has done among the *goyim* in the course of Shaul's journeys?

[B] How do they let Shaul know what similar thing the Holy One has done among the Jews in Jerusalem?

[C] How do they say the Messianic believers are dealing with the Torah?

[D] What false rumor about Shaul's teachings had made its way back to the believers in Jerusalem?

[E] What three specific things was it rumored that Shaul was teaching gentile converts?

*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 3:13-19

*You crushed the head of the land of wickedness. You stripped them head to foot. Selah.*

*You pierced the heads of his warriors with their own spears.*

*They came as a whirlwind to scatter me, gloating as if to devour the wretched in secret.*

*You trampled the sea with your horses, churning mighty waters.*

*I sh'ma-ed, and my body trembled. My lips quivered at the voice.*

*Rottiness enters into my bones, and I tremble in my place,*

*Because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble,*

*For the coming up of the people who invade us.*

*For though the fig tree doesn't flourish, nor fruit be in the vines;*

*the labor of the olive fails, the fields yield no food;*

*the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls:*

*Yet I will rejoice in the Holy One. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!*

*The Holy One, the Holy One, is my strength.*

*He makes my feet like deer's feet and enables me to go in high places.*