

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Chukat:*** **Numbers 19:14-22**
 Haftarah: **Judges 11:4-7**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 3:13-15**

A tahor person is to take hyssop, and dip [it] in the water
[Numbers 19:18]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 23:3-6;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 11, *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem]

Zot ha-torah adam ki-yamut – *This is the instruction when a man dies. ... Numbers 19:14*

Death's sting strikes a cruel blow – leaving multiple levels of trauma in its wake. Not only does dying silence the voice, close the eyes, and shut down the heart, brain, and lungs of each individual soul it takes, it also sends pulsing waves of *tumah* through the deceased person's family, community, nation, and generation. The dead feel nothing. But the survivors experience a debilitating cocktail of shock, confusion, anger, guilt, blame, bereavement, broken heart syndrome, nostalgia over the past, fear about the future, and general sensory and emotional overwhelm. As John Donne poetically explained: "*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.*"

When someone dies a 'death vibration' is emitted by the corpse that calls decomposers at all levels into action. The stealthy force known in Hebrew as *tumat met* – the uncleanness of death – ripples through the atmosphere. The people of the raging nations are always getting caught unawares; as servants of the Most High it must not be so with us. We must know – and faithfully implement - COVENANTAL COUNTERBALANCE PROTOCOLS. We must respond to death in our midst in ways that offset the toxicity barrage and begin the healing of the affected persons and ecosystem. We must rise above the chaos and call forth light. We must drain the poison from each situs of death's nefarious sting.

Calling Forth Light; Neutralizing the Death-Sting's Venom

Last week in parsha Korach that sting struck our camp with a fury. 250 leaders perished when they approached the altar with strange fire. On the heels of that tragedy a horrible plague broke out and claimed 14,700 more of our brethren.

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Obviously, the Covenant does not exempt us from death's sting. But it does call for us to stay calm and focused on the Will and Ways of the Holy One in the face of grief. We are, after all, highly blessed and favored ambassadors of the Creator of the Universe. Our 'reasonable service' is to honor Him not only in life's happy and pleasant times – births, *brit milahs*, *bar* and *bat mitzvahs*, weddings, *Sabbaths*, festivals, and the like – but also in life's difficult times – times of bereavement, sorrow, trauma and bewilderment. We are never under any circumstances to think, speak, behave, or react as those who have no joy, no peace, and no hope. We are never to give up. We may weep, but we must not despair. We may mourn, but we must neither curse God nor blame man. We may experience a temporary setback of shock – but we must not give in to negativity, hopelessness, discontent, offense, outrage, or cynicism. We are people of the Covenant. We are sons and daughters of the living God. We are royal emissaries, who live for our King. Doing His Will, and honoring His Plan – no matter what - is our reasonable service.

The Departure of a Son or Daughter of the Covenant from the Earth Creates a Pinhole in the Universe, Resulting in a Spiritual Vacuum

As it is written: ***There is a time to be born – and there is a time to die.*** Ecclesiastes 3:2 [a]. When one of the Holy One's chosen people dies, it is as if a pinhole was created in the great pressurized cabin we call '*the Universe*'. As a saint of the Holy One reaches the vanishing point – *i.e. breaks free of the demands of physical existence on this fallen planet* - a spiritual vacuum of sorts is created. Spiritual shockwaves ripple through the atmosphere. Each sphere of influence that had been assigned to the deceased saint is adversely impacted – both visibly and imperceptibly. As the spirit departs the body, the realm of *tumah* – *i.e. uncleanness* - comes rushing in to biodegrade the spent frame of what once was a living *nefesh*. The spot on which the empty, lifeless cells, bones, and viscera are left behind becomes *tamei*; everyone who touches these things, or the spot on which they were left behind becomes *tamei* as well. But that is by no means the end of the story. Psalm 116:15 makes it clear: "***Precious*** [Hebrew, *yaqar*] ***in the sight of the Holy One is the death of His kedoshim.***" Even as creatures of the *tumah* realm are rushing into the place of death to begin the process of biodegrading the now lifeless physical body, angels come rushing into to the area as well, proclaiming ***Lo Tirah*** [Fear not!] and filling the air with the ultimate *Magnificat*: '***Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh***' [Holy, Holy, Holy!] ***Adonai Elohim Tzeva'ot*** [is the Holy One, God of Hosts!]

Mot Tamut – i.e. You Will Surely Die

In the narrative we are reading in Torah, people from the generation of the Exodus are leaving this phase of life in droves. Everyone, it seems, who grew up as slaves in Egypt and witnessed the Greatest Deliverance in the history of the world firsthand is suddenly dying off. Those who donated the precious materials that

went into the construction of the *Mish'kan* – and whose hands built it – are not going into the Promised Land. Every day it seems we lose a few more matriarchs and patriarchs. At times our lives seem consumed with saying goodbye to fathers, mothers, kinsmen, mentors, and friends. The Holy One sees. The Holy One knows. The Holy One wants those who are leaving us to be treated with respect. A person has died. Never again, in this age, will streams of living water pour forth from that particular fountain. Never again, in this age, will a blessing come from those precious lips. Never again will those arms reach out to hug a wife, a child, a friend, or anyone in need.

Fast forward to the 21st Century. In our life and time, it is precious patriarchs and matriarchs from the generation that survived the Holocaust, participated in the subsequent re-establishment of the State of Israel, fought the wars of Independence, the Six Days, and Yom Kippur, and rejoiced at the reunification of Jerusalem, that are reaching the vanishing point and disappearing from view. This is not a time for forgetting. It is not a time for ‘business as usual’.

Hence, today’s aliyah begins with the following words from the Heart of He Who created and breathed life into all men: ***Zot ha-torah adam ki-yamut b'ohel*** [*i.e. This is the instruction when a man dies in a tent ... Numbers 19:14(a)*]. What exactly did the Holy One mean when He told Adam that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *mot tamut* – *i.e.* you will ‘surely die’? After the fruit crossed Adams’ lips his heart did not stop beating. His blood did not stop pumping. His brain did not stop functioning. His lungs kept on taking in oxygen and expelling carbon dioxide. He continued walk the earth for over nine hundred more years. See **Genesis 5:3-5**. He sired and raised at least three children – Kayin, Hevel, and Shet. Was there, perhaps, another sense in which Adam did die? Was the ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the spiritual ‘point of no return’ that the Holy One, in His Omniscience, knew would so poison Adam’s mind and heart that he would *never again surrender to walking humbly with His Creator, trembling at His Word, and loving mercy to the extent of taking advantage of the ever-present opportunity of teshuvah?*

Let’s take a closer look at the events that transpired after Adam ate the fruit, shall we? Something did happen when the fruit crossed Adams’ lips. What happened was that Adam immediately had to give an account to His Maker. In the course of that giving of an account his assignment changed from *tending and guarding the garden* into which he had been placed to tilling the soil from which he had been originally take.

When There Really Is One Less Set of Footsteps

Ah, the phenomenon of Death - the *rancid juice* of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Death is the serpent's final sting – and the ultimate stagnant pool of *tumah* [i.e. *uncleanness*]. *What do you do when it comes near - or to - your own household?* How does the Holy One Himself deal with the death of His Beloved Ones? Think of Avraham burying Sarah. See **Genesis 23**. Or think of Yitzchak entombing Avraham. See **Genesis 25**. Or think of Ya'akov laying Rachel to rest [**Genesis 35:19-20**]; or of David saying goodbye to his firstborn son by Bat-Sheva [**II Samuel 12:13-23**]; or of Yeshua standing before the tomb of Lazarus [**John 11:34-38**].

Human science and physical medicine define death as *the stoppage of brain function* that leads to the *cessation of breath*. Or is it vice versa? No one is really sure. But this much we know – the life of the creature is in the blood, and at some point the blood stops flowing through the veins, coagulates, dries, and gives up the life that is in it. Then come *silence*, then *stillness*, and finally *absence*. And suddenly, sadly, there are no more sleepy-eyed *Modeh Ani's*² or *Kriat Sh'ma's* heard in the morning from the bedroom down the hall.

Is there a holy, honorable way of dealing with death? Is there a 'right thing' to do, to say, to feel? Are we at to be at the mercy of fleshly emotions the way the pagans around us are? Can we be human and bereaved – and still be partakers of the holiness and participants in the long-term redemptive plan of our Bridegroom-King? How are sons and daughters of the Covenant to 'do' – and deal with – the ultimate intruder?

Transcending Cultural Rites of Passage

Human cultures tend to be obsessed with death. The serpent, who heads up the realm of the *tamei* on earth, and whose voice those cultures all unwittingly *sh'ma*, is constantly engaged in the enterprise of passing his obsession with death on to them. Each culture has its own brand of "burial rites". Generally these rites serve one or more of the following three purposes: [a] to *honor the dead*; [b] to *win favor with 'the gods'*; and [c] to *supply the dead person* with articles considered necessary by the culture for life in 'the world beyond'.

How a given society chooses to deal with death speaks volumes about that society's values, core beliefs, and perspective on life. The Egyptian culture out of which our ancestors were brought forth, for instance, absolutely *glorified* death. It mummified the dead and built pyramids as burial vaults. And every time they did,

² *Modeh Ani* is the common reference moniker attributed to the prayer with which devout Jews begin each day. The entire prayer is as follows: "*Modeh ani l'f'necha, melech chai v'kayam shehechezarta bi nishmati b'chemlah rabah emunatecha*". This translates roughly into English as: "*I give you thanks to/before You, living and eternal King, for restoring my soul in your great compassion and faithfulness.*"

the old serpent shed another layer of skin - and slyly grinned. In India the bodies of those who died are burned and their ashes cast adrift on their “holy river”, the Ganges. And every time it happens the old serpent breathes in the scent of burning flesh hungrily, and smiles knowingly. Some African tribes have traditionally slaughtered the wife [or wives] of any man who died, thinking this will mean the man will not face the afterlife alone. The serpent coils. The Irish are famous for singing dirges and holding “wakes”. The serpent is, I suspect, always among the longest staying and loudest singing visitors. It is a cultural phenomenon for Hispanic women swoon at funerals and for Arab women to wail at them. I suspect the serpent absolutely basks in the attention.

Are we, as the Covenant People of the Holy One – a set apart nation – supposed to respond to death through such morbid, fleshly, depressing and human-focused customs? Is there - in the Wisdom of the Holy One – not a *better, more excellent way*? What exactly does the Psalmist mean when he says: ***“Precious [Hebrew *yakar* – splendid like a finely-cut precious stone] in the sight of the Holy One is the death of His saints”*** Psalm 116:15.

Transcending the Final Frontier and Ascending the Final Mountain – Crossing Over From Death to Life

So we come to the crux issue - how are *the Holy One's people* supposed to deal with death? How can we glorify Him even in death? How can we keep the focus upon Him, and upon His Greatness and His Glorious Plan of Redemption, even in times of bereavement and grief?

How are the Holy One's people to be “different” from the rest of the world in regard to death? After all, death seems to recognize no distinctions between people at all. Knowing the Holy One – even knowing the Holy One intimately – certainly does not guarantee one will not die. In this week's parsha, for instance, Miryam and Aharon will both die - even Moshe will be informed that his death as well is imminent. Avraham, Sarah, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, David, Yosiah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel and other Tzaddikim all the way down to Kefa [Peter], Yochanan the Immerser, Yochanan the Beloved, and Shaul of Tarsus succumbed to death. Our beloved Rabbi, Yeshua of Natzret, tasted its sting as well.

While we uniquely among the peoples of the world have the hope – indeed the assurance – of ultimate resurrection and life eternal in the World to Come³, and while for us it is still theoretically possible that we will be among “those who remain” at Messiah's Return⁴, the *odds are* that we too will experience that dark valley the shadow of which even the strongest of men fears – i.e. the ceasing of the precious breath, the stoppage of the heart, the stillness of the brain, and the departure of the spirit from the body in order that decay may overtake our flesh and return it to the soil from which it came. And even if it does not happen to us before He appears/returns it will almost certainly happen to someone we love. How are we, the Holy One's Betrothed people, to deal with this unwelcome guest?

Death and the People of the Great King

For the people of the Great King, as for the rest of the world, it almost always takes an encounter with *death to truly learn the value of life*. So what the Holy One wants us to know about life and death has very little if anything to do with how funerals are conducted, or what should be done, or not done, with the body of the deceased. He does not prescribe any particular ritual, or suggest any type or form of ceremony. He has, of course, earlier told us that we are not to “cut our bodies” or shave our heads for the dead⁵. He has also told the *kohanim* [priests] not to take tumah upon themselves by having contact with the body⁶, at least unless the

³ This is, of course, the hope behind the *Modeh Ani* prayer.

⁴ I Thessalonians 4:15-17; see also I Corinthians 15:51-52.

⁵ Leviticus 19:27-28.

⁶ Leviticus 21.

deceased was a very close relative. A few of the Holy One's instructions thus deal with what we are NOT to do when our lives are impacted by death. In today's aliyah the Holy One goes further. He actually teaches us something that is intended to enable us who live on to transcend the stark reality of our loved one's death, ascend into His Sheltering and Re-creative Presence, and *cross over* from death to life. Specifically, the Holy One says:

*He who touches the dead body of any man shall be **tamei** seven days:
the same is to purify himself on the third day
[with water containing the ashes of the red heifer], and on the seventh day he will be **tahor**.
[Numbers 19:11-12]*

And the Holy One goes on to make it clear that it is not just those who physically touch a dead body, but *all who reside in - or enter - the household touched by death*, who enter a *tamei* state. He says:

*This is the **torah** [instruction, teaching] **when a man dies in a tent**⁷:
everyone who comes into the tent,
and everyone who is in the tent will be **tamei** seven days.
[Numbers 19:14]*

Seven days. Seven days of “time-out” from ordinary life activities. *Sitting sheva* [seven], the Hebrew people have come to call it. In Numbers 5:1-5 our Bridegroom-King told us to let certain classes of people in a state of *tamei* go “*outside the camp*” – including those who were *tamei* ‘because of a dead body’. Let them go. *Sh'lach ami!*

For seven full days the Holy One intends for us to allow the death of a loved one to completely interrupt the lives of the surviving family members [and any friends who were present at the moment of death]. During those seven days all members of the deceased's household are *tamei*. As we discussed earlier in regard to parsha *Tazria* however the term *tamei* does not mean “unclean” in a hygienic sense. It instead refers to a state of *spiritual transition* that makes getting out of our routine and paying extremely close attention to and following the Holy One's instructions critical to our future spiritual wellbeing. It is a state of high spiritual alert. It is a state requiring enhanced security. It is a state calling for the exercise of extreme vigilance. It is not “business as usual”. It is a time when major issues hang in the balance, making ordinary life activities and social interactions inappropriate and dangerous – for us and for others⁸.

What Do We Do For Seven Days?

⁷ The word our English Bibles translate as “tent” is *ohel*, *alef*, *hey*, *lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #168, pronounced *o'-hel*. It means any structure or dwelling in which people live – a tent, a house, an inn or hotel, etc.

⁸ For a more thorough explanation and discussion of this concept see *Monday's Shiur* for Parsha *Tazria* - the Rabbi's Son's studies on Leviticus chapter 12.

The Holy One does not tell us specifically what to do for the seven days we are *tamei*. He leaves that largely to our discretion - although by definition we will not engage in any community activity, or even any other “ordinary” life activity beyond that necessary to survive.

It would seem to me that by specifying *seven days* as the time period for separation the Holy One wanted to turn our focus to CREATION, and to see Him as the Creator, calling us, blessing us, and preparing a world for us over which we are to take dominion – instead of allowing ourselves to think morbid thoughts, to wallow in our grief, or to nurse anger against God or man.

I hope therefore that when I die my sons and daughters will spend each of the first seven days after my death focusing upon and studying with each other the corresponding day of Creation as described in Genesis 1:

Day 1, light shines in the primeval darkness, at the Holy One’s word,

Day 2, sky and atmosphere conducive to life appear,

Day 3, dry ground, the platform for human activity, begins to form, and bring forth life-sustaining plants and seeds;

Day 4, the galaxies, solar systems, and other components of the heavens are strategically arranged, and their orbits and revolutions established, all pursuant to The Holy One’s Divine plan;

Day 5, the waters and the skies begin to teem with life;

Day 6, the Holy One brings forth from the dust of the earth living creatures over which man is to have dominion, and, finally, brings forth, and breathes life into, man himself;

Day 7, the Holy One declares “*it is finished*”, and blesses His Creation and the day, making it pregnant with not only hope for new, restored, Divinely-empowered life on earth – but with *shalom* peace and eternal rest.

By the eighth day I believe they will be ready for *a new beginning* – a crossing over from death to a new life - a life with no father but the Holy One.

The sages took another approach. To assist us in the process the sages developed not a *Haggadah* for meditation, but a *protocol* for “*sitting sheva*” – sit, do not stand, do not bathe, shave or change clothes, receive food and consolation from friends and other members of the community, etc. The ‘*sitting sheva*’ protocol is *a fence built around the Torah by the sages*, not the Torah itself. There is nothing wrong with this protocol, and it may likely aid in the transitioning process – but the prophetic and creative words of the Holy One are the only thing that can “finish” the crossing over. *Sitting sheva*, by itself, will not do it. The power is in the words of the Holy One – not the act of sitting. And the only thing the Holy One specifically told us with regard to the grieving process, other than that we are

tamei, relates to events which are beyond our control – events of the *third day* and the *seventh day*.

Two Days Unlike the Others

On *yom ha-sh'lishi* [the third day] after our loved one dies the Holy One tells us that something is to “interrupt the interruption”. Despite our *tamei* status a *tahor* person [someone who is not *tamei*] is to voluntarily make himself or herself *tamei* by coming to our dwelling bearing hyssop and sprinkling on us – and all around our dwelling - “living water” containing the ashes of the red heifer.

*For the **tamei** they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the **korban chata't**;
and running water is to be put with those ashes in a vessel:
and a **tahor** person is to take hyssop, and dip it in the water,
and sprinkle it on the tent, and on all the vessels, and on the persons who were there,
and on him who touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave*

[Numbers 19:17-18]

Then three full days later, on the seventh day, the *tahor* person who selflessly sprinkled us with living water on the third day is to return and repeat the process a second time.

*... and **b'yom ha-shvi'i** [on the seventh day] he is to purify him*

Then after the “*seventh day*” sprinkling each of us who is bereaved is to arise and take two specified actions, as follows: *and he is to **wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and at evening he will be tahor***. Numbers 19:19. And then we are to step forth from the *mikveh*, put on clean, spotless garments, and re-enter the realm of ordinary life and community responsibility. No grief counselors needed. The Wonderful Counselor does it all.

What Does It All Mean?

The Holy One wanted His people to recognize that contact with the realm of death was something that necessitated some “time out” from religious duties and everyday life. A 7-day period of *tamei* – separation for meditation and privately seeking the Holy One – was prescribed for all those who came in contact with death. This is not just an advisory – it is a *dire warning*. For Torah tells us:

V'ish asher-yitma v'lo yitchata

If a person is tamei and does not purify himself,

v'nichretah ha-nefesh hahi mitoch ha-kahal

that person shall be cut off from the community.

ki et-mik'dash Adonai

if he then defiles the Holy One's sanctuary

⁹ In this case the *chata't* is the *parah adamah* [red heifer] – see Numbers 19:9.

time mey nidah lo-zorak alav tamei hu

He remains tamei until the purification water has been sprinkled on him.

[Numbers 19:20]

The realm of death, you see, requires one to *process* some things. Contact with the intense ***tumah*** of that realm requires one to focus on the purpose of life, and all the ways in which one's life has strayed from the Divine Plan and purpose.

The ashes of the *korban chata't* [special sin-covering surrogate known as the 'red heifer'] were to remind one that sin – which led to the introduction of death into human experience in the first place - had to be dealt with in accordance with the Holy One's instructions.

The *mikveh* in living water at the end of the 7-day period was to mark the transition from death to life, and prepare one to re-enter the normal activities of life.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Let us look more closely at the 'torah' [instructions/teachings] the Holy One prescribes for those who come into contact with the *tumah* of death:

[A] Why do you think everything in the tent of one who dies (all his/her possessions) is said to be "*tamei*"?

[B] Do a deceased person's clothes and personal effects (jewelry, etc.) ever lose the status of being *tamei*?

[C] Do a deceased person's clothes and personal effects only become *tamei* if the person dies in his "tent" (or house)? What about death in a plane crash or car wreck, in the field of battle, or in a hospital?

[D] Do you believe that the Holy One is merely setting forth health regulations designed to prevent the spread of infection? Or is there spiritual significance to what He instructs in these verses. Explain.

[E] There is to be some interaction between the *tamei* person (the one who has come in direct contact with death) and a *tahor* person (one who has not had such contact within 7 days). Describe the interaction the Holy One prescribes.

[F] Who, in your opinion, is supposed to perform the function of the *tahor* person – a priest? A rabbi? A pastor? A friend? A paid stranger? A volunteer from the community? A child? Explain your answer.

[G] What is the effect of this interaction on the *tahor* person? Why do you think the Holy One so instructed us?

[H] If no one volunteers to sprinkle the "water of cleansing" containing the ashes of the *korban chata't* on the person who has come in contact with death, can that person ever re-enter normal life?

[I] Even after the *tahor* person twice sprinkles the *tamei* person with the 'water of cleansing' containing the ashes of the *korban chata't*, the *tamei* person

must personally take two final steps to “purify” himself or herself. What are those two final steps?

[J] If the *tamei* person refuses to take this final step, what does the Holy One say is to happen to him or her, and why?

[K] Step now with me into the context of the Messiah’s earthly ministry. Let us look at some events through “Torah” eyes. Read Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 8:49-56, John 11:11-44. Then, write an essay briefly describing how the Holy One’s instructions concerning dealing with death were, or were not [seemingly at least] applied in each of these situations.

[L] How do you think modern American/Christian funeral services and practices relate to Torah? Where are they consistent, in your view, and where are they inconsistent?

2. In today’s suggested Haftarah verses we see B’nei Yisrael under attack from one of our powerful neighbors - and suddenly Yiftach, the outcast son of a prostitute, becomes the man on everybody’s mind.

It happened after a while, that the children of `Ammon made war against Yisra'el.

It was so, that when the children of `Ammon made war against Yisra'el, the Zakenim of Gil`ad went to get Yiftach out of the land of Tov;

and they said to Yiftach, “Come and be our chief¹⁰, that we may fight with the children of `Ammon.”

Yiftach said to the Zakenim of Gil`ad, “Didn't you hate me and drive me out of my father's house?

So why are you come to me now when you are in distress?”

[Judges 11:4-7]

[A] What nation attacks B’nei Yisrael as today’s reading begins?

[B] Look this attacking nation up in Smith’s and/or in the Encyclopedia. Who was the ancestor of these people, and where did they live?

[C] Where was *Yiftach* [Jephthah] when these people attacked? Can you find that place in your Bible atlas?

[D] Who came to find *Yiftach* [Jephthah] to get him to fight against the attacking nation?

3. In the B’rit Chadasha aliyah for today Yeshua of Natzret speaks to Nicodemus about a Hebrew prophetic figure – the ‘*Son of Man*’. Note that Yeshua did not at this point say ‘*I am the Son of Man*’. Yeshua did not mention the ‘Son of Man’ by name, nor did He say anything that would lead Nicodemus to believe He was talking about Himself.

The term ‘Son of Man’ is first introduced in the Psalms. David said in Psalm 8:

¹⁰ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “chief” is *qatzin, kuf, tzade, yod, nun sofit*, Strong’s Hebrew word # 07101, pronounced *kaw-tzeen*’. The verb root is *qatzah, kuf, tzade, hey*, Strong’s Hebrew word #7096, pronounced *kaw-tzaw*’, meaning he *scrapes off*, or he *skims (off the top)*.

*... what is man that You are mindful of him,
and the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him little less than God, and have crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet*

[Psalm 8:4-6]

Then in Psalm 80 we read:

*let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
the son of man whom You have made strong for Yourself!
Then we will never turn back from You;
give us life, and we will call on Your name!*

[Psalm 80:17-18]

In the book of Daniel there is a passage that introduces the *Son of Man* to all Hebrews. After Daniel the prophet saw a vision of four beasts arising from the sea, he described a wonderful Divine intervention in life on earth as follows:

I beheld therefore in the vision of the night, and lo, one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And he gave him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him: his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and his kingdom shall not be destroyed. [Daniel 7:13 ff].

Also in the Book of Daniel, the angel Gabriel used the same term, saying [apparently to Daniel]: "*Understand, O son of man, for in the time of the end the vision shall be fulfilled.*" **Daniel 8:17.** The Holy One also addressed Ezekiel by the title "*son of man*" more than ninety times, e.g. "*Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you.*" **Ezekiel 2:1.** So who was Nicodemus supposed to think Yeshua was talking about when He said: ***No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.***

How - Nicodemus might be expected to wonder - could Yeshua be referring to Himself as the 'Son of Man' when He specifically said the Son of Man '*is in heaven*'? Yeshua was not '*in heaven*' – He couldn't be, because He was standing there in the darkness of night outside Jerusalem talking to Nicodemus. Yeshua couldn't be both 'on earth' and 'in heaven' at the same time.

Yeshua tells Nicodemus that the 'Son of Man' will be "lifted up" after a pattern established by something in Torah - something that should have been very familiar to Nicodemus. Yeshua put it to Nicodemus this way:

As Moshe lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.¹¹

[A] In verse 13 Yeshua says that “*no one has ascended into heaven*”. What, then, do you believe happened to Enoch¹²? To Eliyahu [Elijah]¹³?

[B] Like what object from Torah (in fact, from Parsha *Chukat*) did Yeshua say He would be “lifted up”?

[C] For what purpose did Yeshua say He would be “lifted up”?

[D] What is the “eternal life” of which Yeshua speaks? [Hint: Before you answer, read Yeshua’s own definitions of eternal life, found in John 12:50 and John 17:3; it may be different than you think].

May all our people find living water and healing in the sheltering Presence of Messiah Yeshua, and pass from death into life as His Torah prescribes.

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 23:3-6

He restores my soul.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil.

My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me

all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the Holy One’s house forever.

¹¹ This passage is rendered as follows in the Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha: “And no one has ascended into *Shomayim* except the one having descended out of Shomayim, the Ben HaAdam [DANIEL 7:13-14; MISHLE 30:4; DEVARIM 30:12]. And as Moshe lifted up the *nachash* in the wilderness [BAMIDBAR 21:8,9], so it is necessary for there to be a *hagbah* (lifting up) of the Ben HaAdam [TEHILLIM 22; YESHAYAH 53], that everyone having *emunah* [BERESHIT 15:6; BAMIDBAR 14:11; SHEMOT 14:31] in him may have *Chayyei Olam* [DANIEL 12:2; YESHAYAH 52:13].

¹² See Genesis 5:21-24 [Where did the Holy One “take” Enoch?].

¹³ See II Kings 2:11 [Where did the Holy One “take” Eliyahu in the whirlwind, with a chariot and horses of fire?]