

tickle our ears. If we will *sh'ma* the Voice of the Creator, however, we will have to humble ourselves and act on it. We will have to change our attitudes, our worldview, our protocols, our rhetoric, our narrative, our vocabulary, and even our behavior matrix so as to bring each of those things into line with what the Holy One said. His Word is not just 'advice', or 'counsel'; it is energy. It is alive. It is powerful. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of that which is spiritual from that which is soulish, laying bare of the thoughts and intents of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12.**

***So ... In the Kingdom,
Are All People, All Places, All Times, and All Things
Really To Be Valued 'Equally' and Treated 'Alike'?***

Do you remember the central component/philosophical lynchpin of Korach's rebellion? It was the high-sounding egalitarian slogan '*Kol ha-edah kulam k'doshim*' – *i.e. Every member of the witness throng is holy!* See **Numbers 16:3**. That concept sounds so good – indeed, so indisputably 'right' – to our post-modern Western minds. We have, you see, been pre-programmed by pseudo-intellect stimulating philosophies and ideologies of several centuries of Western culture to demand a utopian concept of 'equality' from everyone – including the Creator of the Universe. Ah, but that is where it gets really dicey. Over-simplistic statements are every bit as deceptive as – and sometimes even more dangerous than – statements that are blatantly and demonstrably false. Over-simplistic half-truths, you see, come clothed in garments of artificial light. They carry a ring of truth – and that is what gives them their power to deceive. So, before I introduce what the Holy One is going to say in today's aliyah, permit me to try to talk you down a little from the ivory tower world of Korach's half-true '*Kol ha-edah kulam k'doshim*' slogan. Let me show you a little of what the Holy One sees – the real world of uneven – though ubiquitous – human brokenness and depravity.

If you have 'bought into' the high-sounding *newspeak* of post-modern era egalitarian ideology (which is really just a resurfacing of ancient, Tower of Babel building and Korachian-rebellion inciting serpent speak), I suspect you are going to have a really hard time, at the outset at least, with what the Holy one says in today's aliyah. The Creator of the Universe is *not* an egalitarian. He is a Creator. He is a builder. He understands how things really work, and how the Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration really thrives and keeps advancing toward His glorious 'endgame' objective. He is not particularly concerned – much less supportive of – how idealistic humans think about social, cultural, or political theory. The Maker of the Heavens, the Earth and everything in both – the One Who does the speaking throughout this aliyah – does not consider all people, all places, all times, or all things to be anything close to 'equal'. Ask Kayin. Ask the

people of Noach's day. Ask Yish'mael. Ask Esav. Ask the myriads who were NOT chosen by Yeshua to be part of His inner circle of disciples. The Benevolent Creator has made some 'holy' – and therefore entitled to special respect, attention, honor, and service; others, not so much. How unfair, you say? How demeaning, you scoff? How offensive, you bluster? How ... outrageous, you scream? Peace, raging storm of human emotion and pseudo-intellect – *be still!*

Why does the Holy One draw lines of distinction instead of lumping people together in clumps? Why is the special Covenant nation referred to in Scripture as *B'nei Yisrael*, said to be *holy*? Even within *B'nei Yisrael*, why are we told by the Holy One to consider and treat some people as *tamei* (i.e. 'unclean'; unsafe for close human interaction, and unfit for Divine service), and others as *tahor* (i.e. 'clean'; safe for close human interaction, and fit for Divine service)? Why does He say that the Levi'im belong to, and must serve - Aharon and his sons? Why does He say the Kohati clan of Levi'im, but no one else, are to carry and guard the holy furnishings of the *Mish'kan*?

Then there are places. Why does the Holy One say that some places – like the *Mishkan*, *Eretz Yisrael*, the holy hills of *Tziyon* and *Moriyah*/Temple Mount, are supposed to be considered and treated as 'holy'? Why does He suggest that are some things – like the *scroll of Torah*, and like the *firstfruits*, *tithes*, and *korbanot surrogates* we set aside to honor our Covenant Partner, the garments of beauty and honor worn by Aharon and his sons; and the fragrant oil and incense formulations used in the *Mish'kan*, set apart from all other things in the world as 'holy'?

Another area of Divinely-ordered differentiation is time. Why, according to the Holy One's instruction manual for life on earth, are certain intervals – like the 7th Day (Sabbath), and the *Mo'edim* – declared to be 'holy', while others, some of which are highly revered by whole cultures? Why does our King label some people, places, times, and things 'holy', and others 'common'? Why are some considered 'Israel', and others considered 'the nations'?

Is the Author of all bloodlines, and the Creator of all souls, unjust? Is He prejudiced? Is He capricious? Is He behind-the-times? Is He cruel? No, our King is none of those things. He is holy, and righteous, and altogether, unceasingly good. We humans are the ones who have issues. We humans are the ones who insist on lumping together things and people, places and times, that are designed to play different roles, and face different challenges, and achieve different Kingdom objectives?

Equality, it seems, is not a Divinely inspired concept. So ... where did it come

from? It is a ‘fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge’ inspired deception. Equality means *no Divine order*. Equality means *no spiritual growth or maturation*. Equality means *no reason to co-labor with the Creator in a Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration*. That is why the Holy One’s Covenant operates by Divine ‘favor’, not by human rights; and why His Kingdom functions according to calling and response, not by principles of equality.

What is Holy?

That which is holy is different from that which is common. That which is *holy* must be cherished, honored, and carefully watched over, so that their holiness is preserved in their holy state. But what does holiness really mean? What are the implications - and what is the purpose – of holiness? First of all, holy places, things, days, and people must not be treated as ordinary, common, irrelevant, or unimportant. We are not at any level or to any extent ‘*cast them to the dogs.*’ **Matthew 7:6.** They have both a *kedusha status* that is to be recognized and revered, and a *kedusha function* that is to be embraced and enjoyed. Everything the Holy One has called holy is a key ‘prop’ He wants to use to teach us what our own holiness – and therefore the lifestyle and impact in the world of the Kingdom of Heaven - *looks like* and *consists of*. For instance, the first thing that is called ‘holy’ in Torah – the 7th Day/Sabbath – not only *marks time* but actually *infuses it with wonderful Kingdom elements it otherwise would not have*. By carrying the blessing of the Creator, the Seventh Day/Sabbath infuses a part of that blessing into, and elevates, every other day. Sunday is holier and more blessed because some of the residue of the preceding day – the Seventh Day/Sabbath – flows into it. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. are more in tune with holiness and more blessed because the Seventh Day/Sabbath is coming. Similarly, everything that the Torah calls ‘holy’ is both positionally holy and functionally holy. Everything the Torah calls holy is to be cherished, delighted in, explored, carefully guarded, and faithfully preserved. We are to extract every bit of the holiness of such things from them that we can. Things that the Torah calls ‘holy’ should never be subjected either to *tumah* [i.e. ‘uncleanness’, or that which fragments, conflicts, or compromises their wholeness and positive impact], or to any thing, thought, emotion, attitude, or behavior that introduces into them the realm of *chol* [i.e. ‘the profane’ - that which makes them seem common or of no value or importance]. Everything the Torah calls ‘holy’ should be highly valued at all times, closely guarded at all times, and kept as pure as possible.

How do we recognize that which is holy? Whatever the Holy One calls holy is holy – and whatever He doesn’t call holy is not. It is that simple. We know what is holy from the Mouth of the Holy One. We know from what He has said in the Torah, through the prophets, and in the writings. What does the Holy One say is holy? He

says the *Ruach Elohim* is holy. He says His *Sabbaths* and *Mo'edim* are holy. He says the nation of *B'nei Yisrael* is holy. He says *the Covenant He made with our forefathers* is holy. He says the *Mish'kan*, along with each of its *furnishings* and all its chambers, furnishings and utensils – as well as *each element of the avodah He directs the priests or the people to carry on there* - is holy. He says that Aharon and his sons are holy. He says that the garments Aharon and his sons wear are holy. He says that the oil of anointing that bears the scent of Mashiach is holy. He says that the special incense burned on the golden altar is holy. He says that each of the *korbanot/surrogate presentations* brought to the altar on behalf of B'nei Yisrael are holy. He says the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and Mount Tziyon are all holy. Yeshua said that the angels are holy. **Matthew 25:31**. Torah says our *firstborn sons* are holy –and Shaul of Tarsus says all of our children – *i.e.* those born into the Covenant – are holy. **I Corinthians 7:14**. He also says every virgin is holy [**I Corinthians 7:38**], and that Yeshua's apostles and prophets are holy. **Ephesians 3:5**.

So what is our assignment with regard to the 'holy things'? We are to highly esteem them, study them, meditate on them, absorb and embrace as much of their holiness as we can, and offer them to the world as points of contact with beauty and majesty through which the Kingdom of Heaven can be brought to earth. They are to be considered *portals of Divine energy*, infused with power to inspire, encourage, motivate, elevate, convict, transport, and guide human beings to the renewal of the mind.

What Does This Have to Do With Korach and the Great Uprising?

In the days leading up to Korach's uprising the members of the Holy One's Great Cloud of Witnesses lost their focus on the holy things, people, places, and days - much like the vast majority seem to have done today. Distracted by worldly things, the salt of those of the Exodus generation lost its savor. The Holy One wasn't regarded as holy. His Torah wasn't regarded as holy. His prophet Moshe wasn't regarded as holy. His appointed priests weren't regarded as holy. His tabernacle wasn't regarded as holy. Offended at everything and everyone, the lamp of those in the generation that danced by the Sea of Reeds lost its glow. Lives that were supposed to emit a pleasing, fragrant aroma of restoration into the world began to give off instead the stench of death, mold, and ashes. The people turned their focus away from the holy to the profane. They began to major on meetings and conferences. They became experts at theorizing, pontificating, and spouting opinions. And unfortunately they let hype, hyperbole, and harangue take the place of meaningful communion with the Holy One or meaningful service to fellow man. They – like we many tend to do today - spent an obscene amount of time, energy, and passion pursuing self-promoting ministries and ministry models, and arguing among themselves over esoteric abstractions and meaningless titles and labels. In

the process they – like so many are in the process of doing today – squandered both their individual and collective destinies. Those who walked out of Egypt alongside Moshe could talk a blue streak about religious ideas, concepts, and doctrines. They could argue for years over procedures, protocols, and programs. They could, and regularly did, bemoan ‘current events’, fret over evildoers, rehash political ‘bullet points’, pontificate about their ideas of ‘social justice’, and debate issues of morality - or, if they preferred, the pseudo-science behind recent weather patterns - just as passionately – and *completely irrelevantly* – as their pagan neighbors. But what they did not have to go along with all their abstract databases of knowledge about useless religious, political, and scientific stuff was a viable moment-by-moment relationship with the Holy One. Nor had they retained an ounce of reverent fear of Him. They allowed the intimate, joyful walk of love He designed into the covenant to degenerate into a loveless, destructive, darkness-obsessed mind game. They substituted *believing in theoretical constructs, reciting creeds, supporting causes, and jumping on bandwagons* for the great adventure *following a real Bridegroom through a real world in real time*. They turned the rheostat on their hearts to ‘cold’. They let their joy dissolve into thin air. They chose to be irritable, offended, critical, and judgmental. They got cynical, sarcastic, and snobbish. They got clinically depressed, pathologically petty, and downright mean. They started listening to the Holy One – if at all – through the self-obsessed ears of the flesh instead of the humble, tender, teachable ears of the Spirit. They majored in ‘form’ – and the course on the ‘Weightier Matters of the Covenant’. They deemed ideology and theological premise and argument more important than either practical Bridal Training or passionate Bridal Responsiveness. They made a ‘*shame on you!*’ attitude more prevalent in the Camp of the Redeemed than a *sh’ma* lifestyle. I call the way of life they adopted in the Desert of Paran ‘*the Great Irrelevance*’. The people the Holy One called and empowered to be the most influential and transformative force on the planet opted instead to make themselves totally irrelevant and useless. *Selah!*

When ‘the great irrelevance’ took over that generation the Holy One intervened to ‘right the ship’. What do you think He will do in *this generation* if we do not right it ourselves, and quickly? Blessed is he who is not offended at the next manifestation of the Bridegroom of Heaven. If we have learned anything from the Wilderness Experience – or from Scripture in general – we have learned that while the Holy One loves us all passionately and desires nothing but our good, no one individual’s comfort or sensitivity is ever going to be more important to Him than the redemptive mission to which we the *am segulah* of the Holy One have been called and empowered and are being trained to fulfill.

New Manna – New Open Doors of Favor - and New Mercies – Every Morning!

Meanwhile all is now quiet in the camp. The challenge of a desperate generation to the ways of the Holy One and to His decree that return to Egypt will not be allowed is quelled. The horrible deluge of misinformation, disinformation, accusation, and self-righteous indignation has subsided. A few stifled sobs are all that remain of the *angry roar* with which parsha *Korach* began. The sweet sounds of laughter are slowly returning to the Camp. We have been given another chance. The precious manna of Heaven greets us every morning – and new mercies from Heaven waft over us each day. Some are even beginning to speak freely again of the Majesty, Magnificence, Kindness, Patience, and Goodness of our Bridegroom-King. Some are suddenly seeing – and rejoicing in – the ever-flowing streams of living water that have been following us all through in this desert, and from which the wise ones in our midst have been drinking deeply each day, even as the attention of most of the people in the Camp has been fixated on the heat, the sand fleas, and the negativity. Finally all the sarcasm has stopped. Finally the cynical, accusatory ‘*rav lachem*’ declarations have disappeared from our conversations. At last there is no ‘*is it a small thing*’ scoffing to be heard. For a while at least, not a single ‘*trial by ordeal*’ challenge dreamed up by the mind of man is pending. Suddenly no ‘*get away from the tents of these men*’ order is outstanding. Finally the complaining, debating, and hate-filled rhetoric have ceased. And with the halt in all the negativity and animosity, *thank Heaven* the plague has stopped as well. The issue of “*who is greatest*” in the camp of the Redeemed is now decided. It is not Korach. It is not Aharon or Moshe. It is not Y’hoshua or Kalev. It is the Holy One. *He alone* rules the camp. *His* decrees are the only ones that matter. Fear of the Holy One, you see, puts everything else back into perspective.

A Question Unanswered

At the end of yesterday’s aliyah of Torah the shell-shocked survivors of the “earthquake” that swallowed Korach and his followers, the firestorm from Heaven that consumed 250 rebellious tribal leaders, and the supernatural plague that killed 14,700 of brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers, appeared before Moshe. Trembling in holy fear, they asked a very poignant question: ... *ha'im tam'nu l'g'voa?* [i.e. are we doomed to die?] Numbers 17:28. Moshe did not respond to this question immediately. It still hangs heavy in the air as we begin today’s study. As we will see, the Holy One is not going to answer the question either. He has already given the answer, when he told us in Numbers 14:

As I live”, says the Holy One,

*surely as you have spoken in My ears², so will I do to you:
your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness;
and all who were numbered of you, according to your whole number,
from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me,*

*your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.
Your children will be wanderers in the wilderness forty years,
and will bear your prostitution, until your dead bodies are consumed in the wilderness.*

*After the number of the days in which you spied out the land,
even forty days, for every day a year,
shall you bear your iniquities, even forty years, and you will know my alienation.*

*I, the Holy One, have spoken,
surely this will I do to all this evil congregation, who are gathered together against Me:
in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.*

[Numbers 14:28-35]

The correct question is thus not whether these who spoke would live or would die – they had requested that they be allowed to die in the desert, and die they will. The correct question was *whether, even in the face of death, they would or would not sanctify the Name of the Holy One.*

Even Though I Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death ...

The question was WITH WHAT DEGREE OF GRACE AND PEACE THE GENERATION WHICH WITNESSED THE MIRACLES OF THE EXODUS WOULD DIE. Would our ancestors pass through the valley of the shadow of death *with dignity*? *Would they die peacefully in the Holy One's loving embrace*, trusting in the resurrection of which they prophesied every time they made *korban* at the *Mish'kan* according to Torah? Or would they *die angry, embittered with and estranged from the Holy One* - the God Who brought them out of Egypt, betrothed them to Him at Sinai, and led them to and offered them His Bridal chamber on a silver platter. Would they die offended, alienated from their brethren, holding on to grudges and nursing old wounds? Or would they choose the way of forgiveness, of release, of love, and of peace with the past?

² Demoralized by the report of the “spies” at K'desh Barnea, we had said: [*“u-mat'nu b'erez Mitzrayim o b'midbar hazeh lu-mat'n – i.e. “Would that the Holy One had allowed us to die in the land of Mitzrayim! Or would that the Holy One would allow us to die in this wilderness!”* Numbers 14:2.

³The Torah portrays in every *korban* presented at the *Mish'kan* a death, burial and resurrection – as the animal/surrogate with whom the worshipper has chosen to be identified dies, but after that death, the worshipper arises to walk in newness of resurrection life. This is vividly portrayed in the *Akeidah* [the binding of Yitzchak], where Avraham bound Yitzchak to the altar in perfect faith that he would be resurrected. Every time an Israelite made *korban* at the brazen altar of the Temple on Mount Moriyah, the site of the *akeidah*, his attention was focused on: [a] the “ram” Avraham saw when he “looked up” just before plunging the knife into Yitzchak, and [b] the Holy One's declaration/promise that “*on the mountain of the Holy One, the Holy One will be seen!*” Genesis 22:14.

Such questions could not be answered by Moshe, or by the Holy One. Each individual has to decide these things for himself or herself. The Holy One's decree will not change. The question is, will *I* – will *you* – will *we* – will *anyone* - love Him, and accept His will, and find meaning and purpose in *sanctifying His Name* as they go about the remainder of their lives? We all must face similar issues. The ultimate issue is not whether others around us will follow our Bridegroom-King, live according to His Will, and co-labor with Him in bringing about His Grand Redemptive Plan. The ultimate question is whether we love Him – and value the amazing treasure that is His love – enough to do so.

It is for us, the living ...

Our covenant with the Creator of the Universe calls for us to embrace and then faithfully *cultivate* until death *two loves* – love *of and for the Divine Bridegroom* on the one hand, and love *of and for our neighbor*⁴ on the other. Our responsibility to embrace and cultivate these two loves is *non-negotiable*. It is inconsistent with our new creation natures and Bride-to-be status to harbor in our souls *anger* or *resentment* toward either the Holy One or any human being He has created in His image.

We can choose to abide in the life-giving Vine, or we can choose to harbor offense, ill will, and resentment toward the Holy One or His creation – but we cannot choose both. The two pathways *go in different directions* - and take us to different destinations. Now that a great holocaust has occurred therefore, and the grand utopian dreams Korach dreamed after eating too much fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lie shattered in the sand of the Desert called *Paran*, which way will we choose? Now that the dreams of our human hearts have not been realized and we have suffered discouragement and loss, the first choice we must make is whether we are going to approach the rest of our lives as *victims* or as *survivors*. The difference between the two is drastic. *Victims* focus on the injuries and wounds and treatment they or their loved ones have received, and put-up walls around their hearts designed to limit their vulnerability to new sources of pain. *Victims* withdraw. *Victims* sulk. *Victims* hold grudges. *Victims* nurse wounds. *Victims* *refuse to let go of the past*. *Survivors* choose to *pick up the broken pieces* of their lives, put as many of the broken pieces back together as will fit, choose to forgive and release those who wronged them or failed to protect them, and *press on with life*. *Survivors* *refuse to give up on the future*.

And so, what do we do with the debris caused by accusation, and opinion, and offense? The Holy One does not intend for us to be morbid. He quickly turns the attention of the people *away from issues of death* back to issues of life. He focuses

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; and see Mark 12:28-34.

us on the task of *rebuilding the Community of the Redeemed* – a task in which He desires for us to work as His partners in co-creation. He departs from the usual protocol and speaks not to the friend of the Bridegroom, Moshe, but to Aharon, the friend of the Bride. Three separate times in chapter 18 of the book of Numbers, which we begin to study today, Torah tells us:

Vayedaber Adonai al-Aharon
and the Holy One spoke unto Aharon ...

The medium is about to become the message. The Holy One wants to restore Aharon's wounded spirit and to empower him – perhaps the most polarizing figure in the camp - to serve as a peacemaker and an *ambassador of reconciliation*. Aharon is the *friend of the Bride* in the Holy One's betrothal covenant. The friend of the Bride must be reconciled to the Bride. Brilliant.

The Holy One Breaks Protocol

The Holy One speaks directly to Aharon without Moshe as an intermediary or concurrent hearer only three times in Torah. The first occasion was in Exodus 4:27 when the Holy One spoke to Aharon and told him to go and find his brother Moshe in Midyan. The second such occasion was in Leviticus 10:8-11 after the death of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu. At that point the Holy One spoke directly to Aharon as a bereaved father, telling him it is his task to make *havdalah* [separation/distinction] between the *kadosh* [*i.e.* that which is holy, totally dedicated to the Holy One's use and will] and the *chol* [*i.e.* that which, in contrast, is man-conceived and man-powered] and between that which is *tahor* [*i.e.* focused on life and peace, and on course toward completion and perfection] and that which is *tamei* [*i.e.* fragmented, focused upon death, destruction, and turmoil]. The third and final occasion when the Holy One 'broke protocol' and spoke directly to Aharon instead of through Moshe is found in today's aliyah.

If Aharon was to function as a friend of the Bride, you see, to teach her the *sh'ma* lifestyle He must be able to learn to hear and recognize the Holy One's voice for himself. Does the Bridegroom have your ear? Have you tuned out all competing voices? Or are you still listening to the spirit-numbing voices of *indulgent appetites*, of *sensual pleasures*, of *old emotional wounds*, of *offense and accusation*, of *sentimental nostalgia*, of *political theory*, *philosophy* and *partisanship*, of *self-righteous judgment*, and of *religious programming*? If you can block out these and other distracting voices the truth is that the Holy One has *a lot to say* – and is just waiting, watching, and searching for someone who will listen.

What Is The Message of the Season and Hour to the Friend of the Bride?

The message of the hour for the friend(s) of the Bride consists of three parts. We

will study the first two components of this message today. The third component we will discuss tomorrow, the Holy One willing.

Component #1: Pick Up Whatever Burden Is Assigned to You and Carry It!

The first message of the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven to Aharon the friend of the Bride in the aftermath of the rebellion of Korach is recorded as follows:

atah uvaneicha uveyt-avicha

You, along with your sons and all those of the household of your father

itach tis'u et-avon ha-mik'dash

will carry the burden of guilt associated with the Holy Place or Things.

v'atah uvaneicha itach tis'u et-avon k'hunatchem

You and your sons will [also] carry the burden of priestly guilt.

[Numbers 18:1]

Lest Aharon think the calling to which he has been assigned is an ‘honorary position’, or a position of authority and power as the world sees such things, the Holy One makes it clear – you are called *not to rule the people*, but *to carry a specific burden for them*. You are to carry the burden of sins they commit against - or involving - the *mik'dash*.

What is *ha⁵-mik'dash*? The Hebrew word literally means ‘holy place’ or ‘holy thing’. It refers primarily to the *Mish'kan* (later, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) – the holy *place* which the Holy One has selected from out of all the places in creation to use as a *parlor* in which to engage in betrothal interactions with Israel, his Betrothed Bride). The term *ha-mik'dash* is, however, broad enough to include all the holy *things* [the *Torah*, the *Shabbat*, the *mo'edim*, and the *korbanot*, or surrogates through which the Bride makes approach to the Holy One at the altar of the *Mish'kan*].

What is a ‘*sin associated with the mik'dash*’? The Hebrew word translated as sin [KJV ‘iniquity’] is *avon*⁶. This word has traditionally been translated into English as *perversity*, or *depravity*, or *iniquity*, or *guilt*. It is first used in Genesis 4:13 by *Kayin* [Cain] to describe the horrible burden of guilt and shame he felt after the Holy One pronounced judgment on him for killing his brother Hevel [Abel] out of spiritual jealousy. Kayin cried out to the Holy One: ***Avoni*** [*i.e. my punishment/guilt/shame*] - ***will I carry its weight forever?***

The Hebrew verb root from which the noun *avon* is derived, is *avah*⁷. This verb root carries the idea of a burden, or limitation, that *twists* and *distorts*. The *ayin* is

⁵ When used as a prefix to a noun the Hebrew letter *hey* is almost always pronounced ‘*ha*’, and almost always means ‘*the*’ – forming the definite article of *l'shon ha-kodesh* [the holy tongue].

⁶ *Avon* is *ayin*, *vav*, *nun sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word #5771, it is pronounced *aw-vone*'.

⁷ *Avah* is *ayin*, *vav*, *hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #5753, it is pronounced *ah-vah*'.

the pictograph of the human soul. The *vav* is a Hebraic picture of a nail, peg, or spike. The *hey* is a Hebraic picture of a window in a tent, through which one sees the world, and through which one receives fresh air and refreshing breezes. Putting these three pictures together to form a mural, or pictograph, one sees the window through which one sees the human soul being *nailed shut* – boarded up, as it were. Avah therefore represents that which separates man from the Holy One, which keeps man from seeing the Holy One as He is, and which interferes with a man's receiving the Holy One's breath of life.

To transform a verb root having *hey* as its final letter – like *avah* - into a noun, the *hey* at the end of the shresh is transmuted to a *nun sofit*. The *nun sofit* is the Hebraic symbol of the Messiah, the ultimate Son and Heir. The Hebrew noun *avon* therefore is a Hebraic picture of a situation where something in a person [or nation's] life which prevents that person [or nation] from seeing, recognizing, and receiving life from, the Messiah. An *avon* associated with *ha-mik'dash*, therefore, means anything that keeps Israel – or the nations – from understanding the *mish'kan*, the Torah, the *Shabbat*, the *Mo'edim*, and the *korbanot* as gifts of the Holy One as containing the image and essence and life and breath of the Messiah.

Willful refusal to *sh'ma* the Torah [*i.e.* 'lawlessness'] is thus *avon et-ha-mik'dash*; so, however, is reducing the Torah to a set of rules, and trying to 'fulfill' it in one's own strength rather than consider it merely a portal through which one receives the life and breath of Messiah [*i.e.* 'lovelessness']. Failing to receive and be transformed by the blessing and holiness inherent in our Covenant Partner's love gift of *Shabbat* is *avon*; so, however, is reducing the *Shabbat* to a day of 'do not's', rather than a day of freedom to pursue the Divine Bridegroom with all one's soul, mind, strength, and physical and spiritual senses. Failing to arrange one's calendar and life around the *mo'edim* of the Holy One is *avon*; so, however, is turning those special times of appointment into days to *hold religious meetings and assemblies focused on the talents and ministries of men*, rather than *special appointments to meet with and receive revelation from the Holy One which we all happen to have at the same time*. Hence the Holy One, the God of Creation, Whose creative and prophetic word causes light to appear out of darkness, endless varieties of plants and trees to burst forth out of clay, and myriads of species of creatures to appear in the skies, the waters of earth, and on dry land, now speaks prophetically and creatively over Aharon. He says: *You are to keep* [Hebrew, *sh'mar*] *the charge of ha-mik'dash, and the charge of the altar; that there be wrath no more on the children of Yisra'el.*

The function of a priest, you see, is to carry the *avon* of the people – to take the weight of it off their backs and necks. It is through this service of the priest that the people are released from *the full measure of the law of sowing and reaping*.

We have such a priest. Let Him empower us to be such priests as well.

Component #2: Lay Down Your Offenses And Become Agents of Healing and Reconciliation

Moreover, before Aharon can be reconciled with the Bride-to-be the Holy One wants him to know that he must first be reconciled with his kinsmen, the *Levi'im* [Levites] – from whose ranks the rebellion of Korach issued forth. Here are the Holy One's specific '2nd component' instructions to Aharon:

*I, behold, I have taken your brothers the Levi'im from among the children of Yisra'el: to you they are a gift [Hebrew, **matanah**], the Holy One's gift to you, for the service of the tent of meeting.*

*You and your sons with you are to keep [Hebrew, **sh'mar**] your priesthood for everything at the altar, and behind the veil, and you will serve:*

I give you the priesthood as a service of gift.

[Numbers 18:5-7(a)⁸]

Please notice the areas where a priest is perpetually called to serve. These two all-important areas are [1] *at the altar* and [2] *behind the veil*. 'At the altar' is where the Holy One promised to meet with individual worshippers within the Redeemed Community. 'Behind the veil' is where the Holy One promised to meet with and provide atonement for the nation of Israel as a collective entity. Thank Heaven we have a High Priest who serves us in both places and in both contexts.

Behold How Good And How Pleasant It Is ...

The Holy One tells Aharon that the process of rebuilding the Community of the Redeemed after the debacle of the rebellion is to begin *with him*. After being personally restored, he is to initiate a *reconciliation* between himself and his sons and their relatives the *Levi'im* [Levites].

Your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, bring you near with you, that they may be joined to you, and minister to/serve/perform labor for you.

[Numbers 18:2]

As those of you who have been reading this week's *shiurim* all along know, the relationship between Aharon and the rest of the tribe of Levi has been stretched beyond the breaking point. The rebellion of the Levi named Korach was

⁸ The verse concludes with an answer, of sorts, to the question posed by the people about whether they will "all die". The Holy One tells Aharon "*Any unauthorized person who participates* [in the presentation of *korbanot* at the altar of the *Mish'kan*] *shall die*." **Numbers 18:7(b)**. Aharon and his sons are given the solemn duty of guarding the *Mish'kan*, and the holy things, against intrusion by unauthorized people (like Korach, and the 250 tribal leaders who came to the *Mish'kan* and offered incense), and against authorized people doing unauthorized things (like Nadav and Avihu did in Numbers 9. This is why in a few chapters we will see Aharon's grandson, Pinchas [Phineas], take up a spear and drive it through a couple – Zimri and his Midyanite mistress – when they brought their blatant affair right into the *Mish'kan*.

accompanied by slanderous accusations and angry confrontations⁹. Now however the Holy One directs that there be a “joinder”. In Hebrew there is a play on words in the Holy One’s instructions. Aharon is to *lavah* Levi to himself, and *lavah* himself to Levi. The verb which our English Bibles translate as “*be joined*” in verse 2 [“*that they may be joined to you*”] is *lavah*¹⁰. This word is a primitive verb root meaning *to join two distinct things together, such that they bond or cleave together, thereafter to abide in a joined, cloven condition*. The first usage of this verb in Torah however is the key to the play on words. In Genesis 29:14, in the midst of the contest between Leah and Rachel for the affections of *Ya’akov* [Jacob], Leah bears a third son (to none, at that time, for Rachel), and names him – guess what - *Levi*, saying:

Now this time will my husband be joined [lavah – lamed, vav, hey] unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi [lamed, vav, yod¹¹].

The intimate, abiding closeness and unity which Leah desired for herself and her husband *Ya’akov* – a relationship of communication, and tenderness, and shared tasks and shared goals and dreams, and of unbroken intertwining of souls – is what the Holy One decrees for Aharon and the *Levi’im*. And Aharon is to initiate healing and reconciliation by “bringing near” the *Levi’im* to him. This could be a little uncomfortable!

This is always our dilemma. It appears the nature of Divine Calling that those closest to Him must take the initiative in laying down things in order to participate meaningfully in the coming season of healing, redemption, and restoration. First of all, will we be willing to give up our anger and outrage - or the right to insist our anger is 'righteous indignation' and our outrage is 'morally justified'? Will we see healing, redemption, and restoration as being worth giving up these self-serving, narcissistic illusions? The answer is always ‘yes, it would be oh, so worth it!’ The reality of life is that embracing anger is equivalent to turning over the reins of your and your family's lives to the whim of a lawless Pharaoh with a dark, loveless, perversely hardened heart, who knows not the Holy One, and who will never, under any circumstances, consent to let His people go! Meanwhile, surrendering to outrage, even for a second, is the equivalent of reporting for duty to cruel taskmaster, drunk with power, who cracks a lethal whip at anyone and everyone just because he can.

So, the Holy One calls those closest to Him to be the first to let anger and outrage go. He knows that those things are far, far worse and more toxic to our souls - and

⁹ See for instance Numbers 16:2.

¹⁰ *Lavah* is *lamed, vav, hey*, Strong’s Hebrew word #3867, it is pronounced *law-vaw*’.

¹¹ The name *Levi*, derived from the verb *lavah*, means “*my joinder*”, or “*my reconciliation*”).

our bloodlines, and the world - than whatever problem led to our picking them up anyway.

But in this case ... that is impossible, we might say. In this case, the Holy One would never ask that of me! In this case, I am not the one who should go through *teshuvah* and reconciliation protocols! In this case, the wound is too deep, the wrong too severe, and the estrangement too great. And, of course, we might even be right. But that has never been, and will never be, the Holy One's criteria.

Baby Steps

The redemption/restoration steps the Holy One calls for in today's aliyah are largely a reiteration of the things He spoke to us in chapters 6 and 7 of Leviticus. The Holy One reiterates that whatever has *happened*, nothing about His Plan - or His Callings – has *changed*. Aharon and his sons are still to be priests, and the Levi'im (even though they had rebelled, under Korach) are still to be their assistants. The rest of the redeemed community are still to present tithes, first fruits and *korbanot* [love gifts of grain, animals, dough and oil, from a passionate Betrothed Bride to her Bridegroom-to-be] at the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. And Aharon and his sons, Elazar and Itamar, are still to act as Friend of the Bride, officiating over everything brought by the people, and consuming a portion thereof in order to symbolically declare the Holy One's acceptance and pleasure in His Betrothed Bride's love gifts.

The first few days must have been extremely *tense*. The first offering brought by a Reubenite (from which tribe Korach's co-conspirators Datan and Aviram had come) must have been extremely awkward. But healing did in fact take place. Why? Because whatever differences the Reubenites had with Aharon and his sons, they shared two things which were much more important - *the Torah* and *the God of the Torah*. These things they had in common were *eternal*, while the things about which they had disagreed were *temporal*. Hence centuries later the psalmist would write:

Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] for brethren to dwell together in unity!

***[It is] like the precious oil upon the head,
running down on the beard, the beard of Aharon,
running down on the edge of his garments.***

[Psalm 133:1-2]

Thoughts on the Healing of Broken Relationships

Today it is not so "easy" when separation comes between people. There is no longer (since the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.) any one altar on earth to which we must all come. Nor is there any one earthly priest to whom we are to bring offerings. We have only one Priest – Yeshua our Messiah. His attendants at the altar in Heaven's eternal courts are *cheruv'im* [cherubim] and *serafim*, not fellow human beings. The Holy One's dwelling is not in any building made with human

hands.

When we who are redeemed strongly disagree on an issue, be it of theology, of orthodoxy, or regarding personal matters, what are we to do? We often go our separate ways, and live our separate lives - at least here on earth. Our challenge is to *walk uprightly*, and to *follow the ways of the Holy One*, and to *continue to passionately pursue the Holy One*.

This we know: If we have wronged someone, we should *ask for forgiveness, make restitution* according to Torah. If we have been wronged, we should *extend forgiveness and bless, rather than curse, the wrongdoer*. We should, if offended, pursue the process specifically set forth in Torah for resolving the matter(s) in dispute. See **Leviticus 19:16-18**; **Leviticus 6:1-5**, and **Deuteronomy 17:8-12** - as taught to us, and interpreted for us, by Yeshua in **Matthew 18:15-17**. If we do these things, will everything be “all better”? Will we then be “the way we were”? Maybe. Maybe not. Times change. People mature, and sometimes outgrow relationships. Sometimes the reason offenses come is that the relationships were unhealthy – and not the Will of the Holy One for us - to begin with. In those situations, the parties may be reconciled to the extent they forgive each other, but they will very likely be led to walk on separate paths thenceforward.

The Holy One may - or He may not - cause us to “reconnect” in spiritual activity with those from whom we have become estranged. As far as we know, Shaul of Tarsus was never reunited in any meaningful way with Barnabas after the rift involving young John Mark. If the Holy One in His Divine Wisdom arranges for the lives of estranged brethren to intertwine again, may His Name be praised! That *is the Holy One’s business*, and it is a *spiritual* matter. There is, however, no value to fleshly attempts at reconciliation, just for “appearances sake”, or in the name of the “unity of the Body”. Human-engineered efforts [i.e. efforts that are *chol*, not *k’dosh*] not only will fail but may actually *exacerbate* the problem by stirring up old wounds that have not had a chance to heal. Only if the Holy One *specifically directs and empowers* [as He did in the case of the rift between Aharon and his brethren, about which we read in today’s aliyah] are we to take affirmative steps beyond forgiveness and restitution.

The key to a proper approach to estranged brethren is to remember the ways of Yeshua, who “only did what He saw the Father doing”. If we try to make something happen - beyond asking and/or extending forgiveness, and speaking blessings - *we will just make things worse*. And so if the Holy One does not ever reconnect us with brothers and/or sisters from whom we have become estranged, may His Name be likewise praised! Our task is to *forgive*, to *release offenses*, to

quit nursing wounds, and to *bless*; having done that, let us dwell on it no longer, and instead focus on the business of the Kingdom as our Divine Bridegroom directs. In time, by the Holy One's grace, hopefully our estranged brethren will do the same.

Questions For Further Study

1. The Holy One starts the aliyah today by speaking to Aharon and reaffirming His appointment as well as that of his sons as the High Priest of the Redeemed Community. He then proceeds to confirm the appointment of the Levi'im as Aharon's assistants. He then proceeds to confirm the ways in which the priests, Levi'im and the rest of the tribes were to interact.

[A] For what two categories of offenses were Aharon, his sons, and the family of his father (which would include Moshe and his sons, of course, and Miryam) to "bear responsibility"?

[B] How was Aharon told to interact with the Levi'im?

[C] In verse 5 Aharon is told that he was to personally supervise the work at the Mish'kan and at the altar. What is the reason given?

[D] Were the Levi'im to officiate at the altar? Why?

[E] Were the Levi'im to ever go inside the holy place? Why?

[F] What was to happen to anyone besides a son of Aharon - even a Levite - who came near the holy place?

[G] From what five classifications of things brought to the Mish'kan by the redeemed community were Aharon and his sons (but not the Levi'im) to receive a portion?

[H] In verse 19, the Holy One tells Aharon that the things he and his sons are to receive a portion from are an "*everlasting covenant of salt*". In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words translated as "*everlasting*", "*covenant*", and "*salt*". Write each of the Hebrew words and describe the Hebraic concepts they represent.

[I] What do you think the "*covenant of salt*" consists of?

2. In today's Haftarah the prophet Samuel continues his address to the community at the formal coronation of *Shaul* [Saul] as Israel's first king. He begins by pronouncing a blessing, then a curse.

*If/when/to the extent you will fear the Holy One, and serve him,
and sh'ma [live by responding to, resonating with] His voice,
and not rebel against the mitzvah of the Holy One,
and both you and also the king who reigns over you
are followers of the Holy One your God, [it will be well with you].*

*But if/when/to the extent you will not sh'ma
[live by responding to] to the voice of the Holy One,
but rebel against the mitzvah of the Holy One,*

then will the hand of the Holy One be against you, as it was against your fathers.

[1Samuel 12:14-15]

Sh'muel then concludes today's haftarah reading by calling upon the Holy One for a miraculous sign - a supernatural, unseasonable rainstorm - to confirm the blessing and the curse, and the authority of Samuel to pronounce both.

*I will call to the Holy One, that he may send thunder and rain;
and you shall know and see that your wickedness is great,
which you have done in the sight of the Holy One, in asking you a king.*

*So Sh'muel called to the Holy One;
and the Holy One sent thunder and rain that day:
and all the people greatly feared the Holy One and Sh'muel.*

*All the people said to Sh'muel,
Pray for your servants to the Holy One your God, that we do not die;
for we have added to all our sins [this] evil, to ask us a king.*

[1Samuel 12:16-19]

[A] What were the conditions laid down by Samuel for the people to enjoy the blessing he pronounced?

[B] Under what conditions did Samuel say the people would enter into the curse he pronounced?

[C] Why was a sudden rainstorm (common to us in summer) a miraculous sign to the people of Israel?

[D] What was the sign of the rainstorm designed to make the people realize?

[E] In connection with which of the *mo'edim* [festivals] of the Holy One was this coronation ceremony conducted? How do you know?

[F] After the supernatural thunderstorm appeared, the people stood in awe, of the Holy One and of Samuel, and asked Samuel to pray for them. What two things did they specifically ask Samuel to pray about?

3. In today's reading from the apostolic writings of Yeshua's *talmidim*, Shaul of Tarsus [the apostle Paul] continues his discussion of the proper relationship between members of the redeemed community and secular (governmental) leaders. Shaul summarizes by teaching us that, in light of what we have learned already this week about the Holy One's appointment of secular leaders and authorities over us in our captivity:

Therefore you need to be in subjection [to your secular governments],
not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

[A] Shaul says the redeemed "must needs" [KJV] be "subject" [KJV] to the governmental "authorities" in our various places of exile. In Strong's, look up the Greek words translated as "needs", and "subject". Write the Greek words and their definitions.

[B] What Hebrew words would Shaul have used in everyday thought and speech to represent these concepts?

[C] What two specific reasons does Shaul say we should submit to the governmental authorities in place in our land (however corrupt or unGodly)?

*May all your paths be directed by the Holy One,
and may His Light illumine them for you.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 99:6-9

*Moshe and Aharon were among his Kohanim,
Sh'muel among those who call on his name;
They called on the Holy One, and He answered them.*

*He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud.
They treasured and cherished His testimonies,
the statute that He gave them.*

*You answered them, O Holy One our God.
You are a God who forgave them,
Although you took vengeance on them for their wrongdoings.*

*Exalt the Holy One, our God.
Worship at his holy hill, For the Holy One, our God, is holy!*